

Women in the conduct of Brazilian sports: a pioneering study

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GOMES, Euza Maria de Paiva. **A Participação das Mulheres na Gestão do Esporte Brasileiro: desafios e perspectivas**. Rio de Janeiro: Quartet: FAPERJ, 2008.

Resumo: Trata-se da resenha do livro *Participação das Mulheres na Gestão do Esporte Brasileiro: desafios e perspectivas*, escrito por Euza Gomes e publicado pela editora Quartet e Faperj (2008). Tem como objetivo analisar a pesquisa realizada bem como suas contribuições para o campo dos estudos sobre mulheres e esporte no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: Mulheres. Esportes. Organização e administração. Identidade de Gênero.

The end of the 20th century was quite fruitful for women when it comes to the occupation of public space, especially in the post-war period. If on the one hand this perception is encouraging, on the other hand it does not imply inequality between the genders has been eliminated thanks to this occupation. The research carried out by *Núcleo de Opinião Pública* of *Fundação Perseu Abramo* in 2001 is a good example of that statement. With the objective of investigating Brazilian women's participation in public and private spaces 2.502 interviews were carried out with questions involving topics such as their perceptions about changes in the women's condition, personal and political expectations, paid work and domestic work, leisure practices, sexuality, and violence, among others. The analyses developed by the team that performed the investigation indicate Brazilian women's situation in the public sphere. The insertion in the labor market is identified as the main path that led women to public experiences, which contributed, to some extent, to the construction of their autonomy, at least by providing more economic independence regarding husbands, partners, and parents. However, this insertion led to a charge, including the double day of work since the larger number of women working outside their homes did not correspond to the division of household chores. When asked on the first take that attitude to be taken so that the life of the Brazilian women could be improved, the main spontaneous answers were: the

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end of discriminations in the labor market (47%), equal rights (10%), struggle against violence against women (9%), more freedom (6%), less sexism, and more recognition by men (4%) (VENTURI, RECAMÁN; OLIVEIRA, 2004).

These data encourage us to analyze Brazilian women's participation in the conduct of sports, a topic approached by the book *Participação das Mulheres na Gestão do Esporte Brasileiro: desafios e perspectivas*, written by Euza Maria Gomes de Paiva, as a result of her doctoral thesis defended at the Post-Graduate Program in Physical Education of the Gama Filho University, under guidance of Ludmila Mourão.

According to the author, despite the recognized expansion that Brazilian women have had regarding their integration in the labor market, the reality of their presence in the Brazilian sports conduct is entirely different: besides to being small, it was established via reconciliation, without major struggles or conflicts, as the process of women's visibility in sports was not marked by the intention to change women's status in this area but, perhaps, to adapt to the what was already established. According to Euza, there was no feminine – let alone feminist – movement in Brazilian sports towards gender equality. Despite this failure, she identifies some advances in that field although the male presence is still predominant in different organizations that manage Brazilian sports - federations, confederations, and departments and the different roles – managers, technicians and referees.

This presence reflects women's participation in sports. If we think of a high-performance sport, for example, only in 1932 we had one athlete attending the Olympic Games, the swimmer Maria Lenk; this number increased significantly in the last edition of the Games held in Beijing in 2008. The Brazilian delegation comprised 277 athletes, with 144 men and 133 women.

Following this trail, Euza Gomes develops a research through which she seeks to understand how women are represented in the spheres of power of high-performance sports conduct in Brazil, in different institutions: Federations, Confederations, the National Department of High-Performance Sports (SNEAR) of the Ministry of Sports, and the Brazilian Olympic Committee. She justifies her choice not only by the absence of such researches but also, because in spite of the cultural changes occurring in the twentieth century, the entry of women in the field of sports management has not occurred with the same speed, as this area of work is comprises a male reserve.

The pioneering character of Euza's study is one of its qualities and it undoubtedly provides many contributions to the advancement of researches on Brazilian sports as it shows new data on gender issues in sports management. In the event they are deemed as politically relevant, these data may contribute to the development of policies that seek to increase women's participation in this field of professional practice.

In the first part of the book, Euza discusses with different authors whose researches indicate data related to the inclusion and profile of Brazilian women in public and private spaces as well as analyses on the power relations in different social institutions. This item sought elements for the understanding of transformations in the representations that mark the women's displacement from the domestic space - in a period when care for the house and children appear as the only tasks that recognize them as "queen of the home" - to the public space or to enter the "world of men."

Based on this discussion, she draws up a panel on women's visibility in the different spheres of public life, showing that, although women constitute half the population, their representatives correspond to 5% of world leaders. In spite of this low percentage, she states that there have never been so many women in charge, especially in congresses and parliaments of different countries, where they occupy 16.3% of the seats. According to the author, its presence in the national context has been, even of tentatively, increasing in the higher levels of government (ministries and state departments), National Congress, Senate, State Legislative Assemblies, and Municipal Chambers. Still, the number of women in positions of command does not correspond to the quotas, which aim to ensure the presence of 30% of women on party lists for legislative positions

When it comes to this topic, Euza mentions several qualitative studies the results of which suggest that the greater representation of women is in areas such as education and social advancement, often seen as an extension of what would be considered as the "female condition" in regard to domestic activities. This trend is also identified in the conduct of the main Brazilian sports institutions in which women occupy decision-making positions in education and leisure and have limited participation in the conduct of high-performance sports.

In this topic, she carries out an analysis based on international authors about women's leadership and conduct in sports. Based on these studies, she states that it is

possible to notice a greater female participation in sports in countries that have adopted affirmative action policies targeted to this end. Such situation does not occur in Brazil, even considering the recommendation by the International Olympic Committee stating that the composition of executive bodies of all institutions operating under its rules should have at least 10% of women by the year 2000 and 20% by the year 2005. The chart presented by Euza, dated of 2006, shows the percentages of women in executive positions: the Brazilian Olympic Committee (4%), Linked/Branch Confederations (1.8%), National Sports Federations (6.5%), and the Brazilian Paralympic Committee (30%).

Although small, the author argues that this participation has expanded over the past 10 years. However, in spite of this achievement, women still must take care of the home and the children, particularly hindering a greater professional rise. For that reason, many studies, which she bases herself on to develop her research, show that there is a large number of single women in positions of command and many of them, after getting married, eventually abandon their sports management duties for being responsible for domestic work.

Given this introduction to the topic, Euza uses the history of Brazilian sport to highlight the work of some pioneering women who participate/participated in the development of Brazilian sports management. She then describes the performance of Maria Emma Hulda Lenk Ziegler (1915-2007) as an important player in the history of women in sports whose history has become a "front door" that allowed them to advance to high-level sports, as well as the sports management, as she was a member of the National Council of Sports (40s) and the first female director of a college of Physical Education: the School of Physical Education and Sports of the University of Brazil, in 1968.

Following it, she presented stories of some women who commanded Brazilian National Teams in international championships and the Olympic Games. A group which, along with presidents of federations and confederations, referees and assistant referees, is still numerically insignificant. At this moment, Euza argues that, in Brazil, the vast majority of women working as coaches command sports teams of youth team categories and their work is more focused on training and recreational and leisure activities than high-performance sports.

Based on the study carried out by Gabriela Souza de Oliveira, entitled "Social representations of female coaches on the command of the high-level sports teams" (2002), in which 12 coaches are interviewed, Euza states that almost all of them had to choose between the exclusive dedication to the family and the career. She mentions the testimony of Maria Helena Cardoso - former Women's National Basketball Team coach- when he says that some women modify their behavior to meet some specific staff training needs, bringing them closer to male characteristics. Even so, they not cease to use some feminine representations, such as maternity issues, which are sometimes used to establish closer relationships with the athletes.

Based on that "literature review", as this item is denominated, she describes the methodological procedures used for the qualitative research. The data collection started with a mapping of the different bodies of the Brazilian sports management, aiming at identifying the presence of women. Later on, 14 female managers were subsequently elected to serve as research collaborators and were divided into two groups: managers who were appointed and managers who were elected to the executive positions. Therefore, the sample comprised three women who worked at the National Department of High-Performance Sports of the Ministry of Sports, one woman worked at the Brazilian Olympic Committee, two came from Confederations and eight came from Federations.

After describing the profile of each one of them, highlighting their personal and professional paths until the moment they achieved their working positions, the author develops her reflections in order to understand the motivations, challenges, and difficulties in building their careers. She also examined gender relations in the conduct of sports and the changes that these women promoted (or attempted to promote) in the sports entities that were under their management.

Through her own words, Euza was able to draw a profile of current female Brazilian managers, which allowed her to conclude that these women are in average 40 years old, mostly single and engage in a voluntary work on behalf of their love for sports. The main difficulty identified by all of them is the lack of funds to manage their sports entities, and the need, as they are women, to daily prove their competence, as their work is viewed with some suspicion, especially among managers.

Several interviewees mentioned that the image of women focused on the management of home and the family is still prevalent in Brazilian society. For this reason it is perceived that, by participating in sports management, they progressed in their careers and, in a sense, broke some barriers. The fact they are single and do not have children appears as a facilitator to such rise.

Married women – a minority in the study – work side by side with their partners, including clubs and associations. Most of these managers do not agree with the quote policies recommended by the International Olympic Committee for women, as they argue that their positions should be achieved based on the work they have developed in their associations, not simply because they are women.

Another factor that limits a greater inclusion of women (and not only them) in the conduct of sports lies in the sports organization described by the author as a “caste” system that is present in several Brazilian clubs. In this system, family bonds are often what counts in career development rather than the indication of female or male managers, even if they are competent.

Finally, despite several challenges faced by these women, their participation in the conduct enables their occupation to become visible, also indicating the possibility of their existence. This is perhaps the great merit of the work developed by Euza Gomes, not only when it comes to the sports field but also other social spaces in which women have low insertion and whose recognition is lower than that attributed to men, even when they perform the same function or work.

The managers interviewed by Euza emphasize that they feel competent and able to stay ahead of their entities. Their narratives can be seen as voices that announce fresh air for Brazilian sports, as even if they do not explicitly mention it, their words show the huge gender inequality in the conduct of sports in Brazil. And that is why the book *Participação das Mulheres na Gestão do Esporte Brasileiro: desafios e perspectivas* reveals itself as a pioneer the reading of which can help us to understand the power relations that permeate sport, more specifically in the management scope.

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Abstract: This is a review of the book *Participação das Mulheres na Gestão do Esporte Brasileiro: desafios e perspectivas*, by Euza Gomes, published by the Quartet & Faperj Publishing Company (2008). The purpose of the review is to analyze the research conducted as well as its contributions to the field of studies on women and sports in Brazil.

Keywords: Women. Sports. Organization and administration. Gender identity.

Las mujeres en la gestión del deporte brasileño: un estudio pionero

Resumen: Se trata de la reseña del Libro *Participação das Mulheres na Gestão do Esporte Brasileiro: desafios e perspectivas*, escrito por Euza Gomes y publicado por la editora Quartet y Faperj (2008). Tiene como objetivo analizar la investigación realizada así como sus contribuciones para el campo de los estudios sobre mujeres y deportes en Brasil.

Palabras Clave: Mujeres. Deportes. Organización y administración. Identidad de género

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