

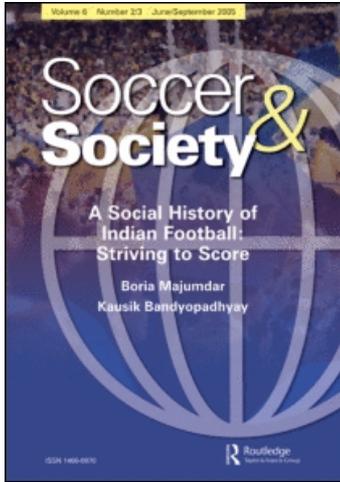
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Women and gender in South African soccer: a brief history

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This essay traces the history of South African women's participation in competitive soccer from 1970 to the present and analyses power relations, namely race, gender and class, within the sport. Three distinct periods are identified: (1) emergence and development years from 1970 to 1990; (2) growth and transition years from 1991 to 2000; and (3) institutionalization years from 2001 to the present. This socio-historical analysis is based on fieldwork in South Africa and relies on qualitative interviews, participant observations and archival documentation. Special attention is given to the shifting racial demographics of women footballers, the influence of feminism and democratization in South Africa on increasing the numbers of girls and women in this masculine flagship sport, globalization of 'women's soccer' and the organizational development in the sport at the local and national levels. Contributions of key administrators and leaders as well as players are briefly discussed.

Introduction

One of the ubiquitous sights during the late afternoon in both rural and urban communities of South Africa is that of young boys playing soccer on makeshift or well-worn soccer pitches. While young boys have carved out space for their physical and social pleasure during the late afternoons, young girls spend their last hours of daylight hauling water and making preparations for the evening meal. South African Cheryl Roberts, a former elite athlete and sports advocate, argues that the gender division of household labour, which burdens women and privileges men, is a critical factor in limiting South African women's access to sports.¹ For the vast majority of women in South Africa, especially those in rural areas, participation in competitive sport is irrelevant to the needs of their daily lives.² This is not to suggest, however, that South African women of diverse regional, economic and ethnic backgrounds have not participated in competitive sport nor continue to forge new sporting identities and opportunities.

Given the historical constraints on women in sport, South African women's participation in 'female-typed' sports such as netball is far more acceptable than their participation in 'male-typed' sports such as soccer. Soccer in South Africa, like that in much of the world, has been explicitly gendered as a male-only sport.³ The historical exclusion of women in South African soccer was instituted at the time British colonialists first introduced the sport to the country in the nineteenth century. The centrality of soccer to nation building and citizenship in South Africa over the past century, particularly for Blacks, has relied on and been deeply shaped by the fact

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it is constructed as a masculine flagship sport. As such, soccer serves as an ideological and material cornerstone for the maintenance of men's dominance (physically, economically, and socially) over women in South Africa. The importance of soccer in Black popular culture and the sex-segregated nature of the game have led to its construction as a masculine flagship sport.⁴ Unlike racial segregation, sex segregation in soccer has not been collectively challenged until recently. Although individual women and girls have undoubtedly participated in all-male teams prior to the late 1960s, it was not until then that South African women collectively challenged the gendered boundaries within the sport and formed their own teams.

This essay traces the history of South African women's participation in competitive soccer from 1970 to the present. This socio-historical analysis is based on data that were gathered as part of a sociological study of race, gender, sport and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa.⁵ The author conducted fieldwork in South Africa during 1999, 2000 and 2003. The data collected include: semi-structured interviews and survey data with athletes participating in the national team and the Western Province women's soccer league, semi-structured interviews with regional and national football administrators, and archival documents including newspaper articles, tournament programmes, organizational correspondence and policy documents. Direct observation of the women's league play was also carried out in 2000. The Western Province was chosen as the site for this observation because it was widely considered at the time the most developed region for women's soccer in South Africa.

I organize the essay around three periods in South African 'women's soccer'.⁶ These include: (1) the emergence and development period between 1970s and 1990, (2) the growth and transition period between 1991 and 2000, and (3) the institutionalization period from 2000 to the present. This essay does not claim to offer a comprehensive history of women's participation in soccer in South Africa; this would require additional research. Rather, this analysis aims to be an introduction of the history of women's participation in soccer.

Emergence and development years: 1970s to 1990

The deep fissures of race and class in South Africa has meant that women in soccer do not necessarily share the same experiences or form a homogenous grouping.⁷ South African women's access to opportunities in organized soccer has been largely determined by an individual's racial and class location in society, as well as the shifting political opportunities for women to collectively challenge race, gender, and class hierarchies. In South Africa, white women of middle-class backgrounds were among the first to join organized soccer in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁸ While some Black women played irregularly in the 1960s, Coloured and African women started to play organized football in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During these years, the harsh material inequalities experienced by Black women under apartheid rule meant that very few of them enjoyed opportunities to participate in sport.⁹ White middle-class women in urban areas, for example, had much more access to sporting opportunities than poor African, Coloured and Asian women living in rural (or urban) settings.¹⁰ With the dismantling of apartheid during the 1990s Black women gained greater access to the public sphere and started to participate in soccer in ever increasing numbers.

The dominance of White, middle-class women in soccer during the early developmental years suggests that race and class privilege helped facilitate their entry into the

male-dominated sport. Not having to struggle for citizenship rights and by relying on their material resources and social networks, White middle-class women were able to create more opportunities in competitive sports than other women, and sometimes many men, in the country. Like their counterparts in North America and Europe, during the 1970s, South African women of European ancestry challenged gender expectations and forged new opportunities and identities in soccer. Although some Black women enjoyed these new opportunities, the majority of South African women did not have access to the leisure time nor the material resources necessary to participate in organized sport, particularly a male-typed sport like soccer.

It was not until the early 1990s with the dismantling of the apartheid regime and the increasing influence of the mass women's movement in South Africa that created a context in which Black women sought new sporting opportunities in soccer. In their comparative study of women's soccer in Europe during the late twentieth century, Scraton, Fasting, Pfister and Bunuel¹¹ argue that 'women's access to football can be seen as a political outcome of a liberal feminist discourse that centres on equal opportunities, socialization practices and legal institutional reform'. This conclusion holds in the context of South Africa, although it is important to note that women's access to soccer in the country has also been an outcome of both liberal feminism and the racial liberation struggle. Increased access has occurred in two waves. The first wave of new opportunities took place during the 1970s and was limited largely to racially and economically privileged women. The second wave took place in the 1990s and extended opportunities to Black women of modest economic means.

In the early 1970s, the South African Women's Football Association (SAWFA) was formed as the governing body for 'women's soccer' in the country. The distinction between 'establishment' and 'non-racial' sporting organizations during the apartheid era does not quite apply to the SAWFA, although this organization was formed exclusively for Whites and Coloureds. Given women's outsider position in soccer and the limited size of women's soccer during these developmental years, there was the only one national governing body for the sport. In many ways the SAWFA was both an establishment and non-racial organization. The organization was dominated by white women but also racially integrated by the late 1970s. There were however separate racialized organizations in some areas. For example, in the Cape Town area there were two spatially and racially distinct organizations (Cape Western and Western Province) that sent teams to the national interprovincial tournament during this period. In 1991, the South African Women's Soccer Administration (SAWSA) was formed by a group of Black women and aligned with South African Soccer Association (SASA). However, in 1992, SAWFA and SAWSA were merged.

Historical SAWFA documents, such as tournament programmes, claim that the SAWFA was founded with some 600 players. The SAWFA sponsored an annual Women's Interprovincial Soccer Tournament starting in 1975. The lists of tournament venues, participating teams and national champions of the annual event demonstrate that soccer developed as an urban phenomenon and was most popular in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. Between 1975 and 1990, the venue of this national competition rotated primarily between these three locations. The Cape Town league hosted the tournament in 1975, 1978, 1981, 1985 and 1990. The Natal Women's Football Association hosted the tournament in Durban in 1976, 1982 and 1988 and Johannesburg was the host city during 1977, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1986 and 1989. In 1979 and 1987 the tournament was played in Pretoria and Welkom respectively.

Natal dominated the interprovincial competition between 1975 and 1990, winning 12 of the first 16 tournaments, although they never won the tournament at home. The four championships not won by Natal during this period were won by the Western Province and Southern Transvaal teams. The two teams (Western Province and Southern Transvaal) were deemed co-winners in 1976. The Southern Transvaal took the trophy home from the 1980 tournament and the Western Province claimed the trophy in 1982 and 1990. By the late 1980s, there were nine provincial teams competing in the Women's Interprovincial Soccer Tournament. These included representatives from Eastern Transvaal, Southern Transvaal, Western Transvaal, Border, Western Province, Cape Western, Eastern Province, Natal, and Northern Free State. An examination of team photographs and player names printed in tournament programmes from 1987–89 suggest that White women were predominant as players and Black women made up approximately 15%, 18% and 13% of the players in each respective year. Although there were several all-White teams, there were no all-Black teams. The African and Coloured women who participated were scattered throughout numerous teams.

According to several interviewees, racial integration of women's soccer teams under apartheid rule was not a problem because the sport was so small and hardly noticed by most people. Although women of diverse racial and ethnic identities came together on the soccer pitch, white privilege still shaped relations in the sport. After the 1978 interprovincial tournament, the *Cape Herald* published an editorial regarding racism in the sport. The article read:

It is to the credit of Western Province women's soccer that its team for the recently completed interprovincial tournament was chosen 'on merit', that it was not an all-white team. It is a pity, though, that they allowed their good non-racial intentions to be outweighed by attending a racial celebration. Surely, good manners dictated that, if some of their party were disqualified from any activity surrounding the tournament, they should all disqualify themselves as well ... One understands it is difficult for whites to appreciate the social humiliation (among other humiliations) that blacks have to suffer. But one believes that, at a time when South Africa is supposedly changing, whites should make an effort to learn.¹²

While it is important to recognize the non-racial intentions within women's soccer, it is necessary to point out that White women as a group were still not willing to sacrifice their own comfort or privilege to challenge apartheid practices off the field. Additional research is necessary to further elaborate race relations in women's soccer during the apartheid era.

At each national championship prior to the 1990s, players were selected for a national 'Springboks' squad. Due to the international sports boycott of South Africa,¹³ the selected national squad did not play any 'official' international matches until 1993. The first 'unofficial' international competition played by a South African squad was during a five-week 'rebel' tour in Italy during June and July of 1989. To participate in the Italian tour, the South African squad had to covertly leave the country disguised as an anonymous soccer club. The trip was organized by the SAWFA and sponsored by owners of small businesses and the individual participants. The squad that competed in Italy consisted of Rose Ertekes, Debbie McCann, Gaylene Peters, Arlene Singh and Robyn Tokin of Durban, Desiree Ellis, Anne Erasmus, Hazel Ford, Sandra Hill, Marinda 'Schemer' Jordaan, Lesley Kallis and Tess Rodrigues of Cape Town, Cherry Van Eyden of Boksburg (Canadian born), Linda Dick, Penny Keith, Belinda Peterson, Edwina Terblanch and Marcelle Weinstein of Johannesburg, Elsie Gilbert

of Germiston served as the manager and Gail Coetzee of Johannesburg and Durban served as the coach. In 1991, SAWFA organized a second 'rebel' tour to Italy with a nationally selected South African squad.

Growth and transition years: 1991 to 2000

The democratization of South Africa sparked significant changes in women's soccer. During the 1990s, the popularity of soccer among women grew exponentially. As apartheid was being dismantled, Black women joined existing teams in larger numbers and started new teams. One of the first women's clubs based in a 'Black township' in South Africa was organized in Guguletu outside of Cape Town in 1993. Winnie Qhuma and her husband Jeffrey Qhuma decided to form the Winnie's Ladies Soccer Club after they saw television coverage of women competing in soccer in other cities and countries.¹⁴ They thought a soccer club would encourage young girls to participate in a constructive activity after school hours. Their efforts were met with significant opposition – ideological, financial, parental and institutional. Many parents refused permission for their girls to play soccer fearing that the girls would be scorned or become 'tomboys'. They spent a good deal of time visiting parents to convince them that there were benefits in soccer for their daughters. Speaking about gender expectations that limit Black women's participation in soccer Winnie Qhuma observed,

Women in the townships are expected to do all the domestic chores at home. Men very seldom assist even if the women are working during the day. Women are expected to dress conservatively by not wearing clothes that will expose their bodies and they are not allowed to wear pants or go hatless ... She is not expected to participate in any physical activities outside of the home.¹⁵

As is often the case, ideological barriers to women's participation in male-typed sports are often accompanied by financial and institutional barriers to their participation. A significant obstacle to developing Winnie's Club was the lack of adequate funds for transportation and equipment. The lack of sports fields in the township meant that players and teams had to pay for transportation to fields in other communities. More often than not, even if parents approved of their daughter's participation, the cost of transportation was a major obstacle to girls' continued participation in the sport. In organizing the club, the Qhumas sought assistance from existing men's and women's soccer organizations; however, other than encouragement from these entities, substantial support was not forthcoming. Although the club received some sponsorship from local businesses, participation was largely funded by the girls and their families. Despite the ideological, parental, institutional and material barriers, Winnie's Ladies Soccer Club has been a thriving club for over 15 years and has long served as a model for other township clubs around the region and country.

The blossoming of teams during the 1990s is illustrated in the change in the number of teams participating in Western Province women's league from 1991 to 2000. In 1991 there were only six teams competing in the league, and by 2000 there were 22 teams competing in two different divisions. This represents an increase of 267% over a ten-year period.¹⁶ In 1997, a national sports survey estimated that 65,000 South African women participated in recreational and competitive soccer.¹⁷ Administrators of the South Africa Football Association (SAFA), however, critique the methodology of the survey and claim that some 200,000 women were participating.¹⁸

Emerging feminist discourse and demographic shifts

The growth in the number of women participating in soccer was sparked by the dismantling of the racist state and fuelled by the shifting expectations around gender equality in South Africa.¹⁹ As the foundation for the new democracy was being laid during the late 1980s and early 1990s, women activists of the liberation struggle started to speak out more publicly about the importance of building a non-sexist new South Africa.²⁰ With leadership from women in the African National Congress, a broad-based women's movement emerged to ensure that combating sexism, particularly institutional sexism, was an integral part of the roadmap for building the new democratic South Africa. Many women had worked tirelessly for the liberation struggle and they did not want to be left behind as had happened in so many countries around the world after liberation.²¹ With the support of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress, women's rights activists won an impressive array of institutional mechanisms to address sexism in the country. These included explicit constitutional protections, the constitutionally mandated Commission for Gender Equality, and 'Women's Desks' in all governmental agencies. To understand fully South African women's increased participation in soccer during the 1990s, one must consider both the impact of the liberation struggle and the inclusion of gender equality in the democratization of South Africa.

In the context of shifting opportunity structures, efforts to collectively challenge the patriarchal order in sports emerged. Reflecting the emerging feminist discourse in the country, a small women's sport movement emerged among elite women.²² In 1992, a Women's Desk was established at the National Sports Council, the leading sports organization associated with the incoming government. In 1994, the advocacy group Women's Sports Foundation was formed and two years later the umbrella organization Women and Sport South Africa (WASSA) was launched.²³ These efforts represent a progressive move toward valuing gender equality within sports; however, given the serious problems facing South African women, including poverty and violence, there was a general lack of urgency among women's rights activists to organize around sexism in sports. Nonetheless, the logic of the new democratic society suggested, especially to young black women, that both racist and sexist structures and practices were no longer officially supported by the state. Their new sense of freedom encouraged them to challenge male dominance in sports in their own local communities.

The 1990s also brought dramatic demographic changes in women's soccer. As more African and Coloured women joined teams, more league games were played in Black townships, places where most White South Africans rarely travelled. At the moment that Black women were entering the sport, White women started leaving the sport, or 'disappeared' as one player commented. Around the mid-1990s many White women left soccer and started to play indoor soccer, which is played almost exclusively in White dominated areas where facilities are available. Although soccer practitioners are racially diverse, indoor soccer became dominated by White women and outdoor soccer became dominated by Black women. The shift in racial demographics is illustrated in the composition of teams participating in annual interprovincial tournaments and the composition of players on the national squad. An examination of tournament programmes in the years of 1990, 1992 and 1994 shows that Black women made up 21%, 41% and 39% of the players participating in each respective tournament. The trend continued and by the late 1990s there were few

white women participating in league play, although there were some teams made up of predominantly White women. By 1998 there were no White women playing on the national team for South Africa. A national survey conducted in 1997 estimated that 87% of the women/girls participating in soccer identified as African, 5.9% as White, 4.8% as Coloured, and 2.5% as Indian (or Asian). Comparing these estimates with national census data from 1999 it appears that African women are over-represented, Whites and Coloureds are under-represented, and Indians are proportionately represented.²⁴

Generally speaking, the decrease in White women's participation was not seen as problematic among existing participants at the time that this research was conducted: firstly, because White women do not represent a large part of the population, and secondly, because White women's material advantages suggest that they could participate if they so desired. White players and administrators also accepted Black women's dominance in the sport based on perceptions of Blacks' 'natural' soccer abilities. The following comment by a national player illustrates the discursive construction of soccer as a game for African and Coloured women:

There are the odd few White players playing football, but many are going to other sports like basketball. And ah, I'm not trying to be funny, but lots of the White players don't have the natural talent the Black players have. I suppose they've [Whites] come to realize that, 'hey, I'm not going to make it in this sport any more'. And you get the Black players – they've got fantastic talent ... Like our national coach always said, the Blacks [Africans] might have the natural talent, but the Coloureds play from their hearts. And that's what we need, to put the two together.²⁵

This discursive construction of women's soccer as a 'Black game' is consistent with the dominant view of who 'owns' soccer in the country²⁶ and demonstrates that the dismantling of apartheid has not meant the deconstruction of essentialist notions of race. Race is still a salient feature of the new South Africa and competitive sport among women is an important site for negotiating racial categories and meanings. The demographic shifts and growing popularity of soccer among Black women raises new questions about the Africanization of the sport, which should be explored in future research.²⁷

Women's soccer's globalization and South Africa

At the same moment that South African women were enjoying more opportunities in soccer, the sport became one of the fastest growing sports for women on a global scale.²⁸ New opportunities in professional soccer leagues emerged across the globe and transnational governing bodies started sponsoring regional and world championships. Women's football in Africa first gained recognition in 1988 when FIFA invited Ivory Coast to represent the continent at the trial tournament for women's football in China. In 1991, Nigeria represented the African continent in the first Women's World Cup sponsored by FIFA. Reluctantly, the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF) started to sponsor an African Women's Championship, as a qualifying tournament for the World Cup.²⁹ Five years later, in 1996, women's soccer became a full medal sport in the Olympic Games and additional regional qualifying tournaments were put into place.

Television coverage of these international competitions had a direct effect on the popularity of soccer for women in South Africa, as it did in other countries around the

world. According to South African soccer administrators, with each televised event there is a dramatic increase in the number of girls and women expressing interest in the game. The televised match in 1994 between South Africa and Nigeria for the World Cup qualifying tournament was a huge recruitment tool for the sport. In the words of a top soccer administrator:

Nigeria qualified to play in the first World Cup in 1991 and that was good for South Africa because we saw women playing soccer on the television, Black women. Suddenly there was a huge interest. Everyone wanted to play soccer. These girls got to travel; it was now not just running around in the streets. Black women could now see that maybe there is a future in this sport.³⁰

After the end of the international sports boycott and the reinstatement of South Africa in international soccer, the first 'official' international match played by South Africa took place in 1993 against Swaziland in Johannesburg at Milpark Stadium. Players for the women's national team, called *Banyana Banyana* (meaning 'The Girls'), were selected after several days of intensive training with some 40 players from across the nation.³¹ The squad of 23 players included M. Weinstein, G. Maple, A. Childs (captain), R. Theron, R. Medell, S. Khumalo, R. Kgaratsi, A. Monate, F. Sithole, B. King, R. Fick, D. Ellis, S. Lombard, P. Keith, C. Keenan, L. Solomons, E. Klein, G. Hlalele, G. Peters, A. Samuels, R. King, K. Zitha and M. Giles. The team's coach was Terry Paine, the coach of the National Soccer League's Witwatersrand University Club. The South African squad beat the Swaziland team 14-0, which to date is the most goals scored by any South African national team in an international match. South Africa missed the first CAF Women's Championship in 1991 but was the runner up in the championships in 1995 and 2000. The 2000 CAF Women's Championship took place in South Africa at Vosloorus Stadium near Johannesburg and the final game between Nigeria and South Africa was abandoned with 28 minutes remaining in the game because of crowd violence. After Nigeria scored their second goal in the 72nd minute some fans started throwing rocks and bottles because they thought the goal was offside. The game was stopped and the multiple attempts to stop the disturbances failed. The game was awarded to Nigeria (2-0), who went on to participate in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. Finally, with the rise of women's soccer globally and in South Africa, multinational corporations seized the moment to expand their markets. By the late 1990s, corporations such as Reebok and Nike started to recognize the potential of South African women's soccer and began sponsoring the sport at a very modest level.

Organizational conflicts and changes

Up until 1994 women's soccer was organized autonomously from any men's governing body, although men were heavily involved with the sport as coaches, managers and referees. In the early 1990s, the unification of racially based organizations and the formation of the South African Football Association led to women's soccer being associated with, but still independent of, the male dominated association. As one might expect, as more women showed up at their local soccer pitches, highly gendered spaces, more overt power struggles between women and men emerged. Some men acted violently to defend their perceived right to control the sport. In the context of the growing popularity of women's soccer and the influx of monies, an intense set of problems erupted between 1994 and 1996 in the Johannesburg area.³² Allegations of

sexual harassment and mismanagement of funds were raised against several male owners/managers of women's teams.³³

After the problems persisted for several years and SAFA ignored written requests to intervene, the Minister of Sport and the national government got involved. The Office of the President of South Africa convened a judicial commission, headed by Judge B. de V. Pickard, to investigate the gendered conflicts along with other problems within SAFA.³⁴ The following statement from a national women's soccer administrator describes the conflict with local teams in the Johannesburg area.

The sport grew very rapidly and in 1994 we started having a lot of problems with men. They saw women's sports growing and they wanted to come and start running it. We had huge troubles in those years – 1994, 95, and 96. It was really a tormented time for all of us. A lot of the women were threatened by these men and their kids intimidated. It led to the police being involved and all sorts of mess. And, unfortunately the men who were trying to take over the running of women's football had connections with the federation [SAFA] and the federation supported them instead of the women. The people in charge did not take us seriously. We had to go to the Minister of Sports. And there was a huge commission for men and women in soccer [along with other concerns] and it took about three years to complete. It resulted in women being rendered powerless. It resulted in the federation disbanding women's soccer as a separate entity and incorporating it into the men's structure.³⁵

The Pickard Commission found that the male-dominated SAFA was extremely dilatory and negligent in paying attention to problems that women's teams were experiencing.³⁶ Judge Pickard advised SAFA to increase resources for women's soccer and create structures to develop the women's game. As part of an effort to resolve the conflicts, women's soccer indabas³⁷ were held in 1997 and 1999. At the 1999 meeting a decision was made to change the organizational relationship between women's soccer and SAFA. Specifically, women's soccer became a subcommittee of SAFA rather than simply affiliated with the organization. As a subcommittee, the larger male-led governing body had total control over, and fiscal responsibility for, women's soccer.

Like women's teams in other countries around the world,³⁸ men have been an integral part of South African women's soccer from the early days. Given women's limited access and experience within soccer, women's clubs are often dependent on men's expertise and skills. Although the women's soccer community was concerned about the hostility from men toward their presence in soccer, the loss of administrative control of their sport, and the trivialization of women's complaints of sexism on the part of some men, they generally did not seek to exclude men's participation. Rather, the primary contention was about the extent of men's involvement, the lack of women in leadership roles and the marginalization of women leaders. The aggression from some men that women footballers faced suggests that the growth of women's soccer poses a significant challenge to the gender status quo and men's collective sense of entitlement to control the sport.

In 2000, SAFA gained full control over women's soccer. Although some athletes and administrators opposed the changes, most supported the move because of the possibility of increased resources for women's soccer. In the Western Province, one immediate effect of the organizational change was the hiring of the first full-time paid administrator for women's soccer. However, despite the growing acceptance of women in soccer, enormous disparities between the women's and men's programmes

exist. In the following quote, a high level manager at SAFA talks about the difficulty of translating the growing commitment of gender equality within soccer into real action.

On the executive level there is recognition that women's football has to be treated a whole lot more seriously than it had been in the past. But, how to translate that into real action is another matter. Whilst there is a commitment, the commitment on a philosophical level that it needs to change, how to do that practically ... becomes another matter. Because, you know, we are not quite sure if everyone is as committed to that as they say they are on paper.³⁹

While most in the national SAFA leadership rhetorically support increasing women's leadership capacities, the process of dismantling male dominance within soccer has yet to be embraced and institutionalized.⁴⁰ The difficulty of translating gender equality into policy and practice is becoming clear to the women's soccer community as it is to those in other social and political sectors in South Africa.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the democratic transition and the globalization of women's soccer has afforded South African women, especially Black women, new resources including an emergent national discourse on gender equity, some governmental oversight in the sport, an increase of transnational capital, and greater support from global governing bodies to develop more opportunities in soccer and challenge beliefs and practices that construct them as outsiders within the sport.

Institutionalization years: 2000 to present

To some, the women's game was at its peak in 2000 because of the large number of local teams, the strength of the national team Banyana Banyana, the capacity crowds at international matches in South Africa, and the increasing financial support from corporate sponsors.⁴² The violent disturbance that broke out at the final game of the 2000 CAF Women's Championship between Nigeria and South Africa that was abandoned because of a breakdown in crowd control was particularly upsetting for the women's soccer community because the women's game was on a rise in the country. That same year Sanlam, a leading financial services group in South Africa, stepped forward to financially support the African Women's Championship and regional leagues called Sanlam Halala Leagues. Like the earlier structure of provincial leagues and an annual interprovincial tournament, winners of the nine provincial Sanlam Halala Leagues would meet at the end of the season to get a national women's club winner.⁴³ The financial sponsorship of Sanlam fell off for the 2002/03 season (September to March) and Vodacom came on board to support the provincial leagues. However, by the 2007/08 season Vodacom no longer supported the women's leagues.⁴⁴ It was only in February of 2009 that a new sponsor – Absa Group, one of South Africa's largest financial services organizations – was found to support the women's league.⁴⁵

The lack of adequate financial support for women's soccer has been a perennial problem in South Africa, like that in many countries around the world.⁴⁶ At times the national governing body – SAFA – served as a barrier to increased financial support for women's soccer. Interviewees involved at the national level report that the SAFA's management has been slow to pursue leads on sponsors for the women's game and that sponsorship for women's soccer was often constrained by existing financial contracts with major sponsors of the men's game.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, there appears to have been greater institutionalization of the women's game in SAFA and CAF since 2000. In 2001, South Africa established its first women's junior team to participate in the inaugural CAF Africa Women's Under-19 Championship. The early 2000s was also the time that South Africa fielded an Under-17 team and an Under-20 team to compete in international competitions sponsored by CAF and FIFA. In 2003 women's soccer was included for the first time at the All-Africa Games, a Pan-African multi-sports event held since 1965. In addition, the Confederation of Southern African Football Associations (COSAFA) has sponsored a Women's Championship since 2002. For a while now there has been talk and promises of a professional women's league in South Africa but nothing has materialized. Adequate finances to support the league have not yet been forthcoming from SAFA or the private sector. The lack of financial support has had a particularly negative effect on preparations for big international tournaments.

South Africa has come close numerous times, but has never qualified for the FIFA Women's World Cup. Only one team from the African continent has been invited to participate in the global event and up until this point in time that team has been the Nigerian Super Falcons. South Africa has been repeatedly defeated by Nigeria, the women's African powerhouse. The 2008 African Women's Championship was the first time that Nigeria did not take home the winner's trophy. South Africa was runner-up in the 2000 and 2008 CAF Women's Championships, losing to Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea respectively. South Africa was also the runner-up to Nigeria at the All-Africa Games in the 2003 and 2007. South Africa has, however, dominated the southern African countries. They won the COSAFA Women's Championship in 2002 and 2006.

Among the many who have worked for the development of women's soccer in South Africa, Fran Hilton-Smith stands out as a tireless advocate for the game. She is a former national player, current and first female FIFA and CAF instructor, long-time SAFA administrator, and the general manager and occasional coach of the women's national squad over the past 15 years. Hilton-Smith also has been instrumental in increasing the number of female referees and coaches in South Africa and has trained hundreds of female coaches and referees from throughout Africa. Recently Hilton-Smith helped to organize the 2007 CAF Women Coaches and Administration Courses that was hosted by SAFA in the Johannesburg area. Separate courses for leaders in French and English-speaking countries were held. Hilton-Smith has also been influential in nurturing opportunities for South African players in European and American professional soccer leagues. For example, Veronica Phewa of Durban and Lena Mosebo of Welkom play for the FC Indiana, one of the US professional clubs and one of the most multicultural teams in the league. According to Fran Hilton-Smith, given the lack of professional opportunities in South Africa, these playing opportunities are critical for the competitiveness of Banyana Banyana.⁴⁸

Other noteworthy women in South African football are Anastasia (Nastasia) Tsihclas, Desiree Ellis and Portia Modise. Tsihclas, often referred to as the 'Iron Lady' of South African soccer, has been an administrator in both the men's and women's game in South Africa over the past 30 years. She is currently an executive committee member of the men's Premier Soccer League (PSL); an executive committee member of SAFA; chairperson for the SAFA Women's Football Committee; director of the Local Organizing Committee for the 2010 World Cup; a member of the CAF Women's Football Committee; and on the Football Committee of FIFA.⁴⁹ Tsihclas has been a strong voice for South Africa to bid for the 2015 Women's World

Cup. She argues that since the facilities are being built to host the men's FIFA World Cup in 2010, South Africa would be more than capable of hosting the women's tournament. Hosting the tournament would undoubtedly stimulate more participation and financial support for the women's game in South Africa.

Desiree Ellis is another widely recognized name in South African women's football. She started playing organized soccer in 1978 and has served in numerous positions in South African football. As one of the strongest players in Africa, Ellis was one of three players in the country nominated for the CAF woman footballer of the year award. Besides being the captain of Banyana Banyana for many years she has worked as a television pundit and is currently a football ambassador for the 2010 World Cup. Portia Modise and Noko Alice Matlou are current players who enjoy a high profile in South Africa. Modise is the current captain of Banyana Banyana and is playing professionally in Denmark. In 2006 Modise was one of the top three vote-getters for the CAF footballer of year award. She was selected to play in the All-Stars squad in the match that preceded the official draw of the 2007 FIFA World Cup in China. Matlou is the newest star at the national level who just won the 2008 CAF Footballer of the Year Award.

While the women's game has grown significantly at the national and international levels during the 2000s, some argue that there has been a decline in the women's game at the local level. 'The number of clubs has dropped dramatically', observed Desiree Ellis. 'Many players have also stopped playing altogether or changed to another sport. The quality of football and commitment of players has also dropped drastically. Players are looking for jobs, and most players stop playing as football doesn't put food on the table.'⁵⁰ Ellis is a strong advocate for a national professional women's league, which she thinks would improve the quality of football, increase the number of teams and encourage more women to join clubs. Other institutional mechanisms to develop and improve women's soccer in South Africa were discussed at a recent August 2008 planning workshop. These include developing girls' soccer in schools, the formation of women's clubs by the PSL teams, and setting up an office with a dedicated staff dealing solely with women's football. One positive sign for the future development of women's soccer is that it appears white women are returning to the sport. According to Hilton-Smith, Banyana Banyana players Kylie-Ann Louw, Janine van Wyk and Mandy de Arouja 'have encouraged many white girls to come back to the game'.⁵¹

Conclusion

In spite of the many obstacles, including the constraints of gendered household labour, ideological discourses and lack of material support, South African women have been active agents in creating opportunities and developing new identities within the global game of soccer over the past 40 years. As Cheryl Roberts has more generally observed, South African women have carved out space to enjoy the potential benefits of competitive soccer and are doing so 'against the grain'. The history of South African women's participation in the 'people's game' suggests both successes and challenges. The emergence and development decades of the 1970s and 1980s offered new opportunities for women in soccer, but almost exclusively for white South Africans. There were some black South Africans participating during this period but were very much a minority. Although the number of women's clubs was relatively small at this time, the dedication among the players, coaches and managers was

strong. The racial homogeneity of the women may have helped create cohesion among the players. Annual interprovincial tournaments brought together the best teams and players from around the country. Although it was not until 1987 that a South African national team competed internationally, a national squad was selected at each of the interprovincial tournaments starting in 1975.

With the democratization of South Africa, the growth of the feminist movement, and the globalization of women's soccer, the 1990s was a period of transition and growth for the sport. Black women entered the sport in ever-increasing numbers and new clubs were formed in Black townships. With the dismantling of apartheid and the growth of women's soccer among African and Coloured women, White women left the sport and did not return until the mid-2000s. The 1990s also brought organizational changes, conflict with men's soccer, and a continued lack of sponsorship. The period from 2000 to the present is described here as an institutionalization period for the sport. While opportunities for international matches have increased for national level teams, the development of women's clubs at the local level seems to be waning. Some argue a women's professional league and soccer for girls in schools would help grow the sport at the local level.

The hosting of the 2010 Men's FIFA World Cup by South Africa creates another opportunity to develop the game among women in the country. An even greater stimulus would be for South Africa to host the 2015 Women's FIFA World Cup. This may depend on the success of South Africa in international competition over the next few years and the willingness of SAFA to more actively address gender inequalities at all levels within the sport. One thing is certain, the future of women's soccer in South Africa promises to be full of challenges and successes. With rising new stars like Noko Alice Matlou and solid veteran players, South African footballers' collective dream of qualifying for the Women's FIFA World Cup may not be too far off.

Notes

1. Roberts, *Against the Grain*.
2. Hargreaves, 'Women's Sport'; Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport*; Hargreaves and Jones, 'South Africa'; Pelak, 'Negotiating Gender/Race/Class'; Pelak, 'Local-Global Processes'; and Roberts, *Against the Grain*.
3. Alegi, *Laduma*; Booth, *The Race Game*; Couzens, 'An Introduction'; Fjeld, 'Soccer Rites'; and Thabe, *It's a Goal*.
4. Nauright and Chandler, *Making Men*.
5. Pelak, 'Athletes as Agents'; Pelak, 'Negotiating Gender/Race/Class' and Pelak, 'Local-Global Processes'. Additional information about the methodology and data used here can be found in these articles.
6. I put the concept 'women's soccer' in inverted quotes to problematize the concept. It is common for authors to qualify the soccer played by females as 'women's soccer' and that played by males as simply 'soccer'. Common usage suggests that South African soccer refers exclusively to the men's game. If one is referring to women's participation, a feminine qualifier is used. Discursively this constructs the soccer that men play as the 'real' soccer and that which the women play as the other or inferior version of the game. In this essay I minimize the use of the feminine qualifier (i.e., women's soccer) as a way to challenge the notion of women as outsiders to the South African sport of soccer.
7. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Dewar, 'Generic Women in Sport'; and Scraton, 'Reconceptualizing Race'.
8. Pelak, 'Negotiating Gender/Race/Class'; Pelak, 'Local-Global Processes'; Saavedra, 'Football Feminine'.
9. Baden, Hassim, and Meintjes, *Country Gender Profile*.

10. Hargreaves, 'Women's Sport'.
11. Scraton *et al.*, 'It's Still a Man's Game?', 99.
12. 'White Selfishness Must Cease'. *Cape Herald*, September 16, 1978, 10.
13. Booth, *The Race Game*.
14. Keim and Qhuma, 'Winnie's Ladies Soccer'.
15. *Ibid.*, 84–85.
16. This finding is based on interview data and archival documents gathered in the Western Province.
17. Sport Information and Science Agency, 'Participation of Women', 19.
18. Interview with SAFA administrator, Johannesburg, September 12, 2000. Because confidentiality was promised to research participants the names of interviewees are being withheld.
19. Pelak, 'Negotiating Gender/Race/Class'; Pelak, 'Local-Global Processes'.
20. Lemon, 'Reflections'; McFadden, 'Nationalism and Gender'; Seidman, 'Gendered Citizenship'.
21. McFadden, 'Nationalism and Gender'; Meintjes, 'Gender, Nationalism'; West, *Feminist Nationalism*.
22. This finding is consistent with that documented by Hargreaves, 'The Women's International Sports Movement'.
23. Hargreaves and Jones, 'South Africa'; Women and Sport South Africa, 'History of Women'.
24. Statistics South Africa, 'Primary Tables'.
25. Interview with national player, Cape Town, July 31, 2000.
26. Alegi, *Laduma!*; Booth, *The Race Game*.
27. Alegi, *Laduma!*.
28. Hong and Mangan, *Soccer, Women*; Lopez, *Women on the Ball*; Williams, *A Beautiful Game*.
29. S. Egunjobi, 'Now Women Get Chance of Glory: Nations Cup Opens Window of Opportunity for African Stars'. *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), November 12, 2000.
30. Interview with SAFA administrator, Johannesburg, July 24, 2000.
31. I. Hawkey, 'Paine's Dames Net First Goal Across Sport's Gender Line'. *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), May 30, 1993.
32. L. Mazibuko, 'Confusion as Too Many Women Take to the Field'. *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), September 4, 1994, 24.
33. L. Rulashe, 'Sex Claim: "We are Innocent": Soccer Officials Out in the Open'. *City Press* (Johannesburg), March 30, 1997, 7.
34. L. Alfred, 'Fran Believes the Sisters should be Doing It For Themselves'. *The Sunday Independent* (Johannesburg), October 5, 1997, 24.
35. Interview with SAFA administrator, Johannesburg, July 24, 2000.
36. Pickard Commission Report, *Pickard Commission of Enquiry*.
37. Indaba, a Zulu word, means 'public gathering' or 'meeting' at which difficult issues are discussed.
38. Lopez, *Women on the Ball*; Williams, *A Beautiful Game*.
39. Interview with SAFA administrator, Johannesburg, July 24, 2000.
40. Pelak, 'Negotiating Gender/Race/Class'.
41. Friedman, 'Effecting Equality'; Hassim, 'Voices, Hierarchy'.
42. Interview with SAFA administrator, Johannesburg, June 20, 2003; and interview with national team player, Cape Town, June 15, 2003.
43. T. Ratone, 'Women Get Big Soccer Boost'. *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), December 16, 2001.
44. 'Women's Soccer in the Sport Light'.
45. SAFA, 'ABSA Women's League Launched'.
46. Lopez, *Women on the Ball*; Williams, *A Beautiful Game*; and Hong and Mangan, *Soccer, Women*.
47. Interview with SAFA administrator, Johannesburg, July 24, 2000.
48. 'Women's Soccer in the Sport Light'.
49. The FIFA Football Committee was established in 1998 and aims to protect the future welfare of the game. The Football Committee includes current and past players, referees, coaches, managers, doctors and others directly connected to the game. These 'guardians of the game' meet numerous times per year. The current Chair is Franz Bechenbauer.
50. 'Women's Soccer in the Sport Light'.
51. *Ibid.*

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