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Girls in Football, Boys in Dance. Stereotypization Processes in Socialization of Young Sportsmen and Sportswomen

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Abstract The article at hand presents and discusses the issue of gender stereotypization strategies during the socialization process of children practicing atypical gender sports, which is perceived as inappropriate to their gender. The outcomes of two qualitative studies among girls playing football and boys practicing ballroom dancing focus on various types of social influence of their families, coaches, and peers. The importance of parents' role in reproducing or challenging stereotypical gender roles is outlined in the text. The strategies to which the children participating in atypical gender sports are subjected to include: stereotypization, destereotypization, apparent destereotyping, and hidden stereotyping. The benefits of participating in atypical gender sports are also discussed, particularly in terms of social and psychological profits.

Keywords Sociology of the Body; Stereotypization Processes; Socialization of Young Sportsmen and Sportswomen; Atypical Gender Sports

Sport has for ages been perceived as a “masculine” area of social life and was dominated by men (Hargreaves 1994; Dworkin and Messner 2002). In the 18th and 19th century, it was inappropriate for a woman to practice any kind of sport, due to possible changes in her appearance and a risk to her reproductive abilities (Vertinsky 1990; 1994). This started to change in 20th century, but still, there are many stereotypes concerning participation of wom-

en (and men) in different sports. Gender stereotypes states that, “masculine” sports, such as boxing, MMA, weightlifting. While “feminine” sports embody beauty, lightness, delicacy, and lack of hardness (Metheny 1965; Koivula 1995; 2001; Jakubowska 2014), such as dancing, figure skating, artistic gymnastics, and synchronized swimming, where direct physical contact is not required. Moreover, these sports represent the illusion of effortlessness (Len-

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skyj 2003:89; Jakubowska 2016) and are perceived quite often as an art or an entertainment rather than a "real" sport.

That does not have to be the truth, since a lot of hard training and strength are needed to perform, for example, a dance or gymnastic figures. Also masculine sports require a lot of features that are perceived as "feminine," like precision in boxing or playfulness and finesse to perform football tricks. The division between "masculine" and "feminine" sports is strongly culturally constructed. Sports are not being perceived the same way as appropriate for men or women all around the globe. Football (or soccer) is perceived in North America (USA and Canada) as mainly a feminine sport, where, at the same time, the most masculine sport activity one

can observe worldwide is a New Zealand dance called haka, performed before matches in other disciplines of sport.¹

Despite many years of participation of both genders in different sports and cultural differences in perceiving certain disciplines, there are still various stereotypes of who should and who should not practice them. In spite of the fact that women practice all sports disciplines, the perception of sports as "feminine" and "masculine" has not changed since Metheny's study conducted in the 60s of the 20th century (Hardin and Greer 2009:22). This subject has also been adopted by

¹ The variety of sport games before which the haka is performed may be seen in "The New Zealand Haka across Many Different Sports" available on Youtube.com. Direct link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0x21u-GzI8c>. Retrieved April 20, 2018.

the popular culture. As an example, one may refer to two movies that illustrate this issue. The first is "Bend it like Beckham," it tells a story of a girl of Indian descent, grown up in a traditional hindu family in London, who starts playing football. The other movie is "Billy Elliot," a story of a boy, from a working class family, who is supposed to participate in boxing classes, but chooses ballet instead. Both main characters have to challenge gender stereotypes related to the perception of a particular sport.

The aim of this article is to compare stereotypization processes present during the socialization of children and teenagers in atypical gender sports such as football perceived as a "masculine" sport and in a ballroom dance, perceived as a "feminine" sport.² Both authors of this article are interested in various social aspects of embodiment and have carried out two independent researches. The first of them was focused on the practices and discourses of gender differentiation in sport (Jakubowska 2014) and the second one studied the social world of ballroom dancing (Byczkowska 2012). Specifics of bodily experiences in both disciplines demonstrate many similarities. One of these similarities: socialization and stereotypization of boys and girls in atypical gender roles is presented in this text.

Theoretical Framework

The division between "masculine" and "feminine" sports is based on socio-cultural patterns of femi-

² Ballroom dancing is a dance genre which is strictly institutionalized, put into rules, which makes it more similar to other kinds of sport than to other genres of dance. It is also called dancesport.

ninity and masculinity. They reflect the features perceived as feminine or masculine and set what is appropriate for girls and women or for boys and men. This division is based on the social construction of a gendered body, the dichotomy between feminine and masculine body. The first should be slim, beautiful, and delicate and the second—strong, muscled, and resistant to pain and punches received in a direct fight. Therefore, women and men are encouraged to develop different sport skills and practice different sport activities (Messner 2002; Wasch 2005). A significant role in this gender division reproduction is played by a socialization process during which attitudes towards physical activity and choices of a sport are being formed.

This dimension of socialization can be described using Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus as a process of production of embodied dispositions and taste. Both are gendered, built on masculine and feminine dichotomy, and express individual traits, as well as values and features specific to gender (Pfister 2013). Boys and girls internalize specific ways of behavior which correspond to gender related social expectations, which afterwards influence their further involvement and attitudes towards sport (Coakley 1990:192-197; Hargreaves 1994).

The process of sports socialization is mainly based on gender stereotypes. Those can be defined as generalized beliefs about the features and competences of men and women in a particular culture and society (Eagly 1987). They are reproduced by the process of socialization, education, mass media, religion, art, et cetera. Deaux and Lewis (1984) define gender stereotypes by four components: personality traits,

gender role, physical appearance, and occupations. They influence not only the way men and women are perceived but also the tasks and jobs appropriate to them. According to the stereotypes, jobs where care and socialization abilities are required are more suitable for women, while men are better in jobs requiring either physical strength or leadership skills. Men and women are also described by a set of traits, for example, activity, independence, courage are perceived as masculine, whereas empathy, fragility, tenderness are perceived as feminine (Bem 1974; Deaux and Lewis 1984). At the same time, both genders should embody the physical characteristics seen as ideal to their gender.

Gender stereotypes influence the perception of gender appropriateness of sports disciplines, as well as self-perceptions, motivations, and sport participation (Chalabaev et al. 2013:136-137). Girls feel less competent in sport and sport itself has a lower value for them (Fredricks and Eccles 2005; Slater and Tiggemann 2011). These attitudes are created among others by the parents who play a key role in the transmission of gender stereotypes (Fredricks and Eccles 2005). In this process, one can observe the influence of other significant actors of children environment, that is, teachers (Chalabaev et al. 2009) or peers (Wasch 2005).

Previous studies revealed that parents have different attitudes towards girls and boys (Messner 2000; Raudsepp and Viira 2000; Mennesson 2011; Łuszczynska 2012; Pfister 2013; Bertrand, Mennesson, and Court 2014). The boys are much more frequently encouraged into active behaviors and sports, while the activities which do not require

physical effort (or seem like it) are proposed to the girls. They listen more often to recommendations about being cautious and attentive during a play. Parents also provide different sports equipment and encourage the children to practice sports “appropriate” to their gender. Therefore, the significant others (parents, teachers, and coaches), as well as the media and commercial marketing, create distinct attitudes of girls and boys towards sports. As a consequence, they “develop the preferences for certain sports in accordance with gendered social norms, values, and expectations” (Pfister 2013:48).

In this context, it is important and interesting to analyze the process of sports socialization in the case of children who practice sport stereotypically perceived as inappropriate to their gender. The issue of atypical gender on the sports field has been analyzed among others by Christine Mennesson and co-authors (Thouault and Mennesson 2004; Mennesson 2011; Bertrand et al. 2014). Although in the French studies the majority of children practiced activities which corresponded to their gender, a particular attention was drawn to the families in which children practiced “opposite” sports activities. Studies revealed that “familiar sports heritage” (parents’ sports activities and their attitudes towards sport) plays a crucial role in children’s choices. However, one should take into account how this heritage is transmitted and “updated” (changed) over time in family relations. The analysis of the gathered data emphasized also an important role of cultural capital—the families with a higher capital were more willing to accept and support the choices of gender “inappropriate” sports, and for the children themselves the social

costs of these decisions were lower. Whereas, for other parents, it was important that sport will allow their children to develop their femininity and masculinity (Mennesson 2011; Bertrand et al. 2014). The second indicated factor that makes the parents less attached to a traditional gender division in sport was personal, particular experience, as illustrated by the example of a feminist mother (Mennesson 2011). Therefore, in socialization into sports, the family role is crucial. Parents can both reproduce and challenge gender stereotypes in sport.

Gendered Character of Sport in Poland

The statistical data reveal that sport in Poland fits into the division between “feminine” and “masculine” sports. Among the amateurs, the sports with the highest ratio of men are: football, basketball, table tennis, chess, snooker, bridge, skiing (including snowboarding), athletics, fishing, swimming, and strength sports. In contrast, women dominate in dance, aerobics, gymnastics, yoga, fitness, jogging, and nordic walking.³ The percentage of sportswomen practicing in professional dance and football clubs also confirms this division. In 2014, women constituted only 5% (19765 out of 378600) of football players, 64% (1813 out of 2811) of practitioners of ballroom dancing, 81% (5848 out of 7115) of sports dancers. However, it should be noted that female participation in football has increased during the last years. Moreover, the only team sport that is more popular among women is

volleyball and there are more women playing football than, for example, basketball or handball. The number of women and girls practicing football is similar to their number in the athletics and a little higher than in swimming. Interesting to notice is that the number of women in dance sports is increasing.

Another important issue that the statistics reveal is a significant percentage of young girls (juniors) among female participants.

In football, only 14% of female players are senior players, however, in dancing it is a little more than 20%. A higher percentage of young girls playing football can be explained by two main reasons. A growing popularity of female football can be observed. There are more football clubs where girls can practice football, female teams participate in the biggest football tournaments organized for young players and achieve some success, like the victory of the U17 national team in the European Championship in 2013. On the other hand, a lot of Polish players finish their career early (quite often after graduation) because they are not able to make a living with the money they receive from clubs and the football federation (Jakubowska 2014).

However, it should be noted that in spite of women's growing participation in so-called masculine sports, Polish fans perceive sports as “feminine” or “masculine” in the same stereotypical way as sports fans in other countries (Koivula 2001; Hardin and Greer 2009). As “feminine” sports they list: artistic gymnastics, synchronized swimming, or, to a smaller extent, figure skating. As “masculine” sports they

³ The data refer to declared skills of performing a given sport. Source: Central Statistical Office of Poland, Department of Social Research and Conditions of Living (2013). Participation of Poles in sport and physical recreation in 2012, Warsaw.

indicate: boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, and football (Jakubowska 2014). The permanent character of this division can be perceived as one of the main barriers of women's inclusion in football, as well as men's into dance. It may also be caused by the fact that when it comes to sports participation, the only thing that may be evaluated is human body and its skills. It is discouraging for kids and teenagers when their changing body is perceived as not feminine or masculine enough to practice a certain sport.

Methodology

In the ballroom dancing research, grounded theory methodology has been used (Strauss and Glaser 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Konecki 2000; Charmaz 2006). During the research, 16 interviews had been conducted (some were photo elicited), 4 video elicited interviews, 5 day-long observations on ballroom dancing competitions, 339 analyzed photographs, 12 videos, an autobiography of a ballet

Table 1. Participation in sport dance and football altogether and among women.

Discipline	2004			2006			2008			2010			2014		
	Total	women	%												
sport dance	1812	1190	66%	3783	2405	64%	3780	2714	72%	2802	2021	72%	7175	5848	81%
football	197063	2207	1%	236821	3022	1%	237064	4344	2%	239578	3562	1%	378600	19765	5%

Source: Self-elaboration based on data from the Center of Sport and Tourism Statistics, Regional Research Center of Podkarpackie Voivodeship (2015). *Physical culture in Poland in the years 2013 and 2014*. Warsaw-Rzeszow and Center of Sport and Tourism Statistics, Regional Research Center of Podkarpackie Voivodeship (2013). *Physical culture in Poland in the years 2011 and 2012*. Warsaw-Rzeszow.

* The data concerning participation in ballroom dancing have not been gathered until 2014, therefore it is not included in this table.

Table 2. Participation of girls in junior teams.

2014		
	Total	Girls
Football	19765	17037
Sport dance	5848	4551
Ballroom dance	1813	1380

Source: Center of Sport and Tourism Statistics, Regional Research Center of Podkarpackie Voivodeship (2015). *Physical culture in Poland in the years 2013 and 2014*. Warsaw-Rzeszow.

dancer (Bittner 2004), a radio audition, and the statute of Polish Dance Association. The analyzed data have led the researcher to theoretical conclusions, some of which are presented in this article. Symbolic interactionism was the theoretical background of this research (Blumer 1969; Charmaz 2006), particularly social worlds theory (Strauss 1984; Clarke 1990), Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1965) phenomenological perspective, Goffman's (1974) dramaturgical perspective, and Nelson's (2001) dreamwork. Apart from an ethnographic description of the social world of ballroom dancing, there was constructed a theory on social aspects of embodiment, concerning such phenomena as institutionalization, career constructing, adapting dancer's body to the requirements of the social world, non-verbal embodied communication, spatial aspects of dance, and the socialization of children in ballroom dancing, and many others (Byczkowska 2009; 2012).

As the theoretical framework of the study about practices and discourses of gender differentiation in sport, Nancy Fraser's (2003; 2005) concept of justice has been used. During the research, 43 interviews had been conducted with female athletes, coaches, as well as representatives of sports clubs and federations from 5 sports disciplines (football, boxing, running, shooting, and chess), 3 group interviews with sports fans (both men and women, 25-45 years old), and 10 interviews with representatives of the feminist environment. Also, a large number of secondary data concerning, for example, sports participation, media coverage, Olympics, and sports regulations have been analyzed. Apart from socialization into sport other issues were discussed, like: Polish sport history, media coverage of women and

men competitions, financial differences, women's participation in sports organizations, et cetera.

Girls in Football, Boys in Dance—Findings and Discussion

The Importance of Parents' Role

Parents of children practicing dance or football (and most probably any other sport, see: Kremer-Sadlik, Jeemin, and Kim 2007) and other members of their families are usually quite engaged in these activities. Their role in career constructing is vital, as lack of help may seriously slow the child's development or even make it impossible to last. Mainly the parents decide whether the child will participate in trainings (Mennesson 2011; Bertrand et al. 2014), they sponsor it by paying for trainings and lessons, participation in tournaments, and all the necessary equipment. Parents usually also interfere with the coaches' role:

- How are you getting along with the parents?
- Badly. Well, you know, we have to get along well. Without them, it wouldn't be possible. [male ballroom dance instructor, ex-dancer, 45-years-old]

Parents, as well as the coaches, are the most influential persons for a child's psychological features, some of which are incredibly important during the beginning and development of a sport career. These features are responsibility, perseverance, and hard work, discipline, openness. If parents concentrate on supporting the development of these features in their child, it is more probable that they will be better prepared for severe competition, for example, in ballroom dancing:

It's a sport, it's a sport for them. It's like a boxing ring. A furious twelve-year-old boy runs into a changing room, he didn't manage to win, he rips of his tail-coat, his shirt, throws it all on the floor, and he falls into hysterics. There his daddy enters, "Don't worry, son, next time you will kick his ass"...I think that's the problem, they [parents] treat it like competition, not upbringing, but competition...if it was more an art...well, first, second, third this always counts, but now it's the most important thing in it. And it evolves in a bad direction. [male ballroom dance instructor, ex-dancer, 45-years-old]

Parents' engagement and support may be in the child's favor when parents use their resources to help the upgrowing career. However, sometimes it may be problematic, if it causes the child's stress, for example, when the parent is overly enthusiastic and has high expectations (Nunomura and Santos Oliveira 2013:6, 8).

If parents are not convinced that atypical gender sport is a good choice for their child, they would probably engage less, and therefore they would not pay much attention on developing the child's psychological features. A similar role is played by parents in the social world of ballet. Mary Lorentz Dietz (1994:68-69) calls it "ballet parents." This term concerns parents who encourage, or even force, their children to constantly increase their engagement, and have a leading role in decision-making about their career course. This is possible, since children in ballet, ballroom dancing, and football start their career and serious trainings at age 6-8 years.

I can say that, for me, as a coach, because I have been working with children for 7 years, parents' participation

in their children's sports activities is very important. In the past, when we were participating in tournaments, for example, "From the backyard to the stadium—Tymbark Cup," the parents were not very interested in it. Nowadays, during home, but also away matches, the parents are always present. There are 20 girls here and it happens that a mother comes, a father, a grandmother, a grandfather, a sister, a brother, and sometimes there are 50 people who are standing and cheering. This is cool, but also it is something new because parents used to be less interested. Today, when we are at a camp, I am not calling parents numerous times like it was previously, but they call themselves to get some information. Let's be honest, parents of children born in 2001, 2002 are much younger and, as a consequence, more open and have different perceptions [than older generations]. Without a doubt, based on working with children's experience, one can see that the world's view has changed. [former female football player and clubs' coach]

Of course, the problem does not refer only to atypical, but also to typical gender sports:

Parents have a very big influence. It happens that a child really wants to play. I have this case now. There are two boys in my class and they want to play football, but their mother keeps saying: "You are not doing this because you have homework to do," or: "You will not manage to do it, you will play wrong." [former female football player, children and youth coach]

Strategies of (De)Stereotypization of Children in Atypical Gender Sports

Four categories of strategies which shape the actions and narrations of all social actors (parents, coaches,

and the children themselves) involved in the process of socialization in atypical gender sports have emerged after analyzing interviews about the perception of atypical gender roles in sport. These strategies are: stereotyping, destereotyping, apparent destereotyping, and hidden stereotyping. They highly influence the career path (Hughes 1997) and often decide whether the child continues their participation in a particular sport, in this case—football or dancing. Usually more than one may be observed, and sometimes all four categories are present in a child's social environment. They appear and interweave in various phases of a child's career and have different importance to their career development. The dominating, at a certain period of time, strategy depends on interactions between social actors, the most important, between coaches and parents.

The first distinguished strategy is stereotypization. It refers to all actions undertaken by social actors, which reinforce the traditional division between “masculine” and “feminine” sports. However, this strategy is not limited to the issues of physical activity but also refers to psychological and social aspects of traditional socialization of children.

The second strategy—destereotypization, refers to actions based on an assumption of gender neutrality in sports. Actors representing such attitudes would usually deny gender specificity of a certain sport and act neutrally towards both genders participating in the activity.

The last two strategies, apparent destereotyping and hidden stereotyping, refer to actions that encourage both genders to participate in a sport activ-

ity, regardless of its connotation. However, they are based on a stereotypical assumption that a gender specificity for football or ballroom dancing exists, and participation in atypical gender sport may have some benefits for a child. These two strategies often appear together, as they are both based on the same stereotypical assumption. They will be therefore described jointly.

These four strategies' framework is not based on actor's approach declaration only but on actions concerning participation in a certain sport activity as well. Both authors have conducted their research on the participation of young people in sports, therefore, the framework is based on a rich source of data from interviews, as well as observations. The similarities of socialization processes and stereotypization of children in atypical gender sports have lead us to create four categories, which exist in both types of sports. A more precise description is illustrated by the citations of the listed strategies presented below.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping refers to all practices and opinions of the social actors, up to which certain sports (as mentioned above football, boxing, ballroom dance) are ascribed to one particular gender and should not be practiced by another gender. This would mainly involve successful and unsuccessful attempts to discourage children from participating in an atypical sport, such as parents' argumentation that girls who play football have a masculine figure, crooked legs, bruises, and are getting sweaty. When asked whether there are instances of girls wishing to prac-

tice football but their parents will not permit it, one football coach responded:

Yes, it often happens. I had a few cases like this. And the worst thing is when parents say that the girl will have bowed legs because of practicing football. [female football player and children coach]

When it comes to boys who want to dance, the argumentation involves general effeminacy (of body, figure, and gestures) and reluctance to use decorated outfits. The problem of reluctant attitude of the fathers towards their sons' participation in dancing has been described by Dietz (1994:72-73) in her article about ballet. As the image of a ballet dancer is consistent with a stereotypical image of woman, male dancers have to face homosexual stereotypization. This stereotypization causes their fathers to think that dance may "make" their sons homosexual (see also: Olszewski 2008:74, 78). Studies also show that this is an issue for other atypical gender sports like rhythmic gymnastics. Boys from working class families, where division of labor (masculine-public-technical work and feminine-private-domestic work), engage in a sport activity which is in contrary to their habitus and expectations of their fathers, but not of their mothers (Chimot and Louveau 2010:441-442).

The stereotypization of gender roles in dance has also another aspect. Ballroom dancing, as dancing in heterosexual pairs, shapes gender roles and inter-gender relations at a very young age. What is more, the relations are much more stereotypical than in the "real world." What we mean is, for example, very skimpy dresses worn by teenage girls, wearing high

heels, being "presented" by the male partner. At the same time, boys are encouraged to play a dominant role in the pair, take responsibility for the pair's movement. The effect is in quite an early creation of masculine or feminine identity among the dancers (in contrary to the identity of a girl or boy).

The stereotyping concerns not only children but also coaches. Female football coaches experience a lot of distrust in their competence. When it comes to male ballroom dance coaches, the main stereotypization concerns their suspected homosexuality. In both cases, the main strategy of dealing with this problem is openly communicating and informing of the facts, like in the examples below:

When it happens that a woman becomes a coach, one can observe [the parents'] resistance. How come? And, there are a lot of questions: "Do you play football?" "Did you graduate an appropriate high school?" "Do you know something about football?" And, when I talk about my experience, the parents are quite shocked and start to apologize. And then, when they see how I conduct my trainings, that I know something about this, and I am able to trap and pass a ball, she plays football! [former female football player, children and youth coach]

[Fathers sometimes say] "What, are you raising my boy into a faggot?!" Mister, I have a wife, I have a child, I like women, what are you talking about? Right? [male ballroom dance instructor, ex-dancer, 45-years-old]

Stereotyping also has its active form. It refers to all the situations when parents force their children to

perform a gender stereotypical sport, mainly to fulfill their ambitions. For example, one football coach said that contrary to girls, boys are pressed to play football:

in the case of boys it is the opposite. The boys do not want to play, but the parents force them to do this because they have some ambitions, mainly their dads. When the boy is screaming, the father slaps him and forces him onto the pitch. [male football coach]

Destereotyping

The second category, destereotyping, refers to actions undertaken by social actors, which are based on an assumption of gender neutrality in sports. This mainly involves giving girls access to stereotypically masculine sports and treating children equally, regardless of their gender. The strategy chosen mainly by coaches includes, for example, presenting a particular child as an example of a talented participant or a player. The citation below shows the situation of a girl football player:

This girl, she has been practicing the second year with me. Jagódka, she is better, at least at skills level, than some boys who are training with me. She does not have bowed legs, she is not bruised, has long hair. She deals with the football excellently. And, I have tried to use her as an example to convince parents to give their daughters a chance to play football. It is possible to reconcile school and football. But, parents say no and, as a consequence, a child also says no. Parents' influence is big. [former female football player, children and youth coach]

Another example of this strategy is to present the values of a certain sport for the child, mainly by emphasizing its gender neutrality and the nonsense of gender stereotypes in sport. This strategy does not appear as often as the other three, and is usually presented by coaches who practiced an atypical gender sport.

Apparent Destereotyping / Hidden Stereotyping

Apparent destereotyping / hidden stereotyping is another category including situations when a social actor uses argumentation or undertakes actions which encourage a child/children to participate in an atypical gender sport, but are based on the assumption that the sport itself is improper to a child's gender. In this case, the trainings are to a smaller extent perceived as an acquisition of a particular sports skills, but mainly as a chance for general physical development, education, or play. This would include situations when a particular sport (e.g., football) is presented by the coach (and sometimes parents) as not a "real" (male) football, but gender neutral sport with a use of ball as an attribute.

Now we want to start with the girls' recruitment and we want to present football as something healthy and say that due to football, children have body conditioning development. Football is only a tool. And, in the future, one can assume whether a girl will become a player or not. But, if you tell the parents that it is only football training, there is no chance, even after a three-hour conversation, they will not believe that everything will be alright, that nothing wrong will happen and their daughter will not have bowed legs and will not become a tomboy. [former female football player, children and youth coach]

I think that we should present football from this perspective that there is a girl, she can wear high heels, a skirt, she has painted nails, and she is also a football player. In this way, we can open parents' eyes that football is nothing wrong, that it is a normal sport discipline, like, for example, volleyball. [former female football player, children and youth coach]

Apparent destereotyping / hidden stereotyping may also have a lighter form. The atypical gender sport is accepted as long as it is just a play. When it comes to bigger investment of time and money (which is a normal stage in any sport career), girls in football and boys in ballroom dance are discouraged to continue, not treated seriously, encouraged to engage in another, more stereotypical activity.

With the boys it works this way that each parent sees in them a future Ronaldo who will earn money for all the family. I had one case like this. A father gave his son a lift to 10 or 15 clubs and did not begrudge fuel, et cetera. However, when his daughter plays and needs a lift somewhere, he says she is in your club, so you should give her a lift. [former female football player and clubs' coach]

Boys more often strictly declare that they want to play football and they attend football trainings. Whereas girls learn to dance, or to play a piano. It causes that when they have to choose one thing, they often resign from football. The parents also often persuade them to do this. With the boys it seems to be easier. [female football player and children coach]

Even if a girl continues her trainings and career, this would be explained socially in a different way than

if it were a boy. Girls in football are encouraged to train and educate because they could get a good and steady job as a trainer, boys are tempted by visions of professional football careers and financial success.

When we want to establish a sports [football] class for the boys, we hang an announcement on the bulletin board, the boys come and the class is established. When we want to create a sports [football] class for the girls, we also hang an announcement, but additionally we invite the parents. At the end, we have to call each parent individually to convince them and urge them to come and listen to what we have to say. When the parents arrive, we focus on convincing them that playing football here is not only an ability to play but also a possibility to be educated and that we will offer their daughter a job in the future. [male football coach]

Benefits for Children Who Cross Gender Stereotypes in Their Choice of Sport

The emphasis on the positive effects for those who engage in atypical sports to their gender can be perceived as an example of a hidden destereotyping / apparent stereotyping strategy. Parents and coaches stress the capacities that children can acquire, and the benefits which go beyond a particular sport or sport in general. For example, ballroom dance coaches very often would justify the boys participation in this sport by explaining that the boy may become more responsible, persistent, and tough thanks to dancing:

They are tough men, they grow up as tough, hardened people and that's how I convince parents. Not

moms, but fathers. Moms want to dance and it's not important, but daddy wants a commando, right? He wants a commando...They do. Or sometimes they say: "What training is that? In special forces," and I say, "You know what? Foolery." But, we have such too. And it's only later that they get convinced when they see that their sons can do, you know, splits, that he works hard, that he is fit, and that he is polite to girls, this is very, very rewarding...but dads usually put it this way: it's not a sport for a boy. They all want to raise a superman. [male ballroom dance instructor, ex-dancer, 45-years-old]

Moreover, the coaches would usually say that boys learn how to behave towards girls and women, which has a very positive influence on their relations with the opposite sex. Teenage male dancers also emphasize this, sometimes boasting their successes in contacts with women.

In my opinion, it is not true [that male dancers become womanly] because, after all, I dance with a woman and even in rumba it's really all the time that I touch her and so, well, let's say in places where not everyone touches women every day, for example, I grab her hip. So I think this is not true. [male ballroom dancer, age 15]

And what I liked the most about it, that later, as a dancer, I can really do much more when it comes to women. Well, then it really turns out differently when someone says such a thing [that male dancers are homosexual] that sometimes you may be ashamed to be a dancer, but when it comes down to it, it turns out quite opposite. Dancing raised me. Come on, dance taught me to respect women, so that I can play, not deceive, but I can play, I can respect women, we always

had to respect the girl while dancing, we were always taught that. Respect above all, a presentation of your partner. Who is more important in dance? Who does what, does all the things? We've always been taught that the male partner leads, but the female is the most important. I always say in my classes that: in dance it's always the man who leads. Then the guys enjoy, applaud, "Of course, I lead." But, the female partner is the most important in ballroom dancing. So it's not just that I lead, but I have a really hard mission to do so when she dances, as I want... [male ballroom dancer and dance instructor, 22 years of age]

Boys profits from practicing ballroom dancing would include a skill of taking care of one's appearance, ability to choose good quality clothes and shoes, as well as a knowledge of female fashion, which women may find attractive. Constant contact with the female body makes the boys familiar with such aspects of physiology like menstruation, body hair, or sweat, which are usually concealed by young girls and usually not present in the public sphere, and therefore become a taboo.⁴ Boys get acquainted with the female body as a physical and physiological entity in a context other than sexual.

Similarly, the participation of girls in football can have some benefits. First, girls develop not only football skills but general sports skills and are physically active. Second, they also learn some social competences due to participation in a team sport. Third, they receive a message that there are no areas which are not accessible for them, that there are no "male" areas. It can be important not only in sport

⁴ This refers to girls acquainting with boys' bodies too, for example, uncontrolled erection during close dance.

but also in other areas of social life, still dominated by men. The girls concentrate on their abilities and skills, ascertain that much depends on their hard work, not looks, what seems to be promoted by the mass media.

Generally, the profits of participating in atypical gender sport focus on understanding the opposite gender better, acquiring the skills and knowledge not popular among boys or girls not participating in atypical gender sports. Growing up in an environment where competition and cooperation between children of both genders concentrates on their actual skills and abilities instead of stereotypes may lead to conviction about one's own hard work and development as main factors of success in adult life.

Conclusion

In social imagination, there still exists a strong belief that some sports are proper for male and some for female participants. This has been shaped by the centuries, although there are many examples that both men and women may achieve good results in atypical gender sports. Individual stories of sportsmen and sportswomen who have fought against this division reveal how much determination this requires.

In ballroom dance and ballet, also in rhythmic gymnastics, boys are accused of becoming womanly and gay, which sometimes prevents them from participating in these activities. It is usually followed by their fathers disagreement or lack of support. Also, girls who want to practice football or boxing are discouraged, and being threatened to develop a male figure or crooked legs.

The research on children participation in football and dance have revealed that both parents and coaches reproduce gender stereotypes in sports socialization. The parents want their children to practice sports appropriate to their child's gender and coaches confirm their convictions. As a consequence, one can observe early resignation from atypical gender sport despite having sport talent or willingness to train. This reduces the number of possible future football or dance stars. In dance, as a sport which requires a dancing partner, many girls have a problem with continuing their career because the higher the age category becomes, the less boys want to participate in ballroom dancing. It is possible to continue training alone only for a certain period of time, and without participating in dance contests, one's skill deteriorates. Therefore, this causes consequence for both typical and atypical gender sports.

Only a small group of parents who decide that their child will practice atypical gender sport challenges sports division into "masculine" and "feminine." Meanwhile, the article has indicated several benefits from participation in atypical gender sport. Among them, one can mention general physical development and being physically active. Girls can gain self-confidence, belief in their own capacities, while boys learn how to take care of their look, how to behave towards women, cooperate with the other gender, and get familiar with female physiology. At the same time, a growing participation of girls in football and boys in dance may contribute to smaller stigmatization of children participating in an atypical gender sport and destereotypization of their nature.

Therefore, one can speak of the positives of both sport and cultural socialization through participation in atypical gender sports. Its meaning requires further analysis, focused on parents' role and factors that can contribute to a higher inclusion of both genders in all kinds of physical activities, teaching children to cooperate with the opposite sex. A study comparing the similarities and differences of mother's and father's attitudes towards their children's participation in atypical gender sport could bring interesting results concerning socialization in families.

It would be worthwhile to compare the results of the studies presented above with the data from other sports, strongly identified as "masculine" or "feminine." These include artistic gymnastics, rugby, or weightlifting. What could also bring more valuable information to understand the processes of socialization inside a group of children practicing certain types of sport is a study concentrating more on coaches who train typical and atypical gender sports and their interactions with boys and girls.

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