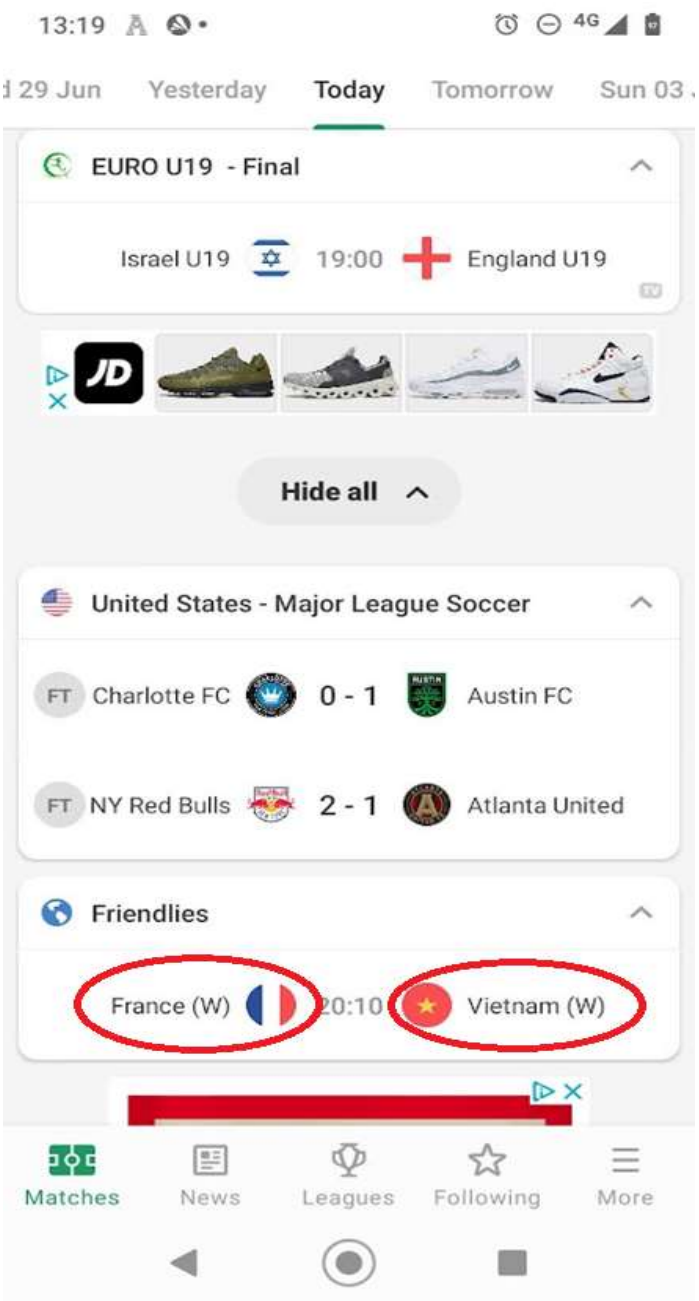
Module 1. The challenges faced by women's football – Historical, cultural, and institutional barriers

When broadcasters, newspapers, sport apps, or sport fans refer to football, it is usually assumed that – by default – they are referring to the men's game. This is best illustrated by the fact that the adjective 'women's', or an abbreviation 'W', gets added to denote when a football match/result comes from the 'other' form of football (see figure 1). In other words, the media tends to only specify – or mark – the gender of a sport's participants when they are women (Fernández, 2021). This reinforces men as the standard, and suggests that female athletes and women's sports are to be separated as they are of inferior quality (Messner *et al.*, 1993).

A clear example of this is the official name given by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) to the most prestigious competition they organise: the World Cup. The men's tournament is simply referred to as **the** World Cup, whereas the women's version is officially called the **Women's** World Cup (Fernández, 2021). Figure 2 captures imagery from FIFA's own marketing and communications (as of 2022) of the World Cup; separate to – and distinct from – the same tournament when the footballers participating are **women**. These simple examples gently help to introduce students to just one of many challenges facing the development, promotion, or commercialisation of football played by women. There is a dangerous tendency to still separate, or even disparage, women's football; with sexist views distinguishing it from the 'normal', 'original' or 'real' version of the sport (i.e., football played by men). These challenges are best understood through the lenses of historical, cultural, and institutional barriers.

Figure 1 is a screenshot taken from a popular football app (FotMob) demonstrating the use of the designation 'W' for women's football games or tournaments. Men's games or tournaments are **not** denoted with a 'M' or any other marker. This reinforces a cultural barrier where men's football is positioned as the standard form, while women's football is a noted departure from that norm. The highlights (in red ink) were added by the author to make the distinction clear to students.

Figure 1: Popular football app (FotMob)



Source: [online image of popular football app (FotMob)], (n. d.), https://bit.ly/3OtT5vb.

Figure 2: Popular football app (FotMob)

Source: [online image of popular football app (FotMob)], (n. d.), https://bit.ly/3OtT5vb.

Figure 3 and 4 are screenshots from FIFA's official websites (i.e., FIFA.com) to promote/disseminate information about 'the' World Cup and, separately, 'the Women's' World Cup. The World Cup (with no gender specified) refers to the tournament played by male footballers. A gendered adjective is only included when referring to football tournaments played by women.

Figure 3: FIFA's official website

Source: [online image of FIFA's official website], (n. d.), https://fifa.fans/3zxfpzK.

Figure 4: FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023 official website

Source: [online image of FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023 official website], (n. d.), https://fifa.fans/3osYyHZ.

1.1.1 The development of women's football: understanding the challenges

In order for you to understand the present situation in women's football business, and influence its future, then it is important to start by acknowledging its past. Specifically, the

various challenges faced by women's football. The business of women's football has had to overcome many barriers over time. By the end of this module, you will be knowledgeable of the assorted historical, cultural, and institutional barriers that affected (and continue to negatively impact) women's football business.

To guide you through this learning process, you will learn about (1.1.2) the history of the creation of organised sports and the exclusion of girls and women; (1.1.3) the history of football and the changing role of women; (1.1.4) the two types of constraints (antecedent and structural) that continue to negatively impact the development of football played by women and girls.

Once you have developed your knowledge of historical constraints, then the second half of this module focuses on teaching you about how these various barriers continue to negatively impact the development of women's football in specific (but very significant) areas. Section 1.1.5 focuses on football (and sport more broadly) and the continued issue of discriminatory gender stereotyping – as well as the perpetuation of cultural constraints that deter girls or women from specific sports. This section teaches you about the continued prevalence of the concept of 'he-sports' and 'she-sports'. Gender stereotyping continues to have a detrimental impact on the advancement of the business of women's football.

Section 1.1.6 then focuses on how historical, cultural, and institutional barriers can be seen to combine and negatively impact the media coverage of women's sport, which, of course, in turn, negatively impacts on how global audiences access – or form their opinions about – women's football.

In section 1.1.7, the focus switches from the media to the law. More specifically, it teaches students about how the law can be used to confront that powerful cocktail of historical, cultural, and institutional barriers. Although, of course, the law can only change so much – it has yet to successfully overturn the sexist ideology that perpetuates the gender pay gap in women's football and women's sport. The commitment of football stars from the US Women's National Team provide a perfect case study to help students learn about this ongoing struggle for equality in women's football.

Finally, in section 1.1.8, the spotlight is placed on how historical, cultural, and institutional barriers have created a subpar environment for the development of women's football business. For example, this section focuses on the deficient funding, inadequate facilities, and institutional neglect that has repeatedly impeded the growth and advancement of women's football.

It is likely that some of the terminology used in this module is new to you. Do not worry. Remember that being introduced to, beginning to understand, and then being able to use new terminology are all normal parts of the learning process. In addition to new terminology, across each half of this module, we will present you with a blend of frameworks, concepts, and/or theories. To deepen your learning, each of these will be 'brought to life' through a broad array of examples and in-depth case studies with which you can engage to elevate your learning.

1.1.2 A brief history of organised sports and the exclusion of women

Sport, the military and men

Scholars of sport history have traced the origins of organised/modern sport (i.e., with formalised rules) back over 150 years. For example, as early as 1860, the British army began investing in organised sports that could be incorporated in the army's training regimens (Campbell, 2000). The idea driving this investment was that sport (and the training, discipline, and tactics associated with its practice) closely resembled war – but on a smaller and more manageable level. Of course – given the era – the opportunity to join the military, or to train or participate in its development of organised sport, was only available to men or teenage boys.

Sport, education and boys

Around the same time period (i.e., late 19th Century), there is also a rich documented history of British schools creating organised sports to promote order and discipline among its pupils; a historical movement that was termed as 'muscular Christianity' (Giulianotti, 2016). Sports such as football, rugby, field hocked, and lawn tennis were organised and enforced as a means of trying to manage the 'unruly energies' of boys and young men in schools (Mangan, as cited in Giulianotti, 2016). Here again, training – or participating in sports – were reserved for only one gender, with girls or women excluded.

Given these origins, it is not surprising that Giulianotti (2016) points to modern sport as a crucial cultural domain for reinforcing, and reproducing, dominant notions of 'manliness'. In other words, modern organised sports cannot be easily separated from their long legacy – dating back to the late 19th Century – of reproducing a 'male culture' steeped in aggression, muscularity, camaraderie, violence and gambling. Academics have documented these male sporting histories across the United Kingdom, North America, and Australasia (Giulianotti, 2016). Across the world, there is a long heritage of insulting people who abstained from sport as being effeminate (i.e., having traits associated with the sexist stereotypes of 'feminine'), weak, or morally inferior (Giulianotti, 2016). For example, historically, in Australia, people who were critical of the violence in sport – and

who did not want to take part – were labelled as 'cowards' or 'old women' (Booth and Tatz, as cited in Giulianotti, 2016).

The creation of sport mega-events and the exclusion of women

At an international level, it is important to remember that, when the first modern Olympic Games took place in Athens, in 1896, women were barred from participating. Pierre Baron de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, stated that Olympic Games with "females would be impractical, uninteresting, unesthetic, and improper" (Hynes, 2008, para. 5). Instead, he believed that women were suited to motherhood and/or being companions to men (Giulianotti, 2016). Women were presumed to be biologically too 'delicate' for sport, and medics advised against their inclusion in sport based on needing to protect women's reproductive organs (Hargreaves, as cited in Giulianotti, 2016).

Even when some women, historically, did start to participate in a small number of sports that were considered acceptably 'ladylike' (e.g., tennis, croquet, and remedial gymnastics), this opportunity was purely for those from wealthy backgrounds/class (Giulianotti, 2016). Importantly, this is more than a lesson in history. Students must try to trace the various historical connections with the impact on women's sport today. For example, students should not forget that it was until the 2008 Olympics that the number of female participants reached similar levels to that of male participants (Hynes, 2008).

1.1.3 A brief history of football and the role of women

Women and football: an early era of inclusivity, growing spectatorship, and commercial interest

Over the last decade, women's football has increasingly emerged from the shadow of the commercial domination of the men's game. However, it is important to remember that the recent growth in the women's game is not the first time that the public – and large audiences of spectators – have been excited by women's football and attended their competitions. For example, in 1917, during the first world war, more than 10,000 spectators watched a women's football match in Preston, England (BBC News, 2019). Photographic archives remind us of the early popularity of women's football. Figure 3 (below) shows a large crowd of spectators at a women's football match in London in 1912.

Figure 5: Large crowd of spectators in attendance at a women's football match held in Tottenham, North London, in 1912

Source: BBC, 2019, https://bbc.in/3veMhL8.

These were not isolated events. In fact, the participation of women in football, and the mass attendance of spectators at their games, grew rapidly in Britain after the First World War (i.e., post-1918). In 1920, a women's football match in Liverpool attracted 53,000 spectators, with 15,000 reported to be turned away as the ground was at full capacity (Taylor, 2019). Importantly, Taylor notes that there was also increasing commercial interest in the women's game. For example, Lyons, a famous coffee company in the United Kingdom, began decorating their cake boxes with pictures of women playing football as they wanted to connect the public's excitement for women's football with their products.

Women and football: an era of exclusion

However, the growth in popularity for the women's game was soon destroyed by the Football Association (the FA). In 1921, the Football Association in England declared football to be 'quite unsuitable for females', placing a ban on women playing in any ground in the country that was affiliated with the FA (Taylor, 2019). That ban included all grounds with spectator facilities (BBC News, 2019). Worse still, other countries followed suit by placing their own bans on women in football; Norway in 1931, France in 1932, Brazil in 1941 (Taylor, 2019). Taylor notes that, in 1955, West Germany's football association declared football to be an 'aggressive sport', and said that that makes it essentially alien to the nature of woman. They stated that a woman's body and soul would inevitably suffer harm, if they played football and, furthermore, 'the display of the woman's body offends decency and

modesty' (as cited in Taylor, 2019). Gender stereotyping and blatant sexism was clear for all to see in the world of women's football at this time.

The FA's ban on women footballers in England lasted more than 50 years; it was only lifted in 1971 **after** a group of women – who opposed the ruling – then travelled to Mexico to participate in a Women's World Cup [see figure 4] (Taylor, 2019). England's women's team lost all three of their games, but this was not surprising considering that they have been banned from training or playing on any FA-affiliated pitches in their home country. One of their players from that tournament, Chris Lockwood, said it was utterly surreal to go from training on local park pitches to running out in front of 80,000 people at Mexico's finest stadia (as cited in Taylor, 2019).

In figure 6, a photograph from the opening ceremony of the 1971 World Cup for Women – hosted in Mexico – is presented. A team of women from England participated in the tournament, despite still being banned from playing football in FA-affiliated grounds in their home country. The tournament itself still did not have official status because FIFA still did not give its support to women's football at that time.

Figure 6: Opening ceremony of the 1971 World Cup for Women

Source: The Guardian, 2019, https://bit.ly/3Bf6DI7.

Even after the FA's ban on women was formally lifted (in 1971), it was reported that women were still strongly advised to 'stay in your lane' (Taylor, 2019). Treating women in the sport of football as second-class citizens was still a global issue. Indeed, the Women's World Cup (photographed above) was not even recognised by/supported by FIFA. There were 110,000 spectators at the final of that 1972 tournament to watch Denmark beat

Mexico 3-0. However, it was not until the late 1980s that FIFA decided to review if a World Cup with women footballers would be feasible (after receiving pressure from the Norwegian FA at the 1986 FIFA Congress). FIFA did not hold their first sanctioned World Cup for footballers who are women until 1991, in China – a full 20 years after the unofficial tournament above had been successfully hosted in Mexico.

1.1.4 The perpetuation of barriers: antecedent and structural constraints in women's football today

Women and football: connecting past and present

Although the preceding sections fall under the heading of 'history', it is important that students are able to connect the past with the present. Overturning sexist bans on women's participation in football did not suddenly create a level playing field. Decades of discrimination and inequality are not simply undone. Girls and women in sport still encounter discrimination. Women's and girl's participation in football continues to be hampered by dangerous stereotypes and gendered ideology (Collins and Kay, 2003). Women's and girl's participation in sport is still lower due to both antecedent constraints and structural constraints (Collins and Kay, 2003; Jackson, 1990).

Women and football: explaining antecedent and structural constraints

Antecedent constraints refer to how girls' or women's formation of preferences (in this case, about sports) are influenced by social norms. For example, a woman or girl might feel that preferring/choosing to participate in sport (or in a specific sport) would be perceived badly by their family, friends, or other important people in their lives. This might be particularly important if the sport they preferred was deemed 'too masculine'. Furthermore, in many cultures and societies, girls or women will feel that it would not be acceptable for them to spend any of their time participating in a sport. They face expectations to bear the burden of caregiving. This can involve, for example, caring for siblings, older family members, or children – while also being expected to do the majority of domestic chores.

Structural constraints refer to factors that affect how girls' or women's preferences are then turned (or prevented from turning) into participation. For example, research has shown that even after Muslim girls and women in Ireland decided that they wanted to play football (despite many facing criticism/objections), they then faced many structural barriers (O'Byrne, 2021). Structural barriers included football clubs not creating, or being open to developing, a girls' team. This meant that many girls or women would have to travel long distances to find a team that would allow them to participate. At the same

time, many girls were blocked from playing football in their school because boys and girls were separated – and football was a sport reserved for boys.

Although gender is central to this module (1.1), it is also important to acknowledge that there is no one single, or homogenous, experience for all girls and women (Cohen, 2009). Instead, various characteristics (e.g., religious, racial, social class, sexuality and disability) can also add to forms of social exclusion or disadvantage. These characteristics – alongside gender – can further compound the ways though which people with certain labels are either privileged or discriminated against – in society and, of course, in sport. To return to the example taken from the research of O'Byrne (2021), presented above, some football clubs in Ireland did cater to female players. However, even some of those more inclusive clubs could then still exclude specific (i.e., Muslim) girls or women from football. For example, some clubs did accept female players, but they did not (at that time) make Muslim girls welcome – or they refused to let them play football while wearing their hijab. It is important to remember that even FIFA did not allow girls or women to play football while wearing a hijab until recently. In 2011, Iran's Women's National Team were forced to forfeit a match because FIFA match officials would not allow their players to wear their hijabs [see figure 7] (CNN, 2011). FIFA did not lift their ban, which simply allowed Muslim players to wear a hijab while playing football, until 2014 (Al Jazeera, 2014).

In figure 7, it is possible to observe players from Iran's women's national team training while wearing their hijabs. This was not allowed by FIFA until they overturned their ban in 2014. For decades, Muslim girls and women who chose to wear a hijab were excluded from playing the game of football.

Figure 7: Players from Iran's women's national team training while wearing their hijabs

Source: [online image of players from Iran's women's national team training while wearing their hijabs], (n. d.), https://cnn.it/3vc1iNF.

1.1.5 Sport and the durability of discriminatory barriers: gender stereotyping, and 'he-sports' vs. 'she-sports'

Discriminatory stereotypes in sport: connecting past and present

Girls and women in sport still encounter inequality and discrimination – stemming from dangerous gendered ideology and stereotypes (Collins and Kay, 2003). Stereotypes are defined as generalisations of characteristics, attributes, or behaviours of members of a given group (Hilton and Von Hippel, as cited in Fernández, 2021). So, for example, sexist stereotypes tell us that girls and women have characteristics that make them more suited to caring duties or domestic tasks, and less suited to playing sport. These sexist stereotypes have historically been supported by notions that sporting officials/decision-makers needed to exclude women from sport in order to protect public decency as well as the girls' or women's 'delicate' bodies, reproductive organs, or even their souls (Giulianotti, 2016; Taylor, 2019). Those notions, which were normalised for more than a century, were not simply erased when sporting federations, policymakers, or law-makers introduced changes.

Even today, many people associate elite and exciting sport, including football, with the men's game, believing that it requires 'masculine attributes' such as physical strength, extreme endurance, violence and risk-taking (Fernández, 2021; Musto *et al*., 2017). These attributes relate back to what Connell (1987, 1990, 1995) called hegemonic masculinity theory. Connell outlined a hierarchy of dominant attributes that are deemed to be the dominant/archetype form of masculinity. That is, the kind of masculinity that was expected and valued most in society. Those attributes included physical strength, suppression of emotions, whiteness, and heterosexuality. Over the decades, since this theory was put forth, society has increasingly questioned the damage done by valuing those characteristics as the archetype of 'masculinity'. Today, in the media, you will often see hegemonic masculinity now referred to as 'toxic masculinity' (Fenwick, 2018; Raisin, 2017).

Discriminatory stereotypes in sport: 'he-sports' and 'she-sports'

The social acceptance, or perpetuation, of expected 'masculine' or 'feminine' traits results in the maintenance of a distinction between sports deemed to be acceptable 'he-sports' or acceptable 'she-sports' (Cohen, 2009) – based on sexist gender stereotypes. This is true not only in football, but also across sport more broadly. For example, in the USA, Cohen (2009) has written about the long history of discrimination that girls and women have

faced in baseball. Male privileges in the sport and not just 'historic'; instead, they are alive and have been maintained in various ways through to today. In the USA, there is still a broad acceptance – based on gender stereotypes – that girls should play softball and boy should play baseball (Cohen, 2009). Sporting systems still funnel girls and women into playing softball (perceived to be a suitable 'she-sport') instead of baseball (perceived to be a suitable 'he-sport'). In the UK, there is still a tendency for girls and women to be funnelled into joining a netball team (a 'she-sport') instead of sports perceived to be traditional 'he-sports' – such as football, rugby, or boxing. The power of sexist stereotyping still fosters many disadvantages for women in sport, and women in football. For example, only 24 % of people registered as playing football in England are women, with 76 % of registered players being men (The Football Association, as cited in Fernández, 2021).

The inequality in sport doesn't end with the disparity in the opportunities for women or girls to participate in playing the sport. For example, Thompson found that, within many local sports clubs, it is girls and women who still take the burden of all the 'voluntary' tasks – such as cleaning, preparing food, and washing sport equipment – rather than playing (Thompson, as cited in Giulianotti, 2016). Given the continuance of these embedded inequalities, it is not surprising that, in 2018, the number of viewers for the men's World Cup final (i.e., one match) surpassed the total number of viewers for the entire women's World Cup tournament in 2019 (Fernández, 2021).

1.1.6 Discriminatory barriers: the media, sexism, and women's sport

For decades, media coverage of women's sport was virtually invisible. Even today, there are sport channels where no women's sport is shown, and countries where women's sport is allocated less than 2 % of the sport reporting time (Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, 2018). Other research in this area found that – over an 11-year period – the cover of *Sports Illustrated* only featured a woman 4.9 % of the time (Weber and Carini, 2013). Furthermore, even when some coverage of women's sport does feature on major media outlets, that coverage was found to frequently trivialise the athletic feats or sporting performances of women in sport (Messner *et al*., 2003). For example, many authors have accused *Sports Illustrated* of sexism. They refute the claims made by *Sports Illustrated* that featuring bikini-clad women on their magazine cover (see figure 8) is about empowering women and their voice (Roper, 2018).

In figure 8, there is Caitlin Roper, a campaigner against the sexual exploitation of women and girls, that has criticised *Sports Illustrated* for publishing series of naked women while simultaneously claiming that their intention is to celebrate 'more than just their bodies'[1].

Figure 8: A *Sports Illustrated* cover

Source: [online image of a *Sports Illustrated* cover], (n. d.), https://bit.ly/3Bl5YEV.

Discriminatory stereotypes in sport media

Fernández (2021) summarised research in the area of media coverage of women's football. She identified that the media predominantly either (i) depicts female athletes as woman first, athlete second (e.g., focus on non-sport related aspects of their lives – including their family or dating life, and fashion preferences; and/or (ii) sexualises women in sport rather than focus on them as sporting competitors. Alternatively, some media outlets take a different (but still constraining) approach, choosing to promote/position women's football as something that only females or families would have any interest in (Allison, 2018).

These results contrast with those identified in men's sports – where the media centres their attention on men's athletic abilities, daring/exciting performances, and sporting excellence (Fernández, 2021). When researchers took deeper explorations into the different ways that the media present, or treat, women's football, they found that they use less action-packed language or adjectives when covering women's matches as opposed to men's matches (Fernández, 2021). Furthermore, as was briefly demonstrated at the opening of this module (see 1.1), the media uses gendered language (or 'gender marking') when reporting on women's football, as opposed to men's (e.g., *Women's* World Cup, Top Goalscorer in the *Women's* Premier League, etc.). This can result in viewing audiences

[1] For more information see https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/naked-women-in-sports-illustrated-isn-t-about-giving-them-a-voice-20180214-p4z0ay.html

accepting that the media has reinforced men's sport as the standard form of sport, and perceiving female athletes and women in sport to be inferior (Fernández, 2021; Higgs *et al*., 2003; Messner *et al*., 1993). Finally, research found that the media also tend to refer to women in sport using their first names, or collectively refer to them as 'ladies' or 'girls' (Fink, 2015). By contrast, media coverage of men's sports tends to refer to men by their last name or their nicknames.

The damage from discriminatory stereotypes in sport media

Sexist discrimination in the media's coverage of sporting events is of critical importance because it perpetuates injustices. The topics the media choose to cover, the emphasis they place on them, and how they choose to frame events can all perpetuate discriminatory gender stereotypes (Fernández, 2021). For example, focusing on women's family lives, or their sex appeal, instead of their sporting achievements, is reminiscent of what Pierre Baron de Coubertin (the founder of the modern Olympics) views on women in the late 19th Century. You will remember (see module 1.1.2), that he stated that an Olympic Games including women as competitors would be uninteresting and improper. Instead, he viewed women as being suited to motherhood and/or being companions to men. These archaic views still seemingly correspond with the media's focus on women footballers' family lives and/or sex appeal. Research has demonstrated that sexualised images of female athletes generate a lot of attention, but that attention leads to them being perceived in ways similar to fashion models; denying them coverage of their sporting excellence (Daniels, 2009; Fernández, 2021). Of course, these perceptions then negatively impact the future growth of women's football in areas ranging from participation to fan attendance, or from sponsorship deals to broadcasting rights.

1.1.7 Discriminatory barriers: the law, sexism, women's football

In the United States, there is a long history of legal cases – based on gender discrimination – brought by girls and women seeking greater equality in the domain of sport (Cohen, 2009). These resulted in a landmark judgement (called title IX) in federal law, passed in 1972, which sought to equalise access to sporting resources and opportunities in high schools and colleges – regardless of gender (Giulianotti, 2016). However, legal protections can only legislate to try to eliminate some barriers to gendered equality in sport. Having the legal right to access a sporting opportunity (e.g., within a university sport system) is not always enough to ensure equality. The mere right to participate or access a sport does not eliminate the gender discrimination that women or girls may experience after entering the sporting domain (Pfister, 2010). Young prepubescent girls can cross the gender barriers, but often only temporarily (Cohen, 2009), as they turn into teenagers and/or try to participate at more elite levels of sport they are often isolated or forced out. For many girls and women, they are playing against something bigger than their sporting

opponents; they are 'playing against patriarchy' (Giulianotti, 2016). This means they are playing against a social system where power is held by men, where cultural norms and customs favour men and deny equal opportunities for women.

The US Women's National Team fight to abolish the gender pay gap

The concept of 'playing against patriarchy' reminds us that sport and gender relations are deeply interconnected. Of course, this stems from the fact that both are influenced by broader economic, political, and social change. Gender stereotypes negatively affect women's opportunities (and careers) both inside and outside of sport. Research shows that gender stereotypes lead to penalties for women in the workplace because their 'female' characteristics and skills are perceived as a poor match for leadership positions (Heilman, as cited in Fernández, 2021). In sport, this can lead to the exclusion of women in positions including referring, coaching or management positions, board membership, or senior sport administrator positions in leagues and/or federations. These discriminatory barriers further compound the fact that women are paid less than men for their work. The damage done by gender stereotypes must be systematically addressed; otherwise, the gender pay gap/wage gap will continue unchecked (Blau and Kahn, 2017).

In women's football in the United States, stay players such as Megan Rapinoe and Margaret Purce have very publicly fought against the gender pay gap/wage gap they have experienced. Figure 9 (below) shows Megan Rapinoe testifying, on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. in 2021, to a United States government committee examining the economic harm caused by longstanding gender inequalities in the payment to – and protections for – women at work. Rapinoe's testimony stated that everyone is taught that if you work hard, then you will achieve – and you will be rewarded fairly. However, those promised rewards are not for everyone. The Women's National Team has won four World Cups and four Olympic gold medals. They have filled stadiums, broken viewing records, and sold-out jerseys. Yet, despite all of this, they are still paid less than men – for each trophy, for each win, for each draw, and every time take to the pitch. Always less.

Rapinoe's full statement can be accesses at https://docs.house.gov/meetings/GO/GO00/20210324/111392/HHRG-117-GO00-Wstate-RapinoeM-20210324.pdf.

In figure 9, there is Megan Rapinoe, US Women's National team player and equal pay advocate, testifying to a US House Oversight Committee hearing titled 'Honoring Equal Pay Day: Examining the Long-Term Economic Impacts of Gender Inequality' (on March 24, 2021).

Figure 9: Megan Rapinoe, US Women's National team player and equal pay advocate

Source: [online image of Megan Rapinoe, US Women's National team player and equal pay advocate], (n. d.), https://abcn.ws/3zd1bTt.

For more information, see https://oversight.house.gov/legislation/hearings/honoring-equal-pay-day-examining-the-long-term-economic-impacts-of-gender.

In March 2021, the President of the United States, Joe Biden, and First Lady, Jill Biden, took to social media to support the US Women's National Team in their legal fight for equal pay (see figure 10). The President wrote the following:

> It doesn't matter if you're an electrician, an accountant, or part of the best soccer team in the world — the pay gap is real. But with Megan, Margaret, and countless others leading the fight for equal pay, I'm confident we'll finally close it. (as cited in Siegel and Kindelan, 2021, https://abcn.ws/3zd1bTt).

In March 2021, the President of the United States, Joe Biden, posted to Instagram to publicly support the US Women's National team footballers (Margaret Purce and Megan Rapinoe are featured in the photo) in their fight for equal pay.

Figure 10: Joe Biden's post

Source: [online image of Joe Biden's post], (n. d.), https://bit.ly/3cJridc.

While section 1.1.6 highlighted the various ways that women in football are treated unfairly by the media, this section (1.1.7) highlighted how women in football are also not compensated commensurately for their sporting ability and the work they do – again stemming from discriminatory stereotypes and gender inequality.

1.1.8 Discriminatory barriers: deficient funding, substandard facilities, and institutional neglect in women's football

In November 2021, the UK Government published a 162-page document entitled *Fan Led Review of Football Governance* (For more information, see https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-takes-next-steps-towards-delivering-major-reform-of-football-in-england) [see figure 11]. The document was the result of engagements with football supporters' trusts, fan groups, women's football representatives, football authorities, club owners, players representatives, underrepresented interest groups, and over 20,000 football fans responding to an online survey. The full report is freely available to download from the UK Government's assets publishing service.

To download the full report, please visit the UK Government's assets publishing service using the following link: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1037648/Football_Fan_led_Governance_Review_v8Web_Accessible.pdf.

The *Fan Led Review of Football Governance* dedicated space specifically to investigate the many barriers to growing the business of women's football.

Figure 11: *Fan Led Review of Football Governance*

Source: [online image of *Fan Led Review of Football Governance*], (n. d.), https://bit.ly/3cLvMjp.

Within the UK report, it is noted that, even though the Football Association (of England) lifted its 50-year ban on women playing football at any of their affiliated grounds in 1971 (see 1.1.3), it was not until 1993 that they provided institutional support for women's football. Furthermore, even after the FA did decide to provide support, they focused on growing participation rather than also taking action on the commercialisation of women's football, developing media interest, and increasing spectatorship, etc. Lack of institutional support in these areas delayed the creation of the Women's Super League (WSL) – which was not founded until 2011. Furthermore, due to lack of financial resources provided to women's football, the WSL was not professionalised until the 2018/2019 season.

Deficient funding

The creation of the Women's Super League has not proved to be effective in redressing the imbalances between men and women's football. For example, the UK report noted that, when football clubs needed to cut costs, there was a culture of 'dispensability' and 'short-termism' in respect of women's and girl's football. Here again, students will see that there is a dangerous tendency to default to protecting what some people still hold to be the 'original' or 'standard' form of football (i.e., men's football). Football clubs' women's team are still seen as an 'easy financial cut' (*Fan Led Review of Football Governance*, 2021)

if a club's men's teams are underperforming and need further investment. Because of these sexist views (see 'playing the patriarchy' in 1.1.7), one of the key questions that the report raised is whether women's football teams should still seek to be affiliated to men's teams, or if they should cut away to be an entirely independent entity.

It is hard to address the gender pay gap in women's professional football (see 1.1.7) when there are such stark differences in the funding provided by key institutions in the game. For example, the report found that FA Cup prize money for the 2020/21 season saw approximately £16 million awarded to the men's game, and only £300K for the women's game. Even the prize pool for the qualifying rounds of the men's competition stands at £2 million, which is more than six times greater than the total prize money available across the whole of the Women's FA Cup. A witness to the government's review gave an example of a women's team taking a 260-mile round-trip to play an FA Cup match, for which the club received £150. The money was not sufficient to even cover petrol costs of their team bus.

Insufficient funding/insufficient institutional financial support has also had a domino effect on other areas of the women's game. For example, there are reports of inadequate levels of refereeing and lack of qualified coaches. Baroness Sue Campbell, the Head of Women's Football at the FA, admitted that the sport still lacks enough funds for those expertise/resources because there has been an explosion in interest in the game which they hadn't anticipated (Wrack, 2020). There has been criticism that the FA has failed to keep up with providing adequate infrastructure for women's football, thus stifling the pace with which the popularity of the women's game could grow.

Substandard facilities

One of the key benefits for women's professional teams that are affiliated with football clubs with a long history (of men's football) should include access to better facilities (e.g., use of the training pitches, stadia, medical services, coaching expertise, data analysis, etc.) that are already in place. However, the UK's *Fan Led Review of Football Governance* (2021) found many women's or girl's teams are denied access to the same facilities as their men's/boy's counterparts within the same club (see figure 13).

In figure 12, it is possible to see Erin Cuthbert, of Chelsea FC, playing on a heavily muddied pitch at Prenton Park, the home ground for Liverpool Women. This quality of this playing surface is markedly worse than that of Anfield – where Liverpool's Men's team play.

Figure 12: Erin Cuthbert

Source: [online image of Erin Cuthbert], (n. d.), https://bit.ly/3SftwRQ.

A former manager of Manchester City Women's Team, Nick Cushing, said that the discrimination regarding shared access to quality facilities should be really simple to fix (Wrack, 2020). It simply requires that staff at the club don't hold a negative perception of girls and women in football. Cushing said that once that message (of equality) is communicated clearly 'from the top' then equitable access to facilities can be gained very quickly. Manchester City decided to share their footballing facilities across their men's and women's teams (see figure 13). Nick Cushing said: "All of the senior leadership team support our women's team and believe in our women's team. I could say they loan us their expertise – but they don't, we are all part of the same football club". (as cited in Wrack, 2020, para. 8).

In figure 13, Manchester City's women's teams are pictured training at the same football academy which accommodates the men's team. These equal access to facilities is still unusual for many professional clubs who oversee both men's and women's teams.

Figure 13: Manchester City's women's teams pictured training

Source: Wrack, 2020, https://bit.ly/3SftwRQ.

Institutional neglect

Although the Manchester City example, cited above, offers hope for a fairer future, there are still serious injustices – and discrimination – to address today. For a start, Manchester City's inclusive policy is still an exception rather the norm in football. For example, the UK government report found that although the WSL is a professional league, there are still many issues with many women's teams only having access to low-quality pitches, poor wages, short-term professional contracts, and inadequate work conditions.

In 2017, the national women's football team from Ireland went on strike because of the poor treatment they received from the Football Association of Ireland (FAI). They demanded that they would be treated with dignity rather than being seen as 'fifth class citizens' (see figure 15). Their list of demands included the team having access to hotels that have working Wi-Fi (while travelling to away games), provision of membership to a gym, access to advice from a nutritionist and a strength and conditioning coach, and financial compensation package for the players in the squad who are not full-time professionals (who lose earnings from their regular jobs when playing matches) (Fitzmaurice, 2017). They demanded a match fee of just €300 per international match played – with a bonus of €150 for a win or €75 for a draw.

Their list of demands was shared on Twitter by journalist Mark McCadden; see https://twitter.com/markmccadden/status/849203048513757184.

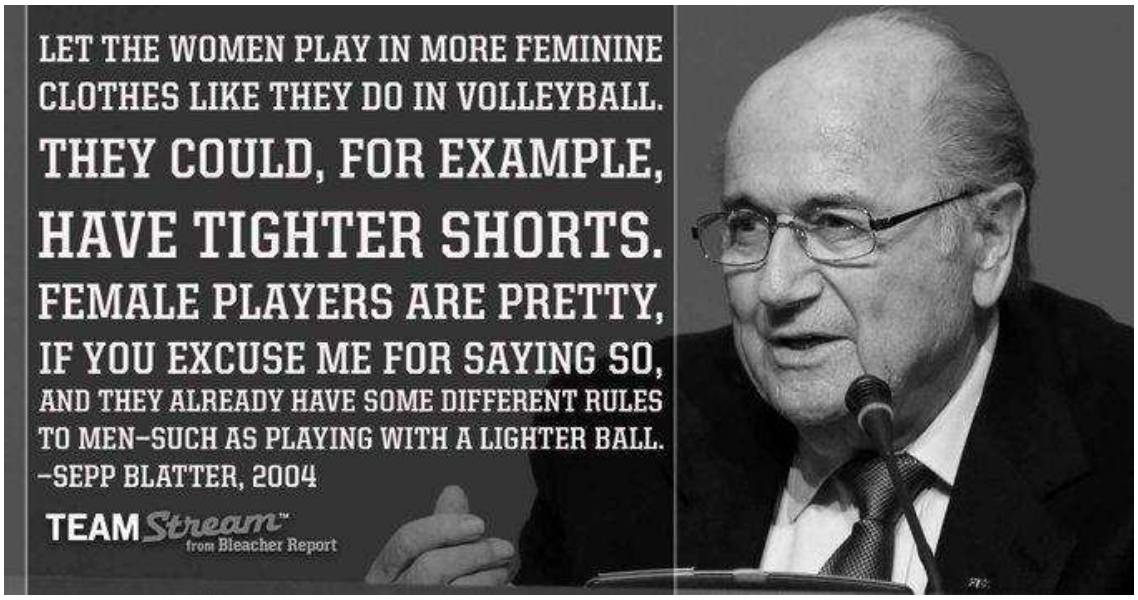
In 2017, the players of the Republic of Ireland's Women's National Team called a press conference to demand that they are given greater respect from the Football Association of Ireland (FAI).

Figure 14: Players of the Republic of Ireland's Women's National Team

Source: [online image of players of the Republic of Ireland's Women's National Team], (n. d.), https://bit.ly/3zBe8ry.

At the highest institutional level, it is worth remembering that football's major decision makers (i.e., structural powerbrokers such as FIFA) have repeatedly failed to push back against the sexist discrimination in women's football. To the contrary, some of the game's biggest influencers have perpetuated discriminatory stereotypes and vocally supported sexist views. This has included advocating for the sexualisation of women in football as a means of better selling the game to sponsors or fans (see 1.1.6). In 2004, Sepp Blatter, who was President of FIFA from 1998 to 2015, suggested that women footballers should wear 'more feminine clothes' and 'tighter shorts' to spotlight how 'pretty' they are (see figure 15).

Figure 15: Sepp Blatter, then President of FIFA, publicly called for women footballers to wear 'more feminine clothes' and 'tighter shorts'



Source: [online image of Sepp Blatter, then President of FIFA], (n. d.), https://bit.ly/3b6JLzI.

In conclusion, it will not come as a surprise to students of this module that the UK Government's 2021 report stated that "women's football continues to face multiple, interconnected challenges" (*Fan Led Review of Football Governance*, 2021, p. 124). In fact, the report explicitly recommends that a review specifically dedicated to women's football is required, given the complexity of addressing and resolving the serious issues affecting the development of women's football. They say that this will be key to helping support its success and a more meaningful future. This section (1.1.8) highlighted insufficient institutional support for women's football – resulting in deficient funding, substandard facilities, and the poor treatment of women in football. Moreover, having now completed this module, students on this course will now be knowledgeable of a broad array of historical, cultural, and institutional barriers faced by women's football. These barriers included women being banned from participating in football or other sports for many decades, facing continued gender discrimination in the media today, and being short-changed by discriminatory compensation packages – even when they achieve at the highest levels of football.

References

Allison, R. (2018). *Kicking Center: Gender and the selling of women's professional soccer*. Rutgers University Press.

Al Jazeera. (2014, March 1). FIFA lifts ban on head covers. https://www.aljazeera.com/sports/2014/3/1/fifa-lifts-ban-on-head-covers#:~:text=Players%20will%20now%20be%20able,to%20the%20sport's%20governing%20body.&text=Football's%20world%20governing%20body%20FIFA,for%20religious%20purposes%20during%20matches.

BBC News. (2019, June 7). Women's World Cup: When women's football thrived decades ago. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-48510198.

Blau, F. D. & Kahn, L. M. (2017). The gender wage gap: Extent, trends, and explanations. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55 (3), 789–865.

Campbell, J. D. (2000). 'Training for sport is training for war': Sport and the transformation of the British army, 1860–1914. *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17(4).

CNN. (2011, June 7). FIFA defends hijab ban after Iranian team forfeits Olympic qualifier. http://edition.cnn.com/2011/SPORT/football/06/07/football.iran.hijab.fifa/index.html.

Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power*. Allen and Unwin.

Connell, R. W. (1990). An iron man: The body and some contradictions of hegemonic masculinity. In *Sport, men and the gender order*, edited by **M. Messner and D. Sabo**. Human Kinetics Books.

Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Polity Press.58.

Cohen, M. (2009). *No girls in the clubhouse: The exclusion of women from baseball*. McFarland.

Collins, M. F. & Kay, T. (2003). *Sport and Social Exclusion*. Routledge.

Daniels, E. A. (2009). Sex objects, athletes, and sexy athletes: How media representations of women athletes can impact adolescent girls and college women. *Journal of adolescent research*, 24(4), 399-422.

Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. (2018). Where are all the Women? Shining a light on the visibility of women's sport in the media. https://www.womeninsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Where-are-all-the-Women-1.pdf.

Fan Led Review of Football Governance. (2021). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1037648/Football_Fan_led_Governance_Review_v8Web_Accessible.pdf.

Fenwick, K. (2018, June 21). Football clubs can end toxic masculinity, but first they need to talk about it. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/jun/22/football-clubs-can-end-toxic-masculinity-but-first-they-need-to-talk-about-it.

Fernández, I. P. (2021). Investigating gender stereotypes in the media: A Natural Language Processing approach to understanding gender disparities in the reporting of football. A Master's Thesis submitted to Linköping University, Department of Management and Engineering.

Fink, J. S. (2015). Female athletes, women's sport, and the sport media commercial complex: Have we really "come a long way, baby"? *Sport management review*, 18 (3), 331–342.

Fitzmaurice, A. (2017, April 4). Sharing tracksuits and changing in toilets - Irish women's team hit out at treatment as FAI respond with statement. Independent.ie. https://www.independent.ie/sport/soccer/international-soccer/sharing-tracksuits-and-changing-in-toilets-irish-womens-team-hit-out-at-treatment-as-fai-respond-with-statement-35592523.html.

Giulianotti, R. (2016). *Sport: A Critical Sociology*. Polity Press.

Higgs, C. T., Weiller, K. H. & Martin, S. B. (2003). Gender Bias in the 1996 Olympic Games: A Comparative Analysis. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 27 (1), 52–64.

Hynes, T. (2008, August 7). Tina Hynes traces the fight for full equality for women at the Olympics, which is yet to be won. *The Irish Times*. https://www.irishtimes.com/news/an-olympiad-with-females-would-be-impractical-uninteresting-unaesthetic-and-improper-baron-pierre-de-coubertin-1.1222948#:~:text=Ireland-,'An%20Olympiad%20with%20females%20would%20be%20impractical%2C%20uninteresting%20%2C%20unaesthetic,'%20%2D%20Baron%20Pierre%20de%20Coubertin.

Jackson, E. L. (1990). Variations in the Desire to Begin a Leisure Activity: Evidence of Antecedent Constraints? *Journal of Leisure Research*, 22(1), 55-70.

Messner, M. A., Duncan, M. C. & Jensen, K. (1993). Separating the men from the girls: The gendered language of televised sports. *Gender & Society*, 7 (1), 121–137.

Messner, M. A., Duncan, M. C., & Cooky, C. (2003). Silence, sports bras, and wrestling porn: Women in televised sports news and highlights shows. *Journal of sport and social issues*, 27(1), 38-51.

Musto, M., Cooky, C., & Messner, M. A. (2017). "From fizzle to sizzle!" Televised sports news and the production of gender-bland sexism. *Gender & Society*, 31(5), 573-596.

O'Byrne, D. (2021). Thinking, Doing, and Creating Together: Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) and the Decoloniality of Knowledge, Power and Being. A Doctoral Thesis submitted to Loughborough University.

[Online image of Erin Cuthbert]. (n. d.). https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2020/feb/12/why-wont-clubs-invest-properly-in-their-womens-super-league-teams.

[Online image of *Fan Led Review of Football Governance*]. (n. d.). https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fan-led-review-of-football-governance-securing-the-games-future/fan-led-review-of-football-governance-securing-the-games-future.

[Online image of FIFA's official website]. (n. d.). https://www.fifa.com/fifaplus/en/tournaments/mens/worldcup/qatar2022.

[Online image of FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023 official website]. (n. d.). https://www.fifa.com/fifaplus/en/tournaments/womens/womensworldcup/australia-new-zealand2023.

[Online image of Joe Biden's post]. (n. d.). https://www.instagram.com/p/CM0lGr1opGp/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=2610897b-171b-40d1-94be-da45ba525e5a.

[Online image of Megan Rapinoe, US Women's National team player and equal pay advocate]. (n. d.). https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/News/soccer-star-megan-rapinoe-testifies-congress-gender-pay/story?id=76635386.

[Online image of players from Iran's women's national team training while wearing their hijabs]. (n. d.).

http://edition.cnn.com/2011/SPORT/football/06/07/football.iran.hijab.fifa/index.html.

[Online image of players of the Republic of Ireland's Women's National Team]. (n. d.). https://www.thesun.ie/news/819515/republic-of-ireland-womens-football-team-claim-they-are-not-allowed-to-keep-their-tracksuits-and-must-change-in-public-toilets/.

[Online image of popular football app (FotMob)]. (n. d.). https://www.fotmob.com/.

[Online image of Sepp Blatter, then President of FIFA]. (n. d.). https://twitter.com/brfootball/status/596348692124323840?lang=ca.

[Online image of a *Sports Illustrated* cover]. (n. d.). https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/naked-women-in-sports-illustrated-isn-t-about-giving-them-a-voice-20180214-p4z0ay.html.

Pfister, G. (2010). Women in sport – gender relations and future perspectives. *Sport in Society*. 13(2), 234-248.

Pope, S., Williams, J., & Cleland, J. (2022). Men's Football Fandom and the Performance of Progressive and Misogynistic Masculinities in a 'New Age' of UK Women's Sport. *Sociology*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385211063359.

Raisin, R. (2017, October 6). Men or mice: is masculinity in crisis? *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/oct/06/men-or-mice-is-masculinity-in-crisis-ross-raisin.

Roper, C. (2018, February 14). Naked women in Sports Illustrated isn't about giving them a voice. The Sydney Morning Herald. https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/naked-women-in-sports-illustrated-isn-t-about-giving-them-a-voice-20180214-p4z0ay.html.

Siegel, B. & Kindelan, K. (2021). Soccer star Megan Rapinoe testifies before Congress on gender pay gap. *ABC News*. https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/News/soccer-star-megan-rapinoe-testifies-congress-gender-pay/story?id=76635386.

Taylor, L. (2019, June 8). From pink goalposts to blue plaques: a history of women's football. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/football/2019/jun/08/from-pink-goalposts-to-blue-plaques-a-history-of-womens-football.

Weber, J. D. & Carini, R. M. (2013). Where are the female athletes in Sports Illustrated? A content analysis of covers (2000–2011). *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 48(2), 196–203. https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690211434230.

Wrack, S. (2020, February 12). Why won't clubs invest properly in their Women's Super League teams? *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2020/feb/12/why-wont-clubs-invest-properly-in-their-womens-super-league-teams