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Gender and racial participation in rugby and soccer in secondary schools, South of Johannesburg: a critical study

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Abstract

The current study explored and interrogated the status of gender and racial participation in rugby and soccer in Johannesburg South secondary schools in South Africa. This study used constructivism paradigm and exploratory case study design and qualitative semi-structured individual interviews with soccer and rugby coaches and soccer and rugby players in selected secondary schools. Critical social theory and the feminist post structuralist theory were used as lenses for the study. The Foucauldian Discourse Analysis was used to analyse the data.

One of the major findings of this study is a concern of hegemonic discourse that was perpetuated by male players and male coaches and was challenged by female players and female coaches who interrogated the state of rugby and soccer in schools.The findings further show the continuation of racial divide between rugby and soccer, because rugby is still perceived as the white middle class male sport and the selection maintains this history. Soccer is perceived as accommodative of females and all races even though is still dominated by black African and Coloured players.

The findings highlight family as influential in male and female choices of sports to play, and some female players were motivated by fathers to play contact rugby irrespective of male hegemonic discourse. The family that is active in sport has encouraged participation in either rugby (contact and touch) or soccer, because players grew up participating in some sport since they were young.

KEYWORDS: Gender, race equity, equality, participation rugby, soccer, perceptions, experiences, Gauteng, South of Johannesburg