

Athlete Activism and Peace Education: Bridging the Social Inequality Gap through Sports.

By Irene Kamberidou

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the collaborative-intergenerational efforts, conflict resolution curricula, projects and training activities of non-profit organizations and NGOs— that reflect the values of Olympism—striving to eliminate racism and xenophobia as well as promote gender equity in sports. In this transitional stage of the postmodernist period, practices of social exclusion or underrepresentation due to gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, and so forth are socially problematic and theoretically inconsistent. The promotion of new role models and mentors in sports is vital in view of the systematic misinterpretation, or rather, misuse of Olympic values, such as obsessive competitiveness and the increase of violence and racism linked to sport events. Moreover, focusing on commercialization and consumerism are not incentives that reactivate Olympic values. A critical issue addressed, among others, is the democratization of the IOC structures. This paper argues that Peace Education—Olympism adapted into today's globalized world—be incorporated into future reforms, educational policies and teaching practices in order to raise awareness concerning the core values of peace: pro-social attitudes, reducing ethnic prejudices, respect for diversity, promoting reconciliation, gender equality, non-violent conflict resolution and democratic decision-making.

Keywords: peace education-conflict resolution skills, Olympism, racism, xenophobia, gender equity, glass ceiling, glass escalator, tokenism.

No other social activity has the same potential and power as ethnically-diverse team sports for kids in reducing ethnic prejudices and tensions, promoting reconciliation and maintaining peace (Monroe, 2009).

Introduction: Teaching youth pro-social attitudes and values through peace education

This paper argues that Peace Education be integrated into all school subjects, future reforms, educational policies and practices. Documented experiences in many countries show the impact of peace education on the societies where it has been applied (Brion-Meisels 2010, Monro 2009, Kamberidou 2008, Brion & Corcoran 2006, Peace Games 2006). Peace education, in simple terms, is learning the skills, behaviour and attitudes to live together successfully, regardless of race, class, religion, gender, etc. Diversity is just one part of a more fundamental equation, that is to enable everyone to realise their potential. In view of today's increasing racial violence in public schools throughout the world, also vital are cross-cultural collaborations, research and partnerships with the leaders in the field of conflict resolution curricula and training. Namely, the NGOs and non-profit organizations and institutions that have been successfully inspiring a new generation of educators, students, athletes and volunteers to become activists (peacemakers) through age-appropriate school

curriculum, sports, service-learning activities, social action and civic engagement. Specifically, through education, research and advocacy, NGOs such as PeaceFirst¹, formerly Peace Games, Sport in Society,² the Canadian Centres for Teaching Peace³, the Peace Education Foundation,⁴ the International Sport for Development and Peace Association (ISDPA)⁵, the Power of Peace Network (PPN),⁶ and many more, have been successfully implementing peace education programs, projects and activities. What is required, however, is an all-encompassing framework to pull together all these efforts, the diverse peace education projects and activities, and in particular those that offer both leadership programs as well as a foundation for new ones. Moreover, providing a hub of information for teachers, parents, guidance counsellors, administrators, school boards, community members, government officials and members of the Olympic movement could prove invaluable. Such an effort, partnered with universities, education ministries and policymakers could ensure that peace education is mainstreamed throughout the system. Specifically, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders working together for the promotion of lasting peace through thinking globally and acting locally via peace education school programs, annual peace education conferences, peacemaker projects and workshops, school peace camps, online resources and so forth. The ‘globalization of peace’ through Peace Education requires allies and networks, especially in light of the alarming impact of globalization on racism and xenophobia today.

Racism and Xenophobia

A survey conducted by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) and the RAcism and XEnophobia Network (RAXEN) reveals that one in two Europeans is xenophobic and one in three is racist.⁷ Additionally disturbing are the results of a recent EU survey concerning perceptions of migrants and migration in Europe. The survey,

¹See details in *PeaceFirst News and Events* (PeaceFirst home page) <http://www.peacefirst.org/site/> (retrieved August 9, 2010). Also see Peace Games Report (Brion-Meisels 2010).

²For further information about the activities and peace education programs of “Sport in Society, a Northeastern University Center” see their website: <http://www.northeastern.edu/sportinsociety/> (last accessed April 7, 2011)

³See “Engaging peace education at the personal, local, and global levels”, *Canadian Center for Teaching Peace*, <http://www.peace.ca/> (Retrieved April 6, 2011).

⁴See “Educating children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and promoting peacemaking skills” in new website of the Peace Education Foundation: <http://www.peace-ed.org/> (retrieved April 6, 2011).

⁵“The International Sport for Development and Peace Association (ISDPA) brings together scholars, educators, practitioners, policymakers and advocates to advance scientific knowledge and practice with respect to the interdisciplinary field of sport for development and peace. The field addresses the role of sport as a vehicle for social change, with a particular focus on youth, health, peace, disability, gender, human rights, and monitoring and evaluation.” In ISDPA website <http://isdpaonline.ning.com/> (Retrieved April 6, 2011).

⁶The Power of Peace Network (PPN), is an UNESCO inspired initiative. For details about the PPN, including its recent activities see: www.thepowerofpeacenetwork.com (retrieved April 6, 2011).

⁷The EUMC was established by Council Regulation (EC) no 1035/9 of 2 June 1997 which was amended by Council Regulation (EC) no. 1652/2003 of 18 June 2003. The primary task of the EUMC is to provide reliable and comparable information and data on racism, xenophobia, islamophobia and anti-Semitism at the European level in order to help the EU and its Member States to establish measures or formulate courses-actions against racism and xenophobia. The very core of the EUMC’s activities is the European Information Network on Racism and Xenophobia (RAXEN), designed to collect data and information at national and European levels. (See EUMC websites: www.eumc.eu.int/index.php), EUMC-RAXEN-DATABASE and the EUMC Annual Report, 2005 in www.eumc.eu.int

carried out as part of the EU funded *Femage project*,⁸ “Needs for female immigrants and their integration in ageing societies” (Cordis 2007), examined the views of 21,000 native citizens in eight European countries: Austria, Germany, Finland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia. In all countries, respondents were found to have more negative views and attitudes towards immigrants than positive ones. In eastern Germany, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, over half of those questioned believed that “foreigners” take away jobs from the native population. In the Czech Republic and in Estonia only 30% of respondents aligned themselves with the statement that “the presence of foreigners is positive because it allows an exchange with other cultures.” (Cordis, 2007:13) The study also showed that respondents with a lower level of education and lower income brackets were more likely to have negative views of migrants and migration: “People with weaker educational capital or economic situation are more prone to fears of the economic competition that comes from foreigners,” states the Femage report (Cordis, 2007:13). Additionally, the survey found a correlation between conservative views on gender roles and migration. Namely, “the more individuals advocated the traditional position of women in the family, the more they expressed negative attitudes towards immigrants in all countries studied,” reads the report (Cordis, 2007:13).

Inevitably, the sport expression has not remained unaffected. Sport federations, academics, politicians and NGOs alike are sounding the alarm over the increase in violence and racism linked with sport events. In recent years we have seen many manifestations of racial intolerance and violence at football matches, converted into stages for regional and identity conflicts: (1) In Spain, racist right-wing supporters mocked and taunted black players. (2) In Greece, an Albanian fan was stabbed to death by a Greek at a qualifying match for the World Cup. (3) A referee was slashed by a missile at the Champions League match between Roma and Dynamo Kiev. (4) In the Netherlands, Dutch fans threw a smoke bomb into the Portuguese goal and firecrackers on the pitch, hitting one of the players at the UEFA Cup match between Feyenoord of Rotterdam and Sporting Lisbon of Portugal. (5) With regard to race discrimination in Ecuador,⁹ spectator fury of physical and verbal abuse erupted when Ecuador played Uruguay and lost 2:1 on October 10, 2009, and the list goes on! (Patsantaras, Kamperidou, Panagiotopoulos, 2009). Even at friendly matches many black players have been racially abused, such as at the friendly match between Spain and England, at which black England players such as Shaun Wright-Phillips and Ashley Cole endured monkey chants from Spain supporters.¹⁰ Not to mention racially motivated football hooliganism or ethnic rivalry. Football hooliganism—unruly and destructive behaviour such as brawls, vandalism and intimidation by association football club fans—can range from shouts and small-scale fistfights and disturbances to huge riots where fans attack each other with deadly weapons such as knives, bats, rocks and bottles.

⁸ Funded under the ‘Research for policy support’ section of FP6 (Cordis 2007).

⁹ On October 10, 2009, Ecuador played Uruguay and lost 2:1, sparking a spectator fury of physical and verbal abuse. See article “Football and Racial Discrimination in Ecuador: Racism in the Game” by Sandra Gross, Feb. 11, 2010, in: <http://www.suite101.com/content/football-and-racial-discrimination-in-ecuador-a200997> (retrieved April 6, 2011).

¹⁰ Keeley, Graham (2006-01-29). “Monkey chants’ force clampdown on Spain’s racist football fans - Europe, World”. London: The Independent. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/monkey-chants-force-clampdown-on-spains-racist-football-fans-525020.html> (retrieved March 24, 2010).

Inevitably, the EU ministers responsible for sport as well as NGOs such as PeaceFirst (Peace Games) and Sport in Society (SIS), are closely studying the issue of violence and racism in sports.¹¹ The EU is promoting international research and projects related to sport as a means to social integration, while highlighting the concept that sport knows no language barriers. In 2007 the Federal Minister of the Interior, Dr Wolfgang Schäuble¹² opened an informal meeting of EU sport ministers in Stuttgart under Germany's EU Council Presidency at which delegations and ministers from 26 member states participated to discuss violence in sports. Subsequently, the Council of Europe, in the framework of its campaign 'All Different, All Equal,' organised an international conference in France on 'Sports, Violence and Racism in Europe,' from 2 to 5 April, 2007, at which the workshops and round-table discussions focused on the role of sport in eliminating racism, violence and gender discrimination (Patsantaras et al. 2009). Such efforts—and not only—are absolutely necessary to address this systematic disregard for Olympic values (Olympism).

Olympism and the Olympic movement

The incentives for Olympic performance, in a society dominated by economic priorities and values, commercialization and consumerism, are not the incentives that can reactivate or revive Pierre de Coubertin's 19th century "Olympism" and "Olympic pedagogy" (peace education). Coubertin's Olympism—cultivated and promoted through Olympic pedagogy—embodies the very essence of education and the critical role of the young to challenge social stereotypes and prejudices and transform cultures of violence into cultures of peace. However, the Olympic movement is not in a position to accomplish this alone. It has failed to adapt Coubertin's Olympism into today's Olympic reality. The exploitation, or rather, misuse of athletic activity and Olympic values has been common practice as observed in the history of the athletic phenomenon (Patsantaras 2007).

Olympic education (peace pedagogy) is an educational process that operates on the basis of prototypes-role models. Unquestionably, today's Olympic athletes (role models) and members of the Olympic movement seem to be in dire need of Olympic education since they themselves do not reflect or represent Olympic values, if we take into account the systematic use of substances, obsessive competitiveness that leads to violence, the under-representation of women in sport governing bodies and so forth. Undeniably, we have been witnessing a notable increase in violent behaviour in stadiums, dehumanizing, racist and xenophobic attitudes, hooliganism, not to mention doping, corruption, cheating, wheeling-and-dealing, political interference as well as the influence of big business, the media, sponsors, etc. Furthermore, studies indicate that youth involved in organized competitive sports show less

¹¹The Council of Europe, in the framework of its campaign 'All Different, All Equal', organised an international conference on 'Sports, Violence and Racism in Europe' on 2-5 April 2007. See commentary on conference entitled "Sport, violence and racism in Europe" Rennes (France), 2-5 April 2007, in Council of Europe website http://www.coe.int/t/dc/files/events/2007_sportconf/default_en.asp (last accessed April 6, 2011).

¹² See Press Release dated 12.03.2007 "Interior Minister Schäuble opens the informal meeting of EU sport ministers" (http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press_Releases/March/0312BMIEroeffnung.htm (retrieved April, 6 2011). Press release also available in http://www.eu2007.bmi.bund.de/cln_028/nn_1059824/EU2007/EN/ServiceNavigation/PressReleases/content_Pressemitteilungen/Sportministertreffen_en.html (retrieved April 6, 2011). Additionally see announcement "Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Sport in Stuttgart on 12-13 March 2007", in website *Living Europe Safely*, http://www.eu2007.bmi.bund.de/cln_028/nn_1059824/EU2007/EN/DomesticPolicyGoals/News/Content_News/Sportministertreffen_Zusammenfassung_en.html (retrieved April 6, 2011).

sportsmanship than those who are not involved, and they value victory— believe that winning is everything— more than non-participants who place more emphasis on fair play.¹³

Undeniably, new role models and mentors are needed to teach pro-social attitudes and values through sports. The time has come for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to put into practice the ideals of the Olympic Charter and Olympism/Olympic Education, especially in view of the fact that the Olympic Games capture the attention of over one-third of the world's population, and could be used for something more than global marketing and the political agendas of wealthy nations that can afford to produce medal-winning athletes. Although the Olympic movement advocates that one of its central missions is to promote world peace, it seems to have deviated from this direction. For example, among the indicators that determine a state of peace is the battle against starvation. Consequently, if the greatest percentage of the profits of the Olympic movement went primarily to countries such as Africa and Asia, where thousands of children die from starvation, this would mean the active social presence of Olympic values (Olympism), as opposed to the rhetorical and abstract speeches and lectures of sport officials and IOC members (Patsantaras 2007).

In other words it would be useless and ineffective to incorporate Pierre de Coubertin's 19th century "Olympism" (Olympic values) and "Olympic Education (peace education) into today's educational systems, into today's public schools, without first taking adapting them into today's sport reality, namely taking into consideration the complex social processes of change and transformation. Undeniably the Olympic movement cannot do this alone but needs to work with the leaders in the field of conflict resolution, curricula and training (peace education), such as PeaceFirst and Sport in Society (SIS), to teach youth pro-social attitudes and values through sports. For example, a decade of progress reveals that the American organization PeaceFirst (Peace Games) has been acknowledged as a key contributor in the national reduction of school violence (Paulson 2006). Its holistic school-change model has successfully reduced school violence and promoted gender equity and respect for ethnic diversity in the communities and public schools it has worked with (Brion-Meisels, 2010). Studies indicate that after eighteen months of training at a partner school, verbal altercations between students were reduced by 41 percent, disruptive incidents in the classrooms, lunchroom, and playground went down by 59 percent and episodes of abuse directed at teachers ceased entirely (Feldscher 2006).

PeaceFirst -Peace Games

PeaceFirst— a holistic school change model adopted in Boston, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and Fairbanks, Alaska, now becoming international—has taught over 40,000 students critical conflict resolution skills. It has created over 2,500 peacemaker projects that improved communities and instilled a sense of civic engagement in students. It has trained 2,500 teachers in conflict resolution and classroom management skills and recruited over 4,000 volunteers who provided 400,000 hours of volunteer teaching service (PeaceFirst 2010). Additionally, PeaceFirst offers training to institutions of higher learning, colleges and universities, non-profit agencies, clubs and corporations, providing a spectrum of services from their one-time trainings to their full model of a three-year partnership. Student volunteers are offered course credits to participate in the program. Incontestably, having

¹³ Canadian Centres for Teaching Peace (2007). "Sports: When winning is the only thing, can violence be far away?" In: <http://www.peace.ca/sports.htm#Athletes%20as%20Role%20Models> (retrieved June 2, 2007).

university students work for the program provides excellent role models and mentors for school pupils (Feldscher 2006).

PeaceFirst athletes, staff, student volunteers and activists have been working directly with entire communities, empowering children, students and parents in creating their own safe classrooms, in societies inflicted with many forms of violence. For example, 7 in 10 Americans in recent surveys said they believed that a shooting was likely in their school. Every day in the United States 10 children are murdered, 186 children are arrested for violent crimes, and approximately 160,000 students miss school because they fear physical harm. Moreover, invisible forms of violence, such as racism, sexism, homophobia and bullying, are not measured in most crime statistics (Peace Games 2006).

Remarkable results have been documented in the PeaceFirst partner schools (Brion-Meisels, 2010), such as a 60 percent reduction in violence but more importantly, a 70-80 percent increase in instances of children breaking up fights as well as in helping one another. PeaceFirst has a proven track record of building safe and productive school climates as indicated in the data that follows. During the 2008-2009 school year, PeaceFirst worked with 14 schools in Boston, Los Angeles, and New York and with the help of 408 volunteers who provided approximately 15,940 hours of direct service, worked with 3,575 students who received the weekly PeaceFirst curriculum and executed 135 original Community Service Learning projects. The long-term positive effects of Peace First are clearly shown in the data for the 2008-2009 school year:

- 87 percent of students reported they rarely tease others
- 77 percent reported that they are rarely teased, pushed or threatened by others
- 81 percent reported that they can walk away from a fight without feeling like a coward

At the same time, students reported that PeaceFirst helped them improve their peacemaking behavior as well as their commitment to school in general. They reported that Peace First helped them:

- Understand how other people feel (95%)
- Cooperate and share with others (97%)
- Include other students in games or groups (94%)
- Improve their school work (95%)
- Want to come to school more (84%)

A study at the University of Southern California (USC) also found a dramatic drop in incident reports:¹⁴

- 41 percent fewer verbal altercations
- 70 percent reduction in racial/ethnic tensions
- 50 percent fewer weapons being brought to school.

¹⁴“Our Impact: Results/Return on Investment”, *PeaceFirst*, p.p.1-2, in: http://www.peacefirst.org/site/?page_id=74&page=2 (retrieved April 6, 2011)

Peace First, formerly called *Peace Games*, was initially established by college students in 1996 to promote a culture of peacemaking (Brion & Corcoran 2006). It emerged from the vision of Dr. Francelia Butler, who brought together the power of play with the power of peace. Butler had established a festival that provided the opportunity for children to share games, sport activities, laughter, communication, friendship and conflict resolution—the building blocks for a peaceful future. In 1992, Butler chose Harvard University’s centre for social service (Phillips Brooks House Association) as a long-term sponsor for her work, and as a result students ran *Peace Games* until 1996 when it became an independent non-profit organization. In 2000, Peace Games opened its second office in Los Angeles, and by 2005 became a national organization, doubling its size through partnerships with schools in New York City and Chicago, growing into today’s holistic school change model (peace education).

The PeaceFirst curriculum and peacemaker projects at many elementary schools and high schools focus on reducing (and eventually eliminating) violence, ethnic prejudices, tensions and stereotypes, promoting reconciliation and cultivating a culture of peace. Trained teaching teams help pupils and students plan and implement age-appropriate community service-learning activities called peacemaker projects, and full-time PeaceFirst coordinators spend years working with students, teachers and families. The age-appropriate curriculum focuses on collaborative games, the power of play, teamwork, democratic discipline, multicultural awareness, communication, non-violent conflict resolution skills, combating hate-filled dialogue and respect for cultural diversity. It is an effective part of a holistic academic model that builds self-esteem, courage and an ability to create social change through civic engagement and service-learning projects (Brion & Corcoran 2005). Peacemaking is more than violence prevention. Peacemaking is civic engagement and service-learning which offers children and adult partners real and meaningful connections in addressing important community issues through a range of activities that invite reflection and conversation about complex subjects such as human rights, cultural violence, homelessness and ecological policies. These intergenerational activities connect three or four generations. They link community volunteers with students, schools, families, high school alumnae and young adults (Kamberidou 2008).

Before introducing students to peacemaker projects, teachers and volunteers learn the theory and the practice of service-learning. They then research the school community, connect with local organizations, meet with school staff and gather materials, thereby laying the foundation for successful projects. The age-appropriate curriculum emphasizes Team and Trust (collaborative games, sport activities, etc.), community service projects and conflict resolution (Kamberidou 2008). For example, in Boston, in Fairbanks, Alaska, and in Los Angeles, classes combined civics, community service, and lessons on combating hate-filled dialogue (Paulson 2006).

Sport in Society (SIS): athletes as mentors in violence prevention

Sport in Society (SIS) has also been active in formulating peace education curricula and social activities to promote respect for ethnic diversity and non-violent conflict resolution programs in public schools, as well as providing athletes as mentors of peace and role models. For example, the SIS program that empowers student athletes to combat bullying and

harrasment in their schools and communities¹⁵ and the leadership program that focuses on gender equality due to the lack of female role models, leaders, coaches, etc. The SIS racially diverse and mixed-gender programs have been cited as the National Crime Prevention Council's "50 Best Strategies to Prevent Violent Domestic Crimes"¹⁶.

Sport in Society (SIS), a leading social justice organization founded in 1984, has been using sport to create social change both nationally and internationally. Through research, education, and advocacy SIS promotes physical activity, health, violence prevention, gender equality and respect for racial diversity among young people and college and professional athletes. For example, on July 28, 2010, in partnership with the Urban Soccer Collaborative, SIS hosted a screening of *Fair Play* at its annual Youth Leadership Institute (YLI). High school students from communities throughout the United States participated to learn about the pivotal role that sport played in ending apartheid and discuss what opportunities exist today to use sport to create a more just world.¹⁷

With the goal of drawing attention to the values of human rights and social justice inherent in Olympism, SIS has been active in promoting athletes as mentors of peace and hosting a series of workshops and seminars, partnering with other organizations. An example of this is its *Mentors In Violence Prevention Program* (MVP)—a mixed-gender and racially diverse leadership program composed of former professional and college athletes. Namely, men and women working together in preventing gender violence, solving problems that historically have been considered "women's issues," such as sexual harassment and rape. The MVP program has successfully facilitated training sessions with 15,000 high school students and administrators at over a hundred Massachusetts schools. It has developed original teaching materials, including MVP Playbooks for high school and college students, professional athletes and adult professionals, along with accompanying trainers' guides and a variety of supplemental exercises that utilize media excerpts from popular culture. It has conducted sessions with thousands of student athletes and administrators at over 100 colleges nationwide, and the list goes on (Kamberidou, 2008).

After decades of work and research contributing to peace education, including gender equality programs in public schools and a diversity of social activities that promote social justice (Kamberidou, 2008; Patsantaras, et al 2009), SIS launched its *Olympism and Social Justice Institute* in 2009, marking its official recognition as one of the IOC's Olympic

¹⁵ See news report "Empowering Student Athletes to Combat Bullying" Franklin, MA (3-29-11), SIS, <http://www.northeastern.edu/sportinsociety/news/2011/248.html> (retrieved April 7, 2011): "On March 23-24, a team of over 30 student athlete ambassadors from across Massachusetts gathered at the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) headquarters to collectively take on the problem of bullying in their schools and communities with help and guidance from Sport in Society."

¹⁶ "Sport in Society's innovative programs are all staffed by former college or professional athletes and have been awarded America's most successful violence prevention program by Lou Harris, the Peter F. Drucker Award as the most innovative non-profit program in the social sector, and have been cited as the National Crime Prevention Council's 50 Best Strategies to Prevent Violent Domestic Crimes." In SIS webpage entitled "Double Dutch Season in Full Swing, About Sport in Society", <http://www.northeastern.edu/sportinsociety/news/2009/174.html> (retrieved April 6, 2011).

¹⁷ More analytically see news report entitled "A screening of *Fair Play*" in SIS website : <http://www.northeastern.edu/sportinsociety/news/2010/234.html> (last accessed April 7, 2011).

Studies Centres (OSCs). As such, SIS has recently become one of ten OSCs worldwide, and the only OSC in the United States.¹⁸

Not only SIS and PeaceFirst, but many other NGOs such as the Canadian Centres for Teaching Peace, the Peace Education Foundation, the International Sport for Development and Peace Association (ISDPA), the Power of Peace Network (PPN), to mention a few, have been successfully implementing peace education programs or attempting a revival of Olympism in today's societies. However, one need to reiterate that what is required to ensure that peace education is mainstreamed throughout the system is an all-encompassing framework to pull together the various existing peace projects and activities. In other words, providing a hub of information for teachers, parents, guidance counsellors, administrators, school boards, community members, government officials and members of the Olympic movement that will facilitate cross-cultural collaborations, research and partnerships with schools, universities, education ministries and policymakers.

Sport as a human right: Tokenism or getting gender back on the agenda

“The IOC strongly encourages, by appropriate means, the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures, particularly in the executive bodies of national and international sports organizations with a view to the strict application of the principle of equality of men and women.”¹⁹

Undeniably we've come a long way since the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki, where women represented only 10 percent of the Olympic athletes. In Sydney in the year 2000, the percentage of female athletes was 38.2%. In the Athens 2004 Olympics it rose to 40.7% and at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, women represented approximately 43 percent of the total athlete delegation, the largest participation record to date! However, despite the comparatively accelerated integration of women in Olympic competitive sports, women are still under-represented in all sport governing bodies, in executive bodies of national and international sport organizations and institutions, such as the IOC. The gendered nature of sport, the lack of female leadership, role models, coaches, etc. persists today, despite the Magglingen Declaration which defines sport as a human right.²⁰ The “*glass escalator*” (Kamberidou 2010) is not yet gender inclusive, namely women do not ride up the sport

¹⁸ See webpage entitled ‘Olympism and Social Justice Institute’ (12-2-09), SIS, Boston, Mass. in: http://www.northeastern.edu/sportinsociety/research/published/research_initiatives/3.html (retrieved 9/3/09) and in <http://www.northeastern.edu/sportinsociety/research/olympism.html> (last accessed April 6, 2011) : “The Olympic Studies Centres (OSCs) collaborate and exchange information in order to encourage research and disseminate knowledge on the Olympic phenomenon. Sport in Society, by becoming an IOC Olympic Studies Centre, will further contribute to the documentation and circulation of the ideals of Olympism, with a particular emphasis upon social justice and human rights.”

¹⁹ Olympic Charter, rule 2, paragraph 5, 18/07/1996.

²⁰ Following the Magglingen Conference, an international platform for Sport and Development was established—and the Magglingen Declaration on the Role of Sport in Development was signed in Switzerland in 2003—bringing together representatives from the UN, international and national sports federations, NGOs and other sports bodies. (“Magglingen Declaration”, *Sport and Development International Conference*, Magglingen Switzerland, 16-18 February 2003, in: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/universitas/download/events/maggldecl.pdf> (retrieved April 7, 2011).

hierarchy. It was not until 1981, following the initiative of IOC President Samaranch, that two women were elected to the IOC. Since 1981 only a total of 21 women have served as IOC members and today there are only 14 women who represent 14.1% of the total of 113 IOC members, a clear contradiction to the Olympic Charter.²¹

Tokenism: women's representation in the Olympic movement²²

November 2006	Women	Men	Total	%
Executive Board	1	14	15	6.6
IOC members	14	99	113	14.1
Commissions	34	209	243	13.9

January 2005	Women	Men	Total	%
Executive Board	1	14	15	6.6
IOC members	12	103	115	10.4
Commissions	35	200	235	14.9

January 2004	Women	Men	Total	%
Executive Board	1	14	15	6.6
IOC members	12	113	125	9.6
Commissions	28	210	238	11.8

Women's integration into Olympic sports has no linear relation to their representation or rather under-representation as observed in the institutional realities of the IOC. Undeniably women are perceived as tokens, namely *symbols* or *representatives* of a marginal social group.

Tokens are people who are hired, appointed or accepted into an institution, organization or a company because of their minority status. Tokens are usually women (as are the female members of the IOC), ethnic minorities, the aged or individuals with special needs. (Kamberidou 2010). Inevitably this focus on *difference*, as opposed to respect for diversity, reproduces social inequalities, stereotypes and specifically the 'gender order.' Tokens do not

²¹ Olympic Charter, rule 2, paragraph 5, 18/07/1996.

²²See International Olympic Committee "Women in the Olympic Movement- Women's Representation in the IOC", IOC, p.1/1. (http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_992.pdf) (retrieved Sept. 29, 2009).

usually ride up the “glass escalator” (Kamberidou 2010) but instead they hit the glass ceiling. That is not to say that men who enter the so-called female dominated fields do not also experience “tokenism” (Kanter 1977). Both men and women can experience tokenism, however, their experiences as tokens are quite different.

Research reveals strikingly different experiences when women are tokens in male dominated workplaces or institutions and when men are “tokens” in predominantly female fields (Williams 1992). Men do not confront the glass ceiling or “the sticky floor” (Kimmel 2004: 195) when they enter female dominated professions but instead they experience positive discrimination (Kimmel 2004, Hultin 2003). They ride up—on what sociologist Christine Williams (1992:296) was the first to call— the “glass escalator.” That is to say, they are encouraged, supported, retained, reproduced and promoted up the ladder much faster than their female counterparts. Following interviews with seventy-six men and twenty-three women in four professions considered “female fields”—social work, librarianship, nursing and elementary education—Williams concluded that men experienced positive discrimination. Specifically, they were welcomed into the workplace, received higher salaries and were promoted up the ladder, in the managerial ranks, more frequently and much faster than their female counterparts, and not only! They were overrepresented in the upper hierarchies. Undeniably “the glass escalator” takes underrepresented men on an upwardly mobile internal career path at a speed that their female colleagues can hardly enjoy” (Hultin 2003).

This seems to be the case in competitive sports as well. That is to say, men who participate in women’s sports experience positive discrimination from their female counterparts, as opposed to men who had not been so supportive when women were demanding participation in the ‘male sport preserve.’ For example, a recent case study shows that women athletes (rhythmic gymnasts) are in favor of men’s official participation in the female Olympic sport of rhythmic gymnastics. Specifically, during the 20th Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championship in Budapest in 2003—where *Men’s Group Rhythmic Gymnastics* were presented for the first time with the approval of the international gymnastics federation (FIG)—a total of 299 participants, the majority female, responded to a closed questionnaire concerning men’s official participation in rhythmic gymnastic. Specifically, 69 female rhythmic gymnasts, 33 female coaches, 100 female judges, 28 female members of the technical committee of rhythmic gymnastics (MTCRG), as well as 41 journalists, 11 parents and 17 members of the audience of both genders. According to the results, the overwhelming majority of the respondents—mostly women— support the official recognition of men’s rhythmic gymnastics. Additionally, 60.5% of the respondents were in favor of the participation of men in mixed group and in mixed pair competitions (Kamberidou, Tsopani, Dallas, Patsantaras 2009).

Rhythmic gymnastics for men may sound atypical or peculiar to many—as did wrestling, hockey, bodybuilding, football and ice-hockey for women in the past—but it has become a reality. In February 2009 the President of the Spanish Gymnastics Federation, Antonio Esteban Cerdán, announced the organization of the 1st National Championship of Men’s Rhythmic Gymnastics and the Spanish government supported the federation’s initiative. This is a ground-breaking venture since it is the first federation that recognizes men’s rhythmic gymnastics (Kamberidou et al 2009). Despite gender stereotypes that depict this Olympic sport as unacceptable for the image of masculinity, the male body aesthetic, including masculine gender role identity, the rising involvement of boys and men in this sport throughout the globe can no longer be ignored. Getting gender back on the agenda in sports

does not only include re-examining women's under-representation in sport governing bodies, like the IOC, it also requires formulating best-practices that will break the glass ceiling and get women to ride up the glass escalator. Getting gender back on the agenda in sports and respect for gender equality also means re-examining changing attitudes and social stereotypes with regard to men and boys, namely their participation in the so-called female sports. Inevitably as traditional social categories diversify, sport identity diversifies and is challenged, despite gender stereotypes that depict the Olympic sport of rhythmic gymnastics as unacceptable for the image of masculinity. The socially constructed and historically specific nature of physicality, corporeality and sport identity need to be renegotiated since exclusions based on genetic characteristics are a contradiction to the value system of sport (Olympic Charter, rule 2 par. 5, 7/7/2007). Respect for diversity part of a more fundamental equation that entails increasing the talent pool, ensuring a gender balance and enabling everyone to realize their potential.

Recommendations

1. The institutionalization of Peace Education, as an integral part of the curricula in public schools, beginning in pre-school or kindergarten, namely getting them while they are young before they formulate social prejudices and stereotypes.
2. To ensure that peace education is mainstreamed throughout the system, what is initially required is an all-encompassing framework to pull together today's diverse peace education programs and projects.
3. The establishment of an international, multicultural network of researchers—from the social sciences, the humanities, sport sciences, gender studies, etc., in order to: (a) explore the ways that an ethos of peacemaking can be reproduced and sustained, (b) discuss the values of a holistic approach to peacemaking, (c) examine complex patterns rather than isolated behaviours so as to identify measures to assist teachers and policymakers in formulating practices central to peacemaking, (d) prepare and promote a widespread campaign to change attitudes and stereotypes: inform, introduce, sensitize, expose and familiarize all stakeholders of the necessity for integrating peace education into school curricula and in all classrooms.
4. In order to revive Olympism (Olympic values), teach youth pro-social attitudes and values through sports—instead of obsessive competitiveness that leads to violence and racial conflicts—the Olympic movement requires allies and networks, specifically collaborations and partnerships with the various NGOs, peace education programs, including joint efforts in order to: (a) examine complex patterns so as to identify measures to assist coaches, sport officials, federations, clubs, parents, and athletes in non-violent conflict resolution practices, (b) formulate a *conduct code* to be signed by coaches, athletes, sport officials, etc. with repercussions/punishments when violations are cited, (c) promote new sport heroes and heroines, new role models and mentors in sport, (d) re-evaluate the gender agenda in sports, focusing on changing attitudes and social stereotypes and in particular formulate policies and best-practices that will break the glass ceiling and get women to ride up the glass escalator in sport governing bodies.

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