

Socio-Cultural Constraints of Female Sportsmanship in the Tunisian Society: A Category of Analysis

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This study focuses on the socio-cultural constraints in women's access to the practice of competitive sport. Through a sociological approach, we explore the field of lived experiences from a population of twenty young Tunisian women practicing competitive sports. We have chosen this work for the qualitative method through semi-structured interview. The main objective of the research is to determine the socio-cultural constraints to women's access to sports based on their past lived experiences in the field of sports. It comes to understand the challenges related to the issue of gender as to the sportsmanship of women in the Tunisian society. The patriarchal ideology deeply internalized by ancient traditions, is an indirect constraint that prevents access to sports by Tunisian women because it is a male issue. Stereo-types and prejudices are a source of social resistance that leads to the exclusion of women from the sporting scene indirectly and implicitly. The education received by the Tunisian girl justifies the social hierarchy between the sexes. They are under enormous pressure to respect the family traditions that are conflicting with the nature of sports. The female body is dependent to constraints imposed by the social environment. Its image is a constraint to the sportsmanship of women. The results show that gender allows us to analyze the social and cultural barriers to women's sports.

Keywords: Sport; Body; Gender; Women

Introduction

As a pioneer in the emancipation of women in the Arab-Muslim world, Tunisia has provided woman of all rights of participation in the workforce. In sporting field, the mobilization for greater participation of women is reflected in policy choices aimed to give the women's sport favors, structural and financial supports. The access of women to any field of active life is often connected to grade level and to the degree of her accession to education and to teaching, which is fully vested for women in Tunisia. But this seems to have no immediate impact on the rate of licensee girls in the field of sports. In fact, despite a quantitative increase, the participation of women in the sports sector is still undersized compared to that of men.

The objective of this work is to study the impact of "gender" on women's access to the sporting field. We interviewed a population of girls practicing a competitive sport. The interviews allowed us to elucidate the different gender constraints that hinder women's sports career. The results enabled us to identify the socio-cultural barriers to women's access to the sporting sphere in Tunisia and to determine the impact of gender on their withdrawal from this field.

Access of Tunisian Women to Sporting Field

Social studies admit that throughout the world, the evolution of men and women is not the same and that they follow different ways in their access to the labor process. In Tunisia, sociological research published since the 60s has shown the importance of the changes that the society has witnessed for half a century. These changes enhance the participation of women in social life due to their integration into Education and their breakthrough in the field of wage labor. What is more, the various reforms aiming to improve women's conditions have contributed to establish certain equality between the sexes, especially in terms of equality of opportunities and treatment in the fields of employment and pay. Similarly to all areas of social life, access of Tunisian women in sports sector is late compared to men on the one hand, and in relation to their access to other areas of social life, on the other.

Indeed, the literature review shows, based on sociological and historical writings, that it is the case for all the countries of the world with a time difference for those of the third-world. Sports sociologists speak of "construction and representation of gender differences in and through sport (Terret & Zancarani,

2006). Thus, it would be important to take into account the socio-cultural characteristics of every people.

In Tunisia, it is no longer a clearly expressed prohibition of women from sporting activities, but the same religious, cultural and social barriers persist in hampering women from access to competitive sport. We far from believe, as before, that the specific biological and physiological structure of women does not allow them to engage in physical activity, but the female body still consists a psychological barrier for women as well as for men. This is what explains the reluctance or even refusal of the family to women's sport especially competitive sport. Indeed, the woman continues to undergo enormous family pressures in order to respect the tradition based on a sense of community, patriarchy, subjugation of women to men and male honor based on the control of female sexuality (Tillon, 1974).

These values are inconsistent with the principles of sport based on freedom of the body and mind opening. As a result, the practice of competitive physical and sports activities by women did not reach the goals and objectives assigned to it. This is often explained by the dominant mentality which has not, according to the findings of social studies, changed much when it comes to women's sport unlike other areas of working life such as Education, health, scientific research and digital technology.

Sport Is a Political Choice

In Tunisia, where the modern state was declared, at dawn of independence, as the only agent of change and modernization of traditional social structures, sport was one of the major new institutions on which a national identity was built focusing on the rationalization, modernity and openness to the outside. Since then, it continues to be one of the main channels of transmission and spread of political message (Abbassi, 2007). This is one of the major social phenomena of our century. Sociology has the worst difficulty grasping this item, or better building it (Vaugrand, 1999). However, national and international sporting achievements have served during the first period of independence (1956-1987) to remind Tunisians of their unity and their new identity. Access of women to the sporting field is often presented as the result of a great effort undergone by the state in the promotion of women in general. Political discourse continues every so often to remind the world of the achievements of Tunisian women under its regime and their achievements in various sectors, including sport. The presence of women in different sporting disciplines has been declared as a strategic choice of political change in Tunisia.

The interest paid by the state to women's sports has resulted in several incentives decided in their favor. These measures ensured an effective presence of women in the sporting field. The number of licensees has increased outstandingly. However, the number of federal members in sports organizations is very unevenly distributed among men, who account for 91% and women who occupy only 9% of all federal jobs. The process of women's access to the sport sector has been studied relatively little and tardy. Consequently, not so often in literature. Especially if we compare with women's access to the world of industrial work, an area where female labor has been the subject of many sociological, economic and cultural analyses as the feminization of this field was associated with rationalization strategies of labor.

Thus, the access of women to the labor world was subject to

a requirement of this market dictated by the general context, yet, the access of women to the field of sport has long been seen as a kind of exhibitionism. This mentality is based on two main reasons: first the anatomical argument, i.e. the female body could not withstand the endurance, and secondly considering the fact that the main function of the woman was procreation. Added to that the social and moral argument which stipulates that the woman has a place to keep in her home.

Sports and the Marital Status of Women

Motivated by the search for a complete emancipation and also for social recognition, Tunisian women have begun to integrate the sports world despite their family responsibilities inherent to their marital status. Thus they defy the whole arsenal of socio-cultural constraints that weighed and are still weighing on them. There is indeed a close relationship between the education of the Tunisian woman who climbed the ladder to the highest educational levels and her access to the sporting field, an access that should not exceed the limits of religious consents (Weber, 1993). Furthermore, the qualification of women to enter the professional field and especially socially valued professions which were for a long time reserved for men, was for much to the access of the woman to the sporting field. This is what raises the issue of equality between the sexes. This claims for equality quickly embraced the sport sector. The expectations of women have changed subsequently. Despite the statistically visible changes in the sphere of sport, asymmetries persist. As an experimental social field, the sports world is the product of regulated and controlled activities by actors who are positioned to each other. These actors are carriers of different experiences and thus inevitably different representations regarding the same social reality. The multiplicity of perceptions of a social reality is an important phenomenon to grasp in so far as it is based on these perceptions and much less on an objective reality that the social actor is often led to act, to react, to behave and make choices.

These perceptions have real practical consequences on the logic of action of social actors. It is from this perspective that we tried to understand the mechanisms underlying these perceptions which primarily have influence on the relations between men and women in the field of sports.

Choosing to study the field of sport in general and women's sports in particular, does not mean to specifically study the process of feminization of the field but rather to analyze the constraints faced by women in their adventure to enter within this area which remains highly gendered. Because the image of sport is masculine, feminization appears as a process, the forms and meanings of which differ according to time and space. Indeed, the evolution of gender inequality cannot be analyzed in the same way as the social spheres in which they occur. It would be important to note that with the accession of women in the sport sector, the differentiation between sports practices of men and women has faded, but did not disappear completely, however.

There is always some form of segregation sometimes indirect and unconscious. The socially inferior position of women in modern societies is at the origin of the issue of gender-related differences. At the scientific agenda, it is registered as a problem serving for analyzing this position and for collecting data to highlight a kind of "silence" by the social sciences. It was considered that the feminization of sporting activities can be

thought of apart from the rest of society. The long exclusion of women from sport sector was not considered as one of the facets of a social system that traditionally built both sexes not only in opposed but also hierarchical groups.

The Body Image of Women and Sports: A Relationship of Opposition

In the Tunisian society, the social dynamics begins in the family where relationships are formed and dissolved. This is “the place for the exercise of the personalized power of pater-familias” (Chekir, 2000). According to Bouhdiba family provides “multiple procreative, educational, socializing, productive, aesthetic, magical, religious and other functions” (Bouhdiba, 1995). The traditional Tunisian family is essentially a patriarchal family where the father has the authority to organize and protect. In this family structure where everything works by hierarchical authority, women are in one way or another subject to the requirements imposed by its role as mother and mistress of the house. Girls are educated and prepared to this role from their young age. Consequently they go from the father to the husband’s authority. The point of view of society on the female body depends on the place of women in this society and the roles assigned to them. Le Breton assumed that “representations of the body and knowledge attained depend on a social status, a cultural reality, a vision of the world and amongst the latter a definition of the person” (Le Breton, 1990). The representations that the Tunisian woman depicts of her body are influenced by everything she has suffered throughout her life, traditional values based on the idea of chastity, the rules of good behavior for a girl, virginity and the separation of sexes. Now mixing sexes is prevalent in all areas and across the country. This probably reflects new social attitudes towards women and their bodies. These attitudes are tempered by some significant censorship of an image of the body still more or less dependent on annoying and frustrating traditional values and norms. The Tunisian family is mostly concerned by a challenging achievement, how it could be to educate a girl who would be both qualified and virgin. It follows that the question of the liberation of the female body and her re possession of a dimension of her being still dominated by male power.

It is certain that if women’s sport is a matter of ongoing debate, it is because this practice passes through the body, about which the sexual connotation comes before any other. The woman remains for the man a body and a sexual partner. This body reminds always and unconsciously the most dangerous sin man has committed the one that took him out of heaven and whose motive is sexual desire caused by the female body. Socio-cultural changes, important as they are, have not altered so much the vision of men over women, concerning her body.

This is can be explained by the education based on gender discrimination which made of the female body a matter arousing the un extinguished male curiosity. Women’s sport expresses a search for equality between the sexes which logically leads to the promotion of common corporeality and body styles turned more towards androgyny (Saint-Martin & Terret, 2005).

Being aware of this attitude, women behave bearing this in mind. The foundations upon which the image of the female body is drawn in Tunisian society are based on an Arab-Muslim culture which makes of it an almost sacred object which must be neither disclosed nor deliberately moved. Yet, Sport, is based on the free movement of the body. This made, inevitably,

the women’s sport more than problematic. Sports practices and women have always been a topic of debate. It is the body of the woman who lies behind the various forms of rejection of women’s sport. What is certain is that the body says the society. It is, as defined by Michel de Certeau, “a model of intelligibility, understanding, and each society has its body as it has its language” (De Certeau, 1982). It is through the body that social practices are constructed. They reflect the religious and cultural references that lead the bodily practices and decide their image and perception. Thus, despite the impact of the opening on the Western culture, Tunisian society draws its main bases on the body image derived from the Islamic religion which makes of the subject a taboo. Anyway, the theme of the body in itself is a very rich research theme that can be treated under many angles, both diverse and complementary. The body and sport are closely related especially when it comes to women’s sport. The female body is the link to the redefinition of the relationship between men and women and the two-sex model (Lacqueur, 1992).

Constraints in the Access of Women to the Sporting Field

The actual study explores the lived experiences from twenty young Tunisian women practicing a competitive sport. Its empirical objective is to determine socio cultural constraints in access of women to the physical practice based on the past experiences of these women in the sports field. Remind that the sample of a qualitative interview method is generally smaller than a quantitative questionnaire method size. Because the information gathered by maintenance are validated by the context and not by their probability of occurrence, given by information service may have a weight of information repeated several times in the questionnaires (Kaufman, 1996).

Thus, we interviewed 20 women in competitive sports. In this type of survey, the researcher may stop when it reaches the so-called “saturation point”—in other words, when the data collected made redundant from a number of interviews. This helped us to definitively determine the sample size

The Gender Approach: Class Analysis of Women’s Sport in Tunisia

The gender approach implies that we have to deal with issues concerning women by taking into account the differences between the biological specificities of men and women and their impact on the distribution of social roles between the sexes. It aims to understand the balance of power between men and women and how to intervene in case of injustice (Togo, 2003). The “gender” approach assumes, therefore, that we have to consider the different opportunities afforded for men and women, the roles socially assigned to them and the relationships between them. Sport is a social and cultural phenomenon in which social constructions of masculinity and femininity play a key role because we traditionally combine sports and sporting activities with the concept of “manhood”.

The first sociological studies dealt with the theme of women’s sports from the point of view of analysis rather than from a psychological angle and hardly dealt with the balance of power in the relationships between the sexes. They focused mainly on the attitudes of the family or school to athletic women (Hall, 1972). They were particularly interested in the per-

sonality traits of female athletes by focusing on women's motivations to invest in the sport. D. Harris speaks of the theory of sex roles on which she relies in arguing that if there were few women disposed to engage in sports, it is because they lived a conflict between their role as athletes and that of wife and mother. Meanwhile, the socialization theory raised the hypothesis of the dominant influence of mothers in the socialization of their daughters to explain the low participation in sports of the latter. These studies have all joined in considering that women and sports are two incompatible things (Oglesby, 1984) and called for a radical loading of sports organizations (Thompson, 2002).

For Nancy Thegerge the myth of physical frailty of women would be at the foundation of the institutionalization of gender differentiation in contemporary sport (Thegerge, 1989). Thus, the sport helps in the reproduction of gender inequality in society through a subtle ideological extension of the physical superiority of men to social superiority.

Starting from the 90s, feminist studies have dominated sociology of sport. They recorded an abundance of studies on gender relations and the role of sport in the construction of gender relations in society (Labege, 2004). The works of Foucault have exercised and continue to exercise a strong influence on feminist studies in the field of physical activity and sport. In fact, the particular social dynamics engendered by the growing presence of women makes of sport an affluent field for the study of the construction of gender identities as well as the analysis of the dynamic transformation in the balance of power in the relations in society.

The results of these studies show that the particular dynamics of social relations based on gender varies considerably according to the social, institutional, historical and spatial context. Finally post-modern inspired works have led to the recognition of sport as a cultural form with multiple meanings. Thus, gender is not a binary category and social identity is not a fixed data.

Research Questions and Methodological Framework

We need first to define the fundamental problem upon which the research is based and to determine the methodological framework in which it operates. The basic problem of the investigation raises the following question: if the Tunisian legislation opens before the woman all active areas of social life, then what are the constraints to access of women to the field of sports? It is then a question of understanding the nature of the difficulties of women's sports activities in an Arab Muslim society.

To answer this question, two theories are developed to try to identify the obstacles that reside behind the removal of Tunisian women from the sport sphere. They are based on a basic assumption that the education received by the Tunisian girl produced a social and individual identity impacted by persistent stereotypes.

The study sample consists of 20 girls aged between 18 and 25 years. They all a competitive sport and belong to different social classes. Our survey on women's sport in Tunisia is based on a qualitative approach, through semi-structured interviews. Before starting the actual survey, an ahead exploratory phase has allowed us to better know the world of sport in general and women's sports in particular. This is an inductive approach that consists in using empirical data to gradually construct the ob-

ject of research along with the data collection. This step, guided by an inductive approach that does not consider the field as an occasion of certification but rather the starting point of this line of questioning (Najar & Kerrou, 2007), allowed us to collect general information about the research topic. It is based on exploratory interviews made up of a limited number of questions.

The survey's main objective is to understand "the sport phenomenon" as a social construct. It aims therefore at making women and girls talk about their experiences and produce an "in situ" speech in order to analyze the reality of athletic woman in her field. This speech was made up from a series of semi-structured interviews. The methodological approach adopted in the interview is based on a type of interview very close to the comprehensive interview as defined by Jean-Claude Kaufman (Kaufman, 1996). This technique gives a certain freedom for both the researcher and the interviewee. It allows the first to take into account the specificity of each case studied, without being out of the research topic. It allows the second to engage in a dynamic conversation that allows her the freedom to go beyond the plain answer to the questions of the inter-viewer.

Bearing this logic in mind, the interview guide is far from being considered as a mold composed of standardized questions that must be asked to all interviewees in the same way and in the same order. It is instead a flexible guide allowing for the involvement of the interviewees who are considered as the main source of information and data. This leads to the production of a dialogue that is clearly distinguishable from the questionnaire. In the context of our present research, an interview protocol was administered to different individuals in our sample. It consists of a set of questions whose answers would help to elucidate the social constraints that athletic woman meets in her entourage.

The construction of the interview guide was made to allow, on the one hand, to compare the different answers to the same questions from all respondents and, on the other hand, taking into account the particularities of each subject (Kaufman, 1996). This does not prevent the researcher from asking specific questions to the persons concerned. Our methodological approach is in fact based mainly on customizing interview lines. This is why; all the questions developed in the interview guide are open questions. How they are made directs people interviewed in the wanted direction and allows creating a discussion and an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. This reminds us of one very interesting aspect of the interview which is an interlocutory journey and process (Blanchet & Gotman, 1992).

This investigative technique creates a situation of interaction between interviewer and interviewee. This interaction allows reconstructing some elements of the social reality (Najar & Kerou, 2007). Our goal is always to collect the maximum information that can be useful for our research and this, by making the women interviewed talk about their sporting experiences.

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion

For the entire study and the targeted public, the data collected from the interviews will be classified according to their content and to the initial research question. The themes will be related to gender-based constraints in the process of the access of Tunisian women to sport. These will be gender relations with

education, body, sport and the values of femininity. The selected data will be subject to analysis and interpretation before being discussed.

Data Analysis

In terms of analysis, the observation made in the field, combined with interviews provides information to determine the various obstacles faced by women in practicing sporting activities. The social values to which obeys the Tunisian girl as well as the education she undergoes and the socialization of sport as a masculine practice and a man's business.

Interpretation of Results

The interpretation focuses on every topic related to the target public of the research. The collected answers allow keeping hold of selected constraints on the four registers chosen for the entire study. It turns out that actresses face the same obstacles in practicing their sporting activities. The survey population shows that gender issues are heavily involved in the definition of female identity and in the functions assigned to her by the social environment.

Discussion

The discussion starts from the fact that in its modern forms, "sport is a cultural product of Western invention (Brohm, 1981), foreign to the field of social and economic experiences of Arab-Muslim culture societies (Errais, 1975; Ben Larbi, 1986; Fates, 1994) as is the case for women in the survey population. It is mainly based on the values and representations of gender to which the survey population is identifying that it releases the constraints faced by Tunisian athletic women. The analysis based on gender helps identifying barriers to women's sportsmanship.

1) The Patriarchal System

Through sport, seen as a form of independence and ownership of one's own personality, one's own body and the place it occupies in society, opens before the Tunisian woman a new area of freedom although constancy emerges. It is the persistence of patriarchal system. This is evident in the comments made by the girls interviewed.

When they talk about their beginnings in the field of sports, they all claim they would never have access to sport without the consent of their fathers. Borrmans (1977), EL Khayat (1985) and Bellhssen (1992) argue that the perseverance of a patriarchal system is remarkable in the Tunisian society. This system keeps women under conditions of statutory disregard. Meha, a young woman footballer said: "I was able to play sports because my dad agreed, without his consent, I could never have done it, as for Mum, she was neither for nor against; it was my father who decides in the family."

When it is not the father who opposes this, it's the elder brother. Nadia, a young girl who plays rugby for three years says: "At first, my brother was unyielding that I do sports, I go training secretly, I put on my sportswear underneath my clothes and I go with the consent of both my parents. He surprised me twice when returning from training, it puts him on his nerves, he even beat me so that I stop playing sports and my parents struggled to convince him that Sport is better than anything else. "One thing is certain, despite the advance in girls' education, wage labor for women, the realities of Tunisian women still

refer to the traditional model of patriarchy. Fidelity to the patrilineal ideology remains alive. "The authority of man is the scope of the evidence and the whole family follows the hierarchical rules unchanged until today." (Dujardin, 1986; Marzouki, 1993). Man continues to ensure the survival of the family and founds its organization. A woman's leaving the households to participate in the family budget by accessing different areas of the labor market and wage labor has not led to a real change inside the family.

Thus, the compromises of the sporting field are very difficult to take. The patriarchal ideology, deeply internalized by ancient traditions, has not abandoned its favorite place which is the woman's body. The athletic woman is facing both her traditional social status and unusual situations inherent to sporting activities. The result is usually a set of contradictions that a society cannot tolerate without leading to individual and family conflicts.

a) Gender stereotypes

This is a factor raised by the interviewees. The different testimonies collected emphasize that prejudices and stereotypes are elements that come rushing into the folds of behavior and providing a source of strength that pushes toward the exclusion of women from the sports scene indirectly and by means of implicit ways. Young girls interviewed spoke about sports scenes and moments of their careers that emphasize the importance of this factor. They spoke of this with great bitterness and disappointment. Listen to Ahlem (a young athletic girl, aged 18) stating: "Prejudice is the very first obstacle. Oh my! This is a problem of mindset. Tunisians continue to say that the sports field is not the concern of women. Unfortunately, it is still believed that the woman can be best only at home as a mother and as a wife."

In the same line of thought, Soumaya (footballer, aged 19 and terminal student) said: "Ah! Obstacles! Obstacles are the mindset. I think the mindset is due to a traditional heritage that makes the women themselves, ourselves, still dependent on a certain social status whatever our level of intellectual development and whatever our beliefs."

As for Marwa judoka aged 19, she mentions examples of social attitudes towards women's sport: "The neighbors have never let me go. When I get back home late from training, they express to my mother, reprimands and remarks such as: how could you allow your daughter to play sports and come back home so late in the evening, are you not scared for her? ... Although convinced that the sport is better than many other things that girls my age can do, Mum is much influenced by the attitudes of others to the point of begging me repeatedly to leave the sport. My sporting activities are a subject of endless discussions in the neighborhood where I live."

Although Nour (young karate expert, 18 years and practicing competitive sports for four years) has not met real obstacles since she started doing competitive sport, she shares, however the opinion which considers the mindset as the main obstacle in the field of sport. She said: "Despite the apparent social change, people continue to divide up practices between women and men, sport is placed in the tribe of men and therefore, in this field, women are frowned upon by society." These testimonies revolve around some elements related to the antagonism of values (Weber, 1965) that refer to the continuous implementation of contradictions within the social structure. All that is part of what our interviewees referred to by the terms "prejudice," "stereotypes" and "mentality" is, in fact, just the expression of

social resistance emanating from what Balandier calls “failures of change” (Balandier, 1986). The observation of social practices still shows “survivals” belonging to different historical contexts and struggling against the innovative behavior and new forms of legitimacy.

2) Education and Socialization

Socialization is the acquisition and internalization of ways of doing, thinking and acting specific to the group in which the individual belongs. It is essential for the adaptation of the individual to the environment (Rock, 1968). The education received by the young Tunisian child justifies the social hierarchy between the sexes by a natural order and by a supernatural organization. The girls are under enormous pressure to respect family tradition based on patriarchy, the inferiority and subordination of women to men and male honor based on the control of female sexuality (Tillon, 1974). Most of the testimonies given by the interviewees refer to a fundamental element associated with both primary and secondary socialization which corroborates what Goffman calls “institutional reflexivity” which is the action of the society on the sexual division of social practices. It is a differential socialization of girls and boys. Indeed, the position of sport is a social position where men and women can actually put forward the difference in natural representation claimed by the society to be theirs (Goffman, 2002).

According to Goffman, sexual differences are included in social institutions to ensure the accuracy of “our social arrangements.” However, the sport is based on inequality, and thus does not prepare the girl’s participation in sports and physical activity practices. On this point, one example is the case of Manel, a 18 years old gymnast whose words resemble those of many others interviewed, she said: “From a very young age, the girl is oriented toward things that she must learn to do: cleaning, cooking... from childhood, we teach the girl how to become a mother, a good cook. Even when she studies, or when she works, she is fully involved in household chores. All mothers make it sure that in their girls’ education they teach them how to handle household chores and those of motherhood”. What our interviewee says, confirms that inequality and discrimination based on gender is a real fact from which the girl suffers at a young age. Grown up, she already has in mind the image of the woman she should be. A self-image that will be decisive for the choices she has to do in her life as well as the activities she will practice and the areas to which she has access.

Beyond the social construct, gender reveals, therefore, power relations between men and women as part of a “mechanism of arrangement” under the Anglo-Saxon sociology and “adjustment mechanism” of after the French sociologists. This arrangement ranks sport in the men’s category. Consequently, the access of women in this area is perceived as a violation of the social order. Because the idea of women’s sport refers to a conception of the individual who has acquired a certain autonomy with respect to the family and the society to which one belong (Khmailia Mohamed et al., 2011). As for Marwa (athlete, 19 years), she said: “as soon as the girl approaches the age of puberty and begins to have noticeable physiognomic changes in her body, monitoring of her gestures and movements increases. Instructions from parents on the proper way to act and behave (especially mothers) become more severe on the way she dresses, walks, watches, sits, talks etc.”

3) The Physical Obstacle

The body is dependent on constraints imposed by the environment; it also is the reflection and the receptacle of society

(Andrieu, 2008). It is both a permanent construction and reconstruction. It only produces and receives standards, messages and complex codes imposed by society. In analyzing the causes of the withdrawal of women from the sporting field, we must consider “the passive body model of femininity (Falcoz & Koebel, 2005). The identity of gender draws its meaning from collective consciousness that designates an individual belonging to a male or female universe, referring mainly to one’s body. Thus, gender is seen as a collective lifestyle (Mathieu, 1991). Like many other areas, the sport is a mirror of the social. It cannot escape the existence of a gender binarity that continues to enhance their femininity to the girls and to boys their masculinity. Despite the social changes registered at all levels, it seems that the representation of the female body always sends back for primarily sexual connotations. The weakness of women is often based on her fragile body weakened by social representations that put her under the control of men (Borrmans, 1977; El Khayat, 1985; Bessis & Belhassen, 1992).

According to the social norms, the female body should be protected from all forms of aggression even the visual. The woman is considered to be too weak to protect herself. That is why her “weakness” requires the vigilance of all the male members of her social circle. Manel, a young footballer said: “during games, my brother escorted me to observe my gestures, after the game, he scolds me and orders me not to do more of this or that gesture. Sometimes he fights with boys who make comments about my body.” The perpetuation of this system lies, in fact, on the belief that it is the only possible social order, which can ensure the woman protection, respectability and honor. It has, therefore, a function of stabilizing the social and family group (Tillon, 1966). The modeling of the body is determined by the society (Le Breton, 1985). Corporeity normalizes the body uses whether it is a man’s body or a woman’s body (Bouhdiba, 1986). The “core” (Abric, 1988) of cultural representations is embodied in the traditional norms and religious laws whose influence gives a precise meaning to the representation of the woman and her body, a mosaic and ruffled body (Peirot, 1991).

Le Breton assumed that “representations of the body and the knowledge which they get in touch with depend on a social status, a cultural reality, a vision of the world, and within the latter, a definition the individual (Le Breton, 1991).

Thus, the representations produced by the Tunisian women of their bodies are tainted with everything they have suffered throughout their lives, traditional values such as chastity which is translated into “good behavior” dictating to the girl, from her young age, her movements and gestures. Indeed, based on our interviewees’ testimonies, we noted a persistence of traditional models as to how to treat the male body and especially the female body. Indeed, apart from socially imposed physical models, differences in behavior and attitudes further strengthen the boundaries between a man’s body and a woman’s body, perpetuating stereotypes of the traditional division of roles and social functions. The survival of the patriarchal hierarchy seems to depend on the identification of members of society to separate models of a man’s body and a woman’s body (Bourdieu, 1999). Education of Tunisian girls is impregnated by modes of behavior of which the repressive standards of sexuality and body avoidance are the basic principles (Bouhdiba, 1986). Adherence to sexual representations of the body finds its echo in the “dual active/passive and therefore in reactions to sporting phenomenon” (Tlili, 2002).

This study has shown that women's access to sport is constrained by gender discrimination fueled by maintaining stereotypes about the social role of women. Indeed, they are inadvertently shelved from physical practices that are traditionally for men. Women's sport, although officially recognized in Tunisia, is often hampered by socio-cultural constraints. Thus, women's sport reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes. This is an excellent indicator of the way in which, within a single institution, individuals are required to produce signs whose gender meaning is immediately perceived and decrypted by them or those who see (Roger and Terret 2005). Despite the profound changes experienced by the Tunisian society since independence until today, sports continue to be considered a male-dominated practice, even if this fact is not clearly expressed. The patriarchal system that persists within the Tunisian family is reflected in the various forms of sport reluctance to access of women to competitive sport through thought patterns opposing men and women (Neuveu & Guionnet, 2004). The image of the sporty woman in Tunisian society carries with it a social organization based on the dominance of masculine and able to influence the relation between the woman's own body and the activities she practices. The patriarchal system that allocates functions and activities by gender, stereotypes that build social images, socialization which teaches the individual what society expects of him, the image of the body of the woman who looks like a sexual object, these are the constraints to access of women to the sporting field. While the resistance expressed against the very principle of women's access to sport decreased, it did not disappear completely. Attitudes favoring women's sports continue to be theoretical and negative. Theoretical because they are limited at recognizing women's right to access to sport without actually translating this attitude with facts and actions. And negative because they provide no real effort to allow women to enjoy this right. This is often explained by what Liotard and Terret call "systems of male domination" that force women to make choices that "keep them in dependency or impose their sacrifices." (Liotard & Terret, 2005) Statements of the interviewed women show that Tunisian women still encounter socio-cultural constraints in its access to the field of sport and physical processes. It would be useful for them to deploy strategies that challenge the legitimacy of the already established social order capable of finding definitive and racial solutions to such situations.

Conclusion

The gender parameter allows to analyze the socio-cultural constraints of women sportsmanship. Thus, has it not revealed that sportsmanship requires roles and models that are positioned at double polarity fundamentally contradictory? Social and sexual differentiation of roles, binding socialization from which the girls suffer in the family and the relationship that they nurture with their own bodies are the factors that influence their involvement in sport. As a concept analysis of social relations between the sexes (Wollstonecraft, 2005), gender elucidates social hindrances in women's access to sport in Tunisia. Did not Simone De Beauvoir (1949) say "One is not born a woman, one becomes it"? It is in the socialization that we can find explanations for the low participation of women in sports. The education received by the Tunisian girl sits on the incompatibility between sport and physical and social feminine nature. Thus, sport contributes to the construction of gender. The latter

is, in fact, the forms of social expressions of femininity and masculinity, and the signs and symbolic practices that reflect a sense of belonging and find a type of relationship between sexes or within each sex.

Consequently, the general trend among the young Tunisian athletic women suffers a traditional order of patriarchy that has always prevailed (Berque, 1979), with female body stereotypes of "go against models of Western societies, those who are likely to let the bodies out of the shadow of the home, to make it more active, slimmer and more tanned (Louveau, 1981), which is radically opposed to the world of men in the outside," "the one of the public life and the great clear and sunny outdoors, often considered to be place of immoral practices (Bourdieu, 1980)". This cultural representation that has long survived sustainable social, economic and political changes (Bouhdiba, 1986) sheds light on the position of women in the social system.

The different reactions that enliven the thoughts of these girls have allowed us to highlight the attributes that are naturally assigned to sex. It also allowed us to understand that the female and male are not immutable and intangible realities, but rather social constructions. This construction seems to us well rooted in the Tunisian society since all the testimonies of the public interviewed recognize the social structure based on the division of tasks according to gender. Indeed, on the basis of biological characteristics, they were rooted patterns of thinking dividing men and women (Neuveu & Guionnet, 2004). By adopting such approach, our research focused on the analysis of social constraints of women in the sports sector. Nowadays, this model reflects a blatant contradiction with the enrollment rate of women and their access to all areas of the workforce.

This work also helps to provide analysis and response elements on a contemporary social problem that affects the role of women in the Tunisian society. A question has been rested heavily after the revolution of January 14, 2011. It provides food for thought for social workers dealing with these issues of social functions and roles according to gender.

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