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Abstract

Caster Semenya, a South African female track and field star from rural Limpopo South Africa, won the IAAF 2009 World Championships in the 800-meter event. She was then subjected to “gender-verification” testing. Media reports, especially in the United States, underscored that Semenya underwent gender-verification testing because of her “deep voice, muscular build, and rapid improvement in times.” Combining content and textual analysis, we conducted a comparative media analysis of the Caster Semenya controversy in the United States and the South African print news media. Results demonstrated that the United States print media coverage framed the controversy in terms of Semenya’s “true” sex, “medicalized” debates about sex testing, and discussed the limitations of medical assessment of male and female bodies in sport. In comparison, South African print media sources focused on human rights, nationalism, and “strategic essentialism” to frame Semenya as a “true” woman defending the nation against a perceived racist assault. We conclude the article with transformative visions of sport rooted in postcolonial feminism and critical feminist studies.

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Introduction

Feminist theorists are concerned with the processes by which culture shapes and creates the body¹ (Balsamo, 1995; Butler, 1993; Dreger, 1998; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). As these theorists note, bodies are the products of historically specific practices and thus are not only determined exclusively by genetics but are also shaped by and through relations of power (Bordo, 1994; Butler, 1993; Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). For example, given the ways that specific social roles imbue bodies with particular capacities and physicality, there may be less in common biologically between bodies of female domestic workers and bodies of female athletes, despite the specific sex categorization of those bodies (Gatens, 1992). Moreover, Butler (1993) argues that feminists should conceptualize and theorize the body as simultaneously produced by and constitutive of social meanings.

Feminist sport scholars locate these processes within sport contexts and highlight the ways in which sport reaffirms the sex/gender binary as inherent, natural, and inevitable (Birrell & Cole, 1994; Cavanaugh & Sykes, 2006; Cole, 2000; Kane, 1995; Sykes, 2006; Travers, 2008). Feminist sport scholars have also critically examined the policy of sex testing within the institution of sport and how it reinforces ideologies of natural, categorical sex difference, therefore, excluding some women from sport participation. It was not until 2004, when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) established the "Stockholm Consensus," that male-to-female athletes were deemed eligible to participate in women's events at the Olympics (Sykes, 2006). However, Sykes argues that the Stockholm Consensus does not represent full acceptance of gender variance. Instead, there continues to be anxiety and resistance to gender variance in sport. In these ways, sport as an institution reaffirms and reproduces sex- and gender-based forms of social injustice (Cavanaugh & Sykes, 2006; Cole, 2000; Travers, 2008). We extend this scholarship to demonstrate how contemporary mainstream print media framings of gender-verification² testing in sport reproduce, as natural and inevitable, the ideological foundation of the sex/gender binary.

This article examines the tensions associated with sex, gender, race, nation, equality, and oppression as framed by the mainstream news media coverage of Caster Semenya. Semenya is a female track and field athlete from rural Limpopo, South Africa. She underwent gender-verification testing after she won the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) 2009 World Championships in the 800-meter event. Several media accounts claimed the tests were ordered because of her "deep voice, muscular build, and rapid improvement in times" (Associated Press, 2009). We use the media response to her gender-verification testing to explore race, gender, and sexuality injustice in sport. We examine whether and how media frames reinforce or challenge dominant binary notions of sex/gender as well as the ways

race, class, and nation intersect to produce culturally specific frames of Semenya and of gender-verification testing. Specifically, we asked how the United States and South African mainstream online and print media (newspapers) framed “gender-verification.” We also ask how the United States and South African mainstream online and print media (newspapers) framed the controversy following Semenya’s performance at the World Championships. That is, who or what was attributed to the suspicions surrounding Semenya’s performance? What, if any, differences are there in the framings between the United States and South African media and what do these differences reflect (and constitute) about each respective context?

The IAAF/IOC’s historical policies only require sex testing of female athletes and transsexuals and are built on an assumption of categorical female frailty, male superiority, and physical dominance (Birrell & Cole, 1994; Cavanaugh & Sykes, 2006; Cole, 2000; Dworkin & Cooky, 2012; Kane, 1995; Travers, 2008). Similar to other athletes who have undergone sex testing, Caster Semenya was nearly denied the opportunity to participate in sport by having her sex/gender questioned. By holding Semenya’s body up for scrutiny and suspecting her for her very success in the 800-meter event, the “sport nexus” legitimated and perpetuated gender injustice (Travers, 2008). Paradoxically, even as gender-verification testing of Caster Semenya reaffirmed the sex/gender binary, this newsworthy event opened the door to rethinking not only the sex/gender binary in sport, but also the ways that race, colonial legacies, and nationalism intersect with and shape understandings of sex testing. As we will argue, the events surrounding the “controversy” also opened the door for envisioning the transformative potential of sport, allowing new avenues for how sport might be restructured and reorganized.

We expected differences in media framings between the United States and South Africa given the relationship each country has to relations of privilege and oppression. Each country’s social, political, and cultural context produces unique understandings of gender and of the role of sport in perpetuating or challenging race and gender inequalities (Dworkin, Swarr, & Cooky, 2012). Ostensibly for athletes, spectators, and citizens from the Global North, common sense understandings of gender-verification testing posit testing as an objective, scientific process that ensures a level-playing field and thus, “fairness” in sport competition. For athletes, spectators, and citizens from the Global South, this common sense understanding of the Global North is problematized, given the history of Western scientific knowledge of racial differences to justify and legitimate colonialism, slavery, and the exploitation of colonized peoples (Hoad, 2010; Nyong’o, 2010; Swarr, 2012). Moreover, it is important to acknowledge South Africa’s apartheid past and the role that sport played, both materially and symbolically, to reinforce apartheid and to help South Africa partly overcome that history in contemporary terms (Hargreaves, 1997; Pelak, 2005). In South Africa, there is a historically specific understanding of sex testing as linked to and identified with Western scientific classifications of gendered and raced bodies. In this manner, sex testing aligns with past colonialist exploitation and contemporary forms of racial oppression, even in the postapartheid context (see Dworkin, Swarr &

Cooky, 2012; Nyong'o, 2010). Thus, for the Global South, Western scientific classifications of raced and gendered bodies are viewed as products of colonialism, European expansionism, and racism, not simply "objective" or "value-free" accounts that ensure equality in sport or in South African society.

We acknowledge these differing historical and sociocultural contexts and situate media framings accordingly. Yet the extent to which media frames may reaffirm the sex/gender binary in sport is central to our investigation. To this end, we conducted a content and textual analysis of mainstream print and online news articles from the United States and South Africa to examine media frames of sex/gender in sport. Our analysis reveals conflicting accounts of how womanhood is defined and which bodies are construed as "true" female athletes eligible to compete in international sport competitions. The comparative analysis also illustrates how differing cultural contexts produce contradictory understandings of sex/gender,³ of gender-verification testing, and of notions of fairness in sport. We conclude the article with a discussion of transformative visions for sport, informed by postcolonial feminism (McClintock, 1995; Mohanty, 2003) and critical feminist sport studies (Cole, 1994; Hall, 1996; Kane, 1995; Messner, 2002), imagining sporting practices as unfettered by the limits of the sex/gender system and by claims of a level-playing field.

Sport, Gender Verification, and the Sex/Gender Binary

Prior to the late 20th century, we could not point to genes in the way we can today to define one's sex. However, the fact that we have knowledge of genetic components of sex identity does not mean we have the "ultimate, necessary, for-all-time answer to what it means to be of a certain sex" (Dreger, 1998, p. 9). Fausto-Sterling's (2000) critique of the binary sex system moves beyond genetic or biological classifications to offer new conceptualizations of sex categories. She states that "a body's sex is too complex. There is no either/or. Rather there are shades of difference" (p. 3). If nature allows for a continuum of sex, as Fausto-Sterling and other feminist theorists suggest, and if sport organizations' policies only accommodate categorical notions of sex alongside a separate-spheres requirement for women and men, then the incorporation and acceptance of bodies into sport that are not easily identifiable as male or female challenges the "cherished aspects" of sex-based forms of social organization in the United States (Kane, 1995; Travers, 2008). Thus, gender-verification tests "constitute one element in a matrix of surveillance and policing practices of the boundaries around gendered bodies" (Cole, 1994, p. 20).

The justification for sex testing/gender verification as a way to uphold and ensure a "level-playing field" (e. g., by identifying and policing women's sport spaces to prevent male "invaders") is built on the assumption that categorically all men are faster, stronger, and better at sport than all women. In this way, sport maintains the myth of absolute categorical sex/gender differences between men and women (Kane, 1995). Rather than viewing the relationship between sport and gender in binary terms, that is, categorically men are faster, stronger, and better at sport than women, Kane (1995) persuasively

argued for the acknowledgment of sport performance as a continuum wherein many women outperform men in a range of sports, including traditionally male-dominated sports. Considering Fausto-Sterling's (2000) conceptualization of sex as a continuum furthermore disrupts the material and discursive ways that sport maintains the myth of a sex/gender binary rooted in natural differences as illustrated in and through sex-segregated sport competition. Thus, sex testing/gender verification simultaneously reinforces the myth of a sex/gender binary and the subsequent justification to uphold this binary through sex-segregated sport competition. Ensuring that only "true" women compete with other "true" women, and that this category is distinctly different from "true" men, sex testing clearly constitutes and is constituted by sex segregation in sport.

Preventing women and men from competing with one another—a central role for sex testing—ostensibly ensures that sex-segregated sports are free from "intruders" who are not "real" (i.e., biological) women. As Kane (1995) argues, "This by definition creates the notion that sport is a naturally occurring binary divided along gender lines" (p. 204). However, female athletes who do not fit into traditional Western expectations of femininity are more likely to have their "biological standing as female athletes called into question" (Kane, 1995, p. 210). Cole (1994) adds, "The female athletic body was and remains suspicious because of its apparent masculinization and its position as a border case that challenges the normalized feminine and masculine body" (p. 20). Those female athletes that society views as nonconventionally feminine—that is, those deemed "deviant mutant" (Kane, 1995)—have the most potential to disrupt the sex/gender binary. This is because when "suspicious" athletes are sex tested, the ambiguities of sex and the social processes involved in constituting and reconstituting sex become exposed. This process thus challenges the underlying assumptions that sex/gender difference is inherent, natural, and most of all, can be categorically "known"—all assumptions through which the binary is upheld.

Given that these tests are administered primarily in international/Olympic competitions, and that international sport bodies/federations are responsible for ordering, conducting, and interpreting the tests and for setting the policies for eligibility, the power of these organizations to constitute a singular meaning of sex/gender on a global scale cannot be underestimated. At the same time, international sport organizations are empowered to change policies on sex testing. The pressure from scientific and feminist communities has resulted in some changes, including the abandonment of mandatory testing in international competitions and the IOC's policy regarding the eligibility of transsexuals to participate in international competitions (for a critical analysis of these policies see Cavanaugh & Sykes, 2006; Karkazis, K., B. Jordan-Young, G. Davis, and S. Camporesi, forthcoming).

Sex/Gender Binary in Local and Global Contexts

Current international governing bodies' policies on sex testing of "suspicious" female athletes impose understandings of sex/gender that do not necessarily resonate with local understandings of sex/gender. Although some may argue that definitions

of sex/gender must transcend geographical and cultural boundaries within international sporting contexts in the name of “fairness” and “equality” in sport, understandings of sex/gender are culturally specific, constituted through race, class, and nation. Thus, differing histories of sex, gender, colonialism, and racism produce historically and contextually specific constructions of sex/gender that have different implications for women from the Global North or the Global South. The treatment of Caster Semenya, and of other athletes who have undergone sex testing, implicates the role of sport in reproducing “natural” dichotomous sex/gender difference. It is this reproduction of “natural” difference that then serves to privilege male bodies and a masculinity linked to particular sexed (i.e., male) bodies, which thereby reaffirms and upholds sport as a male-dominated institution.

We acknowledge the potentially problematic position of White, United States feminists from the Global North who wish to employ the Semenya case to “deconstruct” the discursive categories of sex/gender, especially given the local South African context wherein rights-based claims are directly founded on complex political histories and identity politics (Hoad, 2010). In theorizing “feminism without borders,” postcolonial feminist Chandra Mohanty (2003) argues for a shift away from a biological or cultural basis for political or feminist alliances and, borrowing from Benedict Anderson, envisions an “imagined community (. . .), which suggests potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries and communities in spite of internal hierarchies in Third World Contexts” (p. 46). Indeed, this type of work is critical for social justice, for, “If we pay attention to and think from the space of some of the most disenfranchised communities of women in the world, we are more likely to envision a just and democratic society capable of treating all its citizens fairly. Marginalized women provide the most inclusive paradigm for thinking about social justice” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 231).

Following Mohanty and the work of other postcolonial feminists (McClintock, 1995; Narayan, 1997), we too wish to draw an important distinction between “women as a discursively constructed group and ‘women’ as material subjects of their own history” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 23). In other words, a deconstruction of the categories by which bodies are placed in a sex/gender system seeks neither to deny nor to erase the material effects on the everyday lives of women. It is in this deconstruction of the category “woman” or in this specific case, “female athlete,” that we wish to make visible how, on a global scale, international sporting contexts maintain sex- and gender-based forms of inequality, which are, in turn, shaped by nationalism, race relations, and colonial histories.

Method

Mediated messages (e.g., news media coverage) are not “objective” accounts of events. In other words, news media do not present an unmediated view of what “really happened” during an event. Instead, the media provide cues that encourage readers/viewers to interpret events in particular ways. In writing on the news media coverage of Renee Richards, Birrell and Cole (1994) explain,

While the media appear simply to report what happened, they actively construct news through frames, values, and conventions. Having made the initial decision that an incident is worthy of treatment as news, reporters and editors make choices that foreground some elements of the potential narrative and obscure others, and they define and delineate issues through a series of word choices including headlines, descriptive word choices, photographs, who to authorize with an interview, and what to report. (p. 379)

Thus, the media construct certain interpretations of newsworthy events while discouraging others (Fiske, 1996). In other words, what is included in the story, and more importantly how it is discussed help “frame” an event for the reader/viewer (Fiske, 1996). As such, we analyzed newspaper articles for what was included inside media frames and what was excluded from the media frames. Examining what is inside and outside media frames provides insights into what Hall (2000) referred to as “preferred meanings” of texts.

As Hall (2000) notes, meanings cannot be conceived of as simply hegemonic, dominant, or totalizing; rather “preferred meanings” are embedded in media texts. That is, the meanings intended by those responsible for the production of messages “have institutional, political and ideological power imprinted in them, and themselves become institutionalized” (Hall 2000, p. 57). Hence, even if not viewed as hegemonic in their meaning, texts have a finite set of interpretations given the preferred meanings encoded in texts by producers. Thus, the encoding process by which producers embed preferred meanings into texts limits the possible meanings read by audiences (Hall, 2000). This imposes constraints on the possibility for alternative ways of knowing. Following Hall (2000), it is critical to highlight that media frames, and what is inside the frame and what is left outside the frame, are not only constructed within raced, classed, and gendered hierarchical relations of power but are also read by audiences who are positioned within the same systems of inequality. A combination of content analysis (quantitative counts of media framings) and textual analysis (qualitative examination of media frames) reveals how media create and recreate narratives, which are linked to dominant ideas or ideologies that circulate in wider society (for a detailed explanation of this methodology see Cooky, Wachs, Messner, & Dworkin, 2010).

Using content and textual analysis to locate preferred meanings of texts, we analyzed newspaper coverage of the Caster Semenya controversy in the United States and in South Africa. For the United States sample, we selected major national and regional newspapers. The total sample included 13 newspapers. Four of the top five national U.S. papers were selected based on circulation rates (Audit Bureau Circulation, 2006): *USA Today*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Washington Post*. Ten regional papers were selected using purposive sampling techniques (Patton, 2001) in different regions of the United States (Northeast, Midwest, South, and West) from the top 25 list, which was also based on circulation rates (Audit Bureau Circulation, 2006). Regional newspapers included *The Star Ledger*, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Denver Post*, *Boston Globe*, and *Seattle Times* (no articles were

published on Caster Semenya during the timeframe of the study in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Denver Post*, *Boston Globe*, and *Seattle Times*). For the South African sample, we were limited in part by the availability and accessibility of South African newspapers in the United States, as well as the language of the newspaper. As such, three South African print newspapers *Business Day*, *Sowetan*, and *Mail & Guardian* were analyzed. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations South Africa, *Business Day* has a circulation of 36,110 and a readership of 76,000. *Sowetan* has a circulation of 125,490 and a readership estimated at 1,522,000 million, and *Mail & Guardian* has 50,230 readers and an estimated circulation of 428,000 (www.mediaclubsouthafrica.com, accessed May 27, 2011).

Print news articles from the above newspapers were retrieved using Lexis-Nexis database from August 19, 2009 to January 21, 2010, using the search term "Caster Semenya." January 21, 2010, was selected as the end date because the IOC convened to discuss sport organizations' policies on athletes with ambiguous sex identities. It was also announced that Semenya was allowed to keep her gold medal from the 2009 IAAF World Championships. *Mail & Guardian* was not available in the Lexis-Nexis database. Therefore, print news articles were accessed on the *Mail & Guardian* online Web site using the above search criteria. This search produced a total of 215 articles, 53 from the United States newspapers and 162 from South African newspapers.

We developed a codebook based on emergent themes determined through an analysis of all 215 articles to uncover the various media frames of the event. Emergent themes were discovered using open coding of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, we read articles to determine who or what was left inside and/or outside (and therefore marginalized or erased) of dominant news frames. In this part of the analysis, we focused on which individuals and what groups were given voice and which were excluded or silenced. Second, we examined the ways the media described or discussed key stakeholders and groups that were involved in speaking on the controversy. Third, the media frames of Caster Semenya and other key individuals and organizations were analyzed. In this part of the analysis, we examined the text used to describe Semenya in terms of her sex/gender and how she was implicated in the controversy. We noted the following: Did the media frame Caster Semenya as innocent or guilty? Was Semenya framed as a woman, a man, a hermaphrodite, or inter-sexed? What was attributed to the suspicions surrounding Semenya? Were suspicions attributed to her athletic performance, her body or appearance, or other factors? Finally, we examined how the media discussed gender-verification testing. Here, we examined what terminology was used to describe the testing process and how the testing process was framed (e.g., ensuring a level-playing field in sport, scientific, socially constructed, and other). Given the inductive approach of the textual analysis, we were open to all possible frames.

From these emergent themes, we created subthemes or codes that we subsequently analyzed in the content analysis. This analysis produced 99 codes in total. Thus, the frames analyzed in the content analysis were derived from the inductive approach of the textual analysis. In the content analysis, we coded whether or not an

article mentioned and/or included quotes from specific individuals and groups or included a specific type of framing. Two authors independently coded all 99 codes on 41 U.S. articles and 41 South African articles, or 38% of the total sample. The percentage agreement for interrater reliability was calculated at approximately 95%, well above what is considered an acceptable level of concordance (Fleiss, Levin, & Paik, 2005). Any discrepancies in coding were discussed with the last author and/or an independent senior researcher in sport sociology until consensus was reached. We then compiled descriptive statistics to determine the preferred meanings of the texts.

Background of the Event

Caster Semenya,⁴ aged 18, University of Pretoria student and track athlete competed in the 800-meters event at the World Championships in Berlin on August 19, 2009, and won the event in 1:55.45 (2 s slower than the World record). The silver medal went to Kenyan, Janeth Jepkosgei (1:57.90), 2.45 s behind Semenya. Earlier that day,⁵ IAAF officials confirmed that Semenya was undergoing “sex-determination testing” to confirm her eligibility to race as a woman (Clarey, 2009). According to a *Los Angeles Times* article that quoted Nick Davies, a spokesperson for the IAAF, the IAAF began to “ask questions about Semenya” on July 31, 2009, when “she ran the fastest time in the world season, 1 minute 56.72 seconds, at the Africa Junior Championships (Hersh, 2009, C1). By many media accounts, especially in the United States, the IAAF originally suspected doping. However, subsequent media reports confirmed that Semenya had undergone gender-verification tests on the request of the IAAF (Clarey, 2009). Pierre Weiss, general secretary of the IAAF stated in a press conference that Semenya was undergoing testing because of “ambiguity” and not because the IAAF suspected her of knowingly cheating. Several athletes spoke out immediately after the championships. Elisa Cusma, an Italian runner who finished sixth in the race said, “These kind of people should not run with us. For me, she is not a woman. She is a man” (Clarey, 2009, p. 13). Russian athlete, Mariya Savinova, who finished fifth, told Russian journalists that she did not think Semenya would pass the gender-verification test stating, “Just look at her” (Clarey, 2009, p. 13).

Framings of Suspicion: “Too Fast,” “Too Muscular” To Be a Woman Versus Westernized/Racist Definitions of Beauty/Gender

Over one third of our total sample included some discussion of the suspicions surrounding Semenya’s performance and/or appearance (see Table 1). According to media frames, Semenya’s performance raised “suspicions” for several reasons. Media articles framed the suspicions as emerging because of her fast times in the World Championship (i.e., she’s too fast to be a “real” woman) or to her fast improvement over the brief course of her running career (the African Junior Championships at the end of July and the World Championships in August). In addition, suspicions were said to emerge because of her “masculine,” “muscular,” appearance, or because of both her appearance

Table 1. Media Frames: Suspicions of Semenya's Sex/Gender

	Too fast time (World)	To fast time (Africa Junior Championship)	Appearance (masculine, deep voice)	Both appearance/ performance	Too fast times (at World and Junior)	Too fast increase in performance
U.S. papers	18% (4)	18 % (4)	32% (7)	14% (3)	0% (0)	18% (4)
S.A. papers	25% (14)	7% (4)	11% (6)	36% (20)	2% (1)	20% (11)

Note: Of the articles that had an explicit frame of suspicions.

and her performance. Illustrative of the latter frame, for example, journalists in the United States noted that suspicions emerged because of Semenya's, "muscular physique and drastic improvement" (Longman, 2009a, p. B10) or her "improved speed and muscular build" ((Longman, 2009b). p. D9).

A higher percentage of South African articles framed suspicions regarding Semenya's sex/gender compared to the United States articles. Of the South African articles to discuss the suspicions surrounding Semenya, most framed suspicions in one of three ways, because of both her appearance and her performance (36%), or because her times were too fast at the World Championship (25%) or because her "performance improved too quickly" (20%; Table 1). Of the articles that discussed suspicions in the United States sample, most articles focused on her masculine appearance, deep voice or muscular build (32%) although more than half of the articles (54%) attributed the suspicions to a combination of either her time being "too fast" at the World Championship (18%), or too fast times at the Africa Junior Championships (18%), or that her "performance improved too quickly" (18%). Only a few articles in the United States sample included both frames of appearance and performance to justify the suspicions. For example, a *New York Times* journalist explained it was because "she improved her times drastically in the 800 and 1500 meters and became the world leader in the 800" (Longman, 2009b). This, along with her "improved speed and muscular build" led to "sex verification testing" (Longman, 2009b).

The United States articles framed the suspicions as objective accounts and very few offered a critical assessment of the validity of the suspicions or the assumptions that undergirded them. In contrast, when mentioning her fast times as a cause for suspicion, South African newspapers were critical of this explanation and implied or stated outright that racism instead was to blame for the suspicions. For example, in an op-ed article published in *Sowetan*, the author wrote, "We all know that her crime is that an African girl outran everybody to clinch the women's 800m final" (Mofokeng, 2009). In a more explicit reference to racism, another *Sowetan* op-ed article condemned the IAAF stating, "The conduct of the international body was racist and humiliating" ("The IAAF is a Disgrace," 2009).

Although nearly 46% of the United States articles and 47% of South African articles included some discussion of Semenya's body and appearance as responsible for raising suspicions regarding her sex/gender identity, there are important distinctions

across the two regions. The textual analysis revealed that the “appearance” frame in the United States newspapers was often used as justification for the suspicions of other athletes or sport organizations, thus legitimating the need for the IAAF to enact their sex testing policy. For example, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, “The concerns about whether she met standards to compete as a female athlete were prompted by still and television images of the teenager” that implied it was her appearance that led the IAAF and others to question her eligibility to participate as a female athlete in women’s sport events. In a frame that seemed to attempt to explain Semenya’s gender expression a journalist for the *Los Angeles Times* explains, “Semenya . . . has grappled with the consequences of looking boyish all her life” (Dixon, 2009, p. A1).

In the South African sample, especially in *Mail & Guardian*, articles were critical of the implication that Semenya’s masculine corporeality, strength, or muscularity meant that she was not a “true” woman eligible to compete as a female athlete. Highlighting the linkages among appearance, sex/gender, and race, a *Mail and Guardian* journalist underscored the role that racism plays when Westerners impose White standards of femininity in the global sporting arena. This particular journalist, in a somewhat sarcastic tone, implied that the whole controversy could have been avoided if Semenya had only made “herself appear more girly,” and taken “beauty tips from her peers in Berlin,” who “glam up for the start with lip gloss, enough gold jewelry to outshine the medals, and even false eye lashes” (“A Better Balance,” 2009). Another op-ed article in the *Sowetan* notes that suspicions regarding Semenya’s sex “seem to rely on patriarchal sexist stereotyping of women as weak and soft, which Caster does not fit into because she is considered to be too strong and muscular to be a woman” (Langa, 2009). This questioning of a female athlete’s gender in the sex/gender binary is not unique to Semenya. Historically, female athletes, especially White, heterosexual, middle-class athletes, must negotiate mutually exclusive constructions of gender whereby muscularity and strength are linked to masculinity, and beauty and glamour are linked to femininity (Cahn, 1994; Dworkin, 2001; Dworkin & Wachs, 2009; Hargreaves, 1994; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). In mainstream media coverage, female athletes who do not conform to dominant notions of femininity continue to be the subject of ridicule and the targets of racist and sexist commentary (Cooky et al., 2010).

Also as part of this frame, politicians and political leaders spoke out on behalf of Semenya, critical of the ways in which Semenya’s appearance was blamed for raising suspicions. The following was a quote from an African National Congress (the ruling political party in South Africa) press release, “We condemn the motives of those who have made it their business to question her gender due to her physique and running style. Such comments can only serve to portray woman as weak” (“South Africa Lashes Out,” 2009). An op-ed article in the *Sowetan* was quite angry in tone at the “ignorance” of society speculating how to rid the world of “gender Nazis.” The author wrote, “Now poor Caster has to be publically shamed simply because she does not look the way society dictates a woman should look” (Lategan, 2009).

Table 2. Media Frames: How is Semenya Described in Terms of her Gender?

	Girl, woman, lady	Not a “real” girl/woman	Both/ intersex	“Hermaphrodite”	Ambiguous	Total
U.S. papers	50% (8)	6 (2%)	6% (1)	6% (1)	16% (4)	16
S.A. papers	95% (57)	0%	0%	3% (2)	1% (1)	60

Some articles, in both South Africa and in the United States, provided a discussion of how these standards are “racist” or based on White/Western notions of beauty. An op-ed writer in *Sowetan* noted, “It is very clear that the IAAF used Western stereotypes of what a woman should look like as probable cause, and that is racist and sexist since many of those making the determination are fat and ugly European men” (Anderson, 2009). In addition, the *Mail & Guardian* reported, “. . . although the debate is ostensibly about sex, many in South Africa believe it has a racial dimension. Political leaders have accused Western ‘imperialists’ of a public lynching . . .” (Smith, 2009). In the United States, articles reported this perspective as the response from South Africa and not necessarily indicative of sentiments in the United States. For example, an article in the main section of the *Los Angeles Times* echoed the South African frame critical of Western standards of beauty and femininity: “Other black South Africans find something more sinister in the controversy erupting around Semenya: another example of demeaning Western attitudes toward black Africans, particularly women” (Dixon, 2009, p. A1).

Of interest, the “appearance” frame in the South African articles that specifically referenced Semenya’s “masculine” appearance was used primarily as a physical descriptor of Semenya, and was not invoked to justify the IAAF’s gender-verification test, as it was in the United States frames. Nor did the mention of Semenya’s masculine appearance necessarily signify that she was not a “girl.” In this way, South African media frames simultaneously challenged the sex/gender binary, describing Semenya as masculine, although reaffirming the binary asserting her identity as “our girl” and “golden girl” (Mdlethe, 2009), a frame we discuss in the following section.

Frames of Semenya’s Sex/Gender: “What Makes a Woman a Woman?” Versus “Our First Lady of Sport”

South African media accounts frequently included quotes and images that identified Caster Semenya as “Our Golden Girl,” “Our First Lady of sport,” and “Golden Heroine” (see Table 2). For example, many articles used these frames in the descriptions of Semenya, “Golden girl Caster Semenya yesterday thanked South Africa for supporting her” (Moeng, Mbamba, & Ratsatsi, 2009). “Caster Semenya is our golden girl,” wrote an author in an op-ed in the *Sowetan* (“Semenya is Not a Cheat,” 2009). Pictures of the crowd holding signs reading “100% woman” during a rally for Semenya’s welcome back to South Africa featured in media articles, intentionally

countered questions about Semenya's sex, print media coverage offered confirmation of her sex through quotes from family members, sport fans, and even governments officials. A fan awaiting Semenya's arrival home at the airport says, "at the end of the day, she is our hero. She is our African girl and there's no need to question that" (Brooks, 2009). An article appearing in *Sowetan* quoted Semenya's father, "She is my little girl. I raised her and I have never doubted her gender" (Sowetan Reporters, 2009).

Although not a dominant frame, there were several articles in the South African sample that challenged the sex/gender binary by recognizing that having "both male and female characteristics" did not provide evidence that Semenya was not a "girl." An op-ed published in *Business Day* noted, "It is, therefore, not true that we are either male or female, or masculine or feminine. In nature there is more. . . . Unfortunately even good scientific explanations are contaminated by subjective conclusions . . ." (Matshiqi, 2009). The *Mail & Guardian* published an article that questioned the binary and noted how South African politicians' "constant reiteration that she is a woman . . . reinforces the same binary that is the cause of the problem: men have to be men and women have to be women" (Schuhmann, 2009).

It should be noted that the ostensibly celebratory embracement of Semenya's gendered nonconformity by politicians and the public was not representative of South Africa's treatment of transgendered individuals or gender nonconformists. In one of a few articles that raised this issue, Schuhmann (2009) situated the Semenya controversy in the specific historical and cultural context, informing readers that "feminine masculinities and masculine femininities are not normally celebrated so overtly." On the contrary, women who defy gender norms in South Africa are often the targets of hate crimes, "curative" rape, and homophobia. Although in 2009 Semenya earned heroine status in South Africa, in April of 2008, South African Black lesbian football star Eudy Simelane was gang raped and murdered. These "corrective rapes" (a term used by activists and scholars) are intended to punish lesbians for their sexuality and "convert" them to heterosexuality (Dworkin, et. al., forthcoming; Gevisser, 2009; Swarr, 2012).

Moreover, at the same time that South Africa frames focused on the "subjective" aspects of sex although erasing the transphobia and homophobia inherent in their celebration of Semenya as a "true woman," the dominant frame in the United States centered on the "medicalized" aspects of sex/gender. These debates largely took place among scientists and academics on whether or not "sex tests" could identify and verify "real" female athletes (see Table 3). Twenty percent of the United States articles compared to only 7% of South African articles included this frame (see Table 4). We discuss the framing of Semenya's gender-verification test in the following section.

Frames of Semenya's Gender Verification Test: "A Reasoned Choice Among Imperfect Options" Versus "Violation of Human Rights"

The "medicalized" frame acknowledged the scientific limitations of using sex testing/gender verification to determine sex/gender (see Table 2); 35% of articles in the United States sample framed gender-verification testing in this way. Illustrative of

Table 3. Media Frames: Process of Sex Testing/Gender Verification

	Socially constructed	Determines true identity	Scientific	Human rights violation	Racist	Equal playing field	Can't determine sex/gender
U.S. papers	5% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	30% (6)	20% (4)	10% (2)	35% (7)
S.A. papers	18% (14)	17% (13)	7% (5)	37% (28)	13% (11)	0% (0)	8% (6)

Note: Of the articles that had an explicit frame of testing process.

Table 4. Does the Article Include a Scientific and/or Academic Discussion of Sex/Gender?

	Yes	No	Total
U.S. papers	20% (11)	80% (42)	53
S.A. papers	7% (12)	93% (150)	162
Total	11% (23)	89% (192)	215

this frame, Alice Dreger wrote an article for the *New York Times* that discussed the limitations of gender-verification testing, which included quotes from a professor in human genetics and pediatrics, a pediatric endocrinologist, and a professor of epidemiology on whether or not a process of sex testing, even one that included an interdisciplinary panel (genetics, endocrinology, anatomy, psychology), could determine one's sex in a definitive way that would ensure someone with an "unfair advantage" was not allowed to compete. Although this article, and others like it, provided a critical assessment of the limits of sex testing, rightly acknowledging the complexity of determining an individual's sex, outside the frame was a critical discussion of the legitimacy or purpose for sex testing female athletes (see Table 5). This absence left unquestioned the assumptions on which gender-verification tests are based. Thus, the sex/gender binary, and the need for sport to be sex segregated went unchallenged in the United States media frames. One scientist said the, "IAAF must acknowledge that all it can do is make a reasoned choice among many imperfect options" (as quoted in Dreger, 2009, SP8).

Surprisingly, inside this frame were quotes from the IAAF and other experts to assure audiences that Semenya's sex/gender would be determined once the testing was complete and the results made public, despite the fact that many of the same articles also acknowledged the limitations of gender-verification testing to determine one's sex. In other words, Semenya's sex and/or her eligibility to compete would be "known" once the IAAF had the results of the test, even though scientists in the articles said the test itself was problematic. As such, the United States articles "medicalized" debates about sex/gender and gender-verification testing, presenting the limitations of assessing male and female bodies and yet were still concerned with how we can determine the "truth" surrounding Semenya's sex/gender. Thus, the United States frames reinforced a binary between male and female sport performances that ultimately served to naturalize sex/gender difference.

Table 5. Media Frames: Is There a Critical Discussion of Limitations of Sex/Gender Testing to Determine Sex/Gender?

	Yes	No	Total
U.S. papers	15% (8)	85% (45)	53 articles
S.A. papers	7% (12)	93% (150)	162 articles
Total	9% (20)	91% (195)	215 articles

Unlike articles in the United States that framed sex testing/gender verification as a scientific process, although one with limitations, the South African media framed gender verification as a lingering artifact of South Africa's apartheid past and the racist history of Global North/Western culture's scientific scrutiny of African women's bodies (see Table 3). More than half the South African sample included a discussion of the process of sex testing as a human rights violation or as racist (although the U.S. newspapers also had human rights and racism as a dominant framing of the process of testing, these articles quoted or referenced the South African response). These articles offered a critique of the policies of sex testing as "sexist and racist" (Brooks, 2009), rather than a scientific attempt to determine true sex/gender. "It is the ghoulish, white-coated scientists of the IAAF who would do well to look into their hearts and ask whether the overwhelming evidence of Caster's life as a girl in South Africa does not count as science" (Brooks, 2009). Such responses are understandable given a long racist and colonial history wherein Black women's bodies were objectified (Dworkin et. al., in press; Ray, 2009).

Inside this frame were statements from politicians and South African sport stakeholders that the IAAF's policy on gender verification was in violation of Caster Semenya's human-/gender-based right to compete as a female athlete in women's sport competition. This is not surprising given burgeoning human rights discourses in postapartheid South Africa and the growing attention given to women's rights in sport and broader society (Banda, 2005; Hargreaves, 1997; Pelak, 2005; Robins, 2008). To that end, an article in *Sowetan* reported that the South African parliament planned to petition the United Nations to investigate the "'abuse' of running sensation Caster Semenya's human rights . . ." and quoted Butana Komphela, the head of Parliament's sports portfolio committee who said the IAAF "had committed a 'gross violation of Semenya's human rights'" (Majavu, 2009). "The Athletics South Africa (ASA) council took issue with the IAAF's 'failure' to observe the confidentiality required to handle the Semenya issue with sensitivity and infringed upon the human rights of the athlete" (Moreotsene, 2009). The President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, was also quoted in this frame, "Miss Semenya had also reminded the world of the importance of the right to human dignity and privacy, which should be enjoyed by all human beings" ("Continue to Walk Tall," 2009). The South African frames thus seemingly empowered Semenya acknowledging her human right to participate in women's sport competitions

without being subjected to the humiliation of gender-verification testing, although mostly through the voices of political leaders and South African sport stakeholders.

At the same time that this frame delegitimized scientific claims of Semenya's sex/gender, it also positioned Semenya's family members, coach, teammates, representatives of Athletics South Africa, and South African political leaders and stakeholders as "experts" to verify Semenya's sex, in spite of any pending results of the IAAF's gender-verification tests. Absent from this frame were academic experts or scientists to discuss the validity of gender-verification testing. Instead, articles included quotes from Semenya's mother, father, uncle, grandmother, friends, fans and other members of the community verifying that Semenya was indeed a girl, and as such there was no need to conduct or to await the results of the gender-verification tests. Approximately 12% of the articles in the South African sample (only one article in the United States sample) included this frame. These quotes frequently verified Semenya's gender as a "girl." A *Mail & Guardian* article quoted Semenya's uncle, "Caster is a girl . . . I am not worried about that too much. I know where she comes from. For myself, I know Caster is a girl" (Brooks, 2009). Semenya's mother, Dorcas Semenya, reflecting on the controversy said, "I cannot comment about the scientists and the professors, all I know is that I gave birth to a girl in 1991" (Moeng, Mbamba, & Ratsatsi, 2009). Thus, in the South African media frames, culturally relevant "local" definitions of gender were inside the frame, whereas scientific determinations and the legitimacy of international sport organizations' policies were dismissed as either violating Semenya's human rights or an example of Western imperialism and racism.

Framings of Semenya: Inside and Simultaneously Outside the Frame

Although every article in our sample was about Caster Semenya, Caster Semenya the athlete and human being, was almost always outside the frame. And although she was framed in the South African articles as a "Golden Girl" and "Our First Lady of Sport," which positioned her as a representative of the South African nation-state, this frame constructed only a symbolic representation of South African nationalist identity and largely lacked any substantial discussion of Semenya's experiences from her own voice or perceptions. Semenya's agency was constrained in her silencing by South African political leaders and stakeholders who discouraged her from speaking during press conferences. As a result, in the majority of mainstream print news media coverage of the controversy, her voice, experience, and perspective were outside the frame. Indeed, Semenya was quoted in only 5 (approximately 9%) of United States newspapers and in only 8 (approximately 5%) of South African newspapers.

When Semenya was asked to provide her own perspective on the events, quotes centered on her response immediately after the race, and not on the subsequent controversy: "I took the lead in the 400 meters and I killed them, the couldn't follow. I celebrated the last 200 cause I knew, man" (Bearak, 2009). In a rare example of an article where Semenya's perspective is inside the frame, she was quoted in a *Mail & Guardian*

article demonstrating resilience, perseverance, and acceptance, “God made me the way I am and I accept myself. I am who I am and I’m proud of myself” (“Caster is a Cover Girl,” 2009). The absence of her voice in mainstream media articles, and the way in which her experience was rendered invisible, served to deny the subjective aspects of her becoming an international phenomenon at the age of 18. She became an international phenomenon not because of her sport performance but as a result of the gender controversy her performance elicited in local and global contexts. Thus, the exclusion of Semenya’s voice and her subsequent invisibility deflected any challenge that her perceptions of her own experience would pose to the “controlling images” of Black women (Collins, 1990) that circulate in the mainstream news media (Cooky et. al., 2010).

Summary

The controversy surrounding Semenya’s performance at the 2009 World Championship provides an analytical framework for a critique of sexism, racism, and homophobia that is embedded in the logic of gender verification. As discussed earlier, Western scientific classifications of raced and gendered bodies are not simply “objective” or “value-free” accounts. Rather than framing the gender-verification tests as a scientific process necessary to “ensure” a level-playing field, as did the United States news media, the South African news media framed the process as racist, a human rights violation, and a product of Westernized standards of femininity and beauty. In the United States’ media frames, gender-verification testing and Western definitions of sex/gender were “global” processes by which capitalist, neoliberal notions of fairness, equality, and competition omitted the “local” knowledge of Semenya’s sex and gender.

Looking beyond Western/Global North cultural constructions of sex/gender may appear to offer liberatory imaginings of sex/gender given that self, family, and community-based understandings held more currency in South Africa (and in the South African media frames) than did Western scientific definitions. However, similar to media framings of tennis star Renee Richards (see Birrell & Cole, 1994), the United States and the South African media both discussed whether or not Semenya was a “real” woman. In United States and South African print news media, dominant frames illustrated print media’s reinforcement of limiting, binary definitions of sex/gender, although in differing ways.

Moreover, the United States media frames engaged scientific debates regarding Semenya’s “real” sex/gender and discussed the science of sex testing. Several newspapers in the United States quoted medical and academic experts who outlined the limitations of existing technology to determine or verify one’s sex or gender. Ultimately this medicalized understanding of sex and gender reinforced the sex/gender binary, which allowed the legitimacy of sex testing and the need for sex-segregated sport to remain unquestioned.

Conversely, in South Africa media frames, the sex/gender binary was upheld through nationalist identity claims of Caster Semenya as South Africa’s “First Lady of

Sport” and a “Golden Girl.” Although the South African media framed gender verification as illustrative of the lingering effects of racism, colonialism, and apartheid past, sex segregation in sport remained unquestioned in both countries’ news media frames.

Although there were distinctions in the ways that the sex/gender binary was upheld in each context (scientific vs. local definitions), similarities were evident. Outside the news media frames in each country was a discussion of how the sex/gender binary in sport serves to maintain gendered hierarchies and inequalities both within sport and in wider society. Only a few articles in our sample offered any critique of the sex/gender binary or acknowledged that sex and gender are not neatly aligned as dominant cultural and scientific understandings would suggest. Moreover, only three articles (approximately 1%) of the entire sample discussed the possibility or desirability of abandoning sex segregation in sport.

Most of the groups, organizations, and institutions whose representatives were quoted in the news media from both countries were male-dominated and the individuals who were inside the frame were mostly men. In the U.S. context, it was predominantly male scientists and male members of international sport organizations that were framed as “experts” to determine Semenya’s identity. In South Africa, it was male political leaders, male sports stakeholders, and family members (male and female) who were framed as “experts” with the right to speak for Semenya. These groups made essential claims to Semenya’s identity to support her right to participate in sport as a woman. Indeed, South African politicians suggested that Semenya’s human rights had been violated in the process of undergoing gender-verification testing; the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, spoke on her behalf, defending her identity and her right to participate in an institution for which women had fought to be included. Yet, outside the frame were Semenya’s voice and her own perspectives on her experiences. As the IAAF and Athletics South Africa strongly encouraged Semenya not to speak at press conferences, Semenya’s voice remained outside the frame, even though she was discursively positioned as a representative of the South African nation-state.

Transformative Visions

Women athletes throughout history have played a unique role in constituting femininity and national identities through their sport participation (Ritchie, 2003). Caster Semenya is no exception. In South African media frames, Semenya was positioned as a national icon and a representative of the democratic, postapartheid, South African nation-state. Multiple constructions of her femininity and claims of her essential femaleness largely ignored, however, the reality of ambiguities surrounding the boundaries of race, sex and gender in that nation (Swarr, 2012). The mobilization of nationalist rhetoric in the South African papers and the defense of Semenya’s “true womanhood” suggest a reliance on the gender binary to defend what was perceived by many in South Africa as a racist assault.

One might interpret “transforming” sport as a call for recognizing how sports, in their current manifestations, provide a space for transformative visions and new ways

to reimagine sporting practices. Reading the Semenya controversy through the lens of postcolonial feminism (Mohanty, 2003), transformative visions come to light that simultaneously allow for and reject the inclusion of the sex/gender binary in sport. Indeed, Caster Semenya, as an agent in the framing of her experience, receded into the background of the story and she was outside the frame. Yet Semenya speaks to us, feminists from both the Global North and the Global South, in and through her sport performance. Semenya, both in her corporeality and in the media framing of her performance, presents a challenge to persisting forms of racism and sexism, both within and outside of sport, in global and local contexts.

In the coverage of Caster Semenya, mainstream media frames reaffirmed the legitimacy of gender-verification testing (in the United States) and the sex/gender binary (in both countries), and thus reproduced social injustice in sport and in society. Given that print news media, especially sports news media, have historically been male-dominated institutions (Messner, 2002; Serra & Burnett, 2007), it is not surprising that mainstream media frames concerning female athletes would reinforce gender ideologies and present female athleticism in sexist and racist ways (for a similar case study see Cooky et al., 2010). Thus, the framings of Semenya and the controversy itself lead us to reinforce calls for the inclusion of a diversity of voices, multiple standpoints, and contextually specific understandings in print news media. This inclusion of multiple voices and perspectives provides a critical challenge to the dominant meanings in media frames, which often uphold sex and gender injustice in sport.

The power of international sport organizations to constitute a singular meaning of sex/gender on a global scale cannot be underestimated. Some have argued that any transformation of sport requires abandoning sport policies that maintain the idea of dichotomously sexed and gendered bodies, including sex testing/gender verification (Cavanaugh & Sykes, 2006; Travers, 2008). To do so means abandoning the sex/gender binary in societies that define sexed/gendered bodies in oppressive and limiting ways. Although these suggestions are compelling, we recognize they may be difficult to achieve.

At the same time, there is evidence that the controversy and the subsequent outcry in South Africa and elsewhere regarding the treatment of Semenya has led to changes in international sport-governing policies on gender-verification testing. As of May 1, 2011, the IAAF released its latest policy titled, "IAAF Regulations Governing Eligibility of Female Athletes with Hyperandrogenism to Compete in Women's Competition." This 14-page policy outlines the process, rules, and procedures of determining the eligibility of female athletes. As part of this new policy, the IAAF no longer uses the terms "gender verification" or "gender testing" and has strict procedures to ensure the confidentiality of the process. Also, female athletes with hyperandrogenism may be eligible to compete in women's competitions if they submit to a test and agree to be compliant with the IAAF's policies. Athletes who refuse a test, or are found to have androgen levels higher than the "normal male range" or have androgen levels within the "normal male range" but are deemed to derive a competitive advantage from those androgens, could be ineligible for

competition, by either the expert medical panel's recommendation or by the IAAF officials' decision. This latest policy suggests a movement toward addressing the complex ways that sex/gender is expressed, yet remains problematic in that it upholds the rationale for sex segregation in sport.

We suggest that if sport-governing bodies continue to maintain the need for such tests, they should track the countries from which athletes undergo testing. This would ensure that certain countries are not inadvertently or overtly targeted and would also ensure that race and national profiling of certain femininities/masculinities do not occur. Moreover, to level the playing field, the policy of sex testing should be applied equally and consistently to male and female athletes. Male athletes who have endogenous levels of testosterone or androgens that exceed the "normal male range" should also be prevented from participating as a male athlete in men's competitions, given that these athletes would have an "unfair advantage" over other male competitors who have lower levels of testosterone. Some may argue that doping controls already assess athletes for the illegal use of synthetic hormones, steroids, and blood doping. However, we are suggesting that in addition to testing for steroids or other forms of doping, male athletes should also submit to a test to determine their eligibility to participate as a "normal" male athlete. Moreover, the numbers of male and female athletes who are tested must be monitored and, if inequalities exist, athletes or national sport federations would be able to file a sex discrimination violation.

Although proposing to "sex test" male athletes along with female athletes challenges the assumptions of female frailty/male superiority embedded in sex testing, this proposal ultimately reproduces the sex/gender binary by reinforcing the assumption that "male" and "female" are mutually exclusive categories. Scientific experts acknowledge that the IAAF (and other sport-governing bodies that implement sex testing) is making a "reasoned choice among many imperfect options," which we argue, offers a convincing rationale to eliminate sex testing in sport.

A way to accomplish this goal is for local and global sport communities and societies to reject the assumptions on which sex testing is based. According to the IOC and the IAAF, the rationale for sex testing is to ensure a "level-playing field" for women in sport by preventing men, or women with too much testosterone/androgen levels, from competing in women's events. To address sex/gender injustice in sport, therefore, we need to deconstruct and dismantle the myth of sport as a "level-playing field."

This transformative change has the potential to extend beyond the sex/gender binary in sport to address other inequalities. This is because the myth of sport as a level-playing field reproduces other forms of inequalities, such as racism, classism, ableism, and others. In some ways, this type of transformative potential can easily be realized given that sport is not, and arguably has never been, a level-playing field. The media framings of Semenya shed light on the need for global sport communities, and especially those individuals in positions of power to dictate sport policies and organizational structures, to acknowledge that sports competitions (and other institutionalized sporting practices), in their current manifestation, are imbued with inequality and injustice.

Only certain bodies (i.e., male, White, Western/Global North, affluent, heterosexual, able-bodied, etc.) are privileged in most sporting contexts. Transformative visions see the ways contemporary sport institutions and organizations at the amateur/Olympic and professional levels are rife with various inequalities. They also recognize that these inequalities are often accepted as part of the sport (here consider that economic resources confer better access to training facilities, equipment, and coaches, all of which enhance sport performance). These transformative visions move us toward an understanding of injustice in sport, one that identifies and locates inequalities to challenge the myth of sport as a level-playing field.

By exposing what myths in sport exist and how these operate to mask the production and reaffirmation of inequalities, opens the door to transforming the ways sport is organized, structured and understood. In Western countries, the notion of sport as a level-playing field serves to normalize competition and hierarchies that are found in broader society. As such, sport is a key socialization agent that serves to maintain social inequalities. Thus, rather than attempt to maintain the myth of a level-playing field by sex testing athletes to ensure no one has an “unfair” sex/gender “advantage,” there should be a clear recognition and acceptance that sport is not a level-playing field. This effectively eliminates the need to sex test athletes, male or female, in the first place. This may be an effective route through which to begin to transform sport and to assist with the eradication of sex, gender, race, and sexuality injustice.

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Notes

1. We acknowledge the potentially problematic use of the term “body,” given that it reproduces the mind/body dualism, in an article where our central argument is a critique of binary understandings of sex/gender. Here, we use the term “body” even though recognizing the limitations of language.
2. It should be noted that media reports referred to the testing in various ways such as gender verification, sex testing, gender testing, physical tests, and so on. This was included in our analysis; however, given the focus of this article, we report these findings elsewhere (Dworkin, Swarr, & Cooky, 2012).
3. Given the ways in which sex and gender are conflated, the understandings of Caster Semenya, and the media representations we analyzed, we use the term sex/gender. The IAAF’s own policy on “gender verification” speaks to the conflation of gender with sex. Moreover, following Fausto-Sterling (2000), we recognize that “our beliefs about gender—not

science—can define our sex . . . and effect what kinds of knowledges scientists produce about sex in the first place” (p. 3).

4. We respect Semenya’s self-identity, and thus throughout the article we refer to Semenya using feminine pronouns. Based on the textual analysis, most articles in the United States and in South Africa also refer to Semenya using feminine pronouns.
5. Media accounts in the United States and in South Africa differed in the sequences of events, of who knew what and when, who ordered the tests, when they took place and why. Thus, there was little agreement in media accounts of the “timeline” of events.

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