Article

Gender verification in sport as a surveillance practice: An inside and outside perception

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Abstract

This paper analyzes gender verification of sportswomen as one of the surveillance practices present in today's sports. Caster Semenya's case is the starting point for a discussion about gender verification, eligibility criteria and the presence of intersexual athletes. The article's main purpose is to show the role of surveillance in enforcing the boundary between sex and gender. It refers to concepts of *surveillant scopophilia*, *soft biometrics*, and the 'othered', (un)natural body and heteronormative body. The paper is based on the author's individual in-depth interviews with sportswomen, coaches and sports activists, and representatives of feminist organizations. This selection of respondents reveals how surveillance practices relating to sex verification are perceived both within and outside sport.

Introduction

According to Kathryn Conrad (2009: 380), issues of gender and sexuality 'have been largely invisible in surveillance studies'. The same can be said about sport. As Andrew Manley, Catherine Palmer and Martin Roderick (2012: 305) have noted, Surveillance Studies in sport have focused on mega events and issues of security and terrorism, but rarely do they focus on the surveillance of athletes by sports institutions. Such studies are conducted in the frame of physiology and sports medicine, but these sciences and the results of their research are usually outside the area of interest of the social sciences. From this point of view, the issues of gender verification and sports eligibility can help to address both of these gaps.

Athletes' bodies are the objects of different forms of surveillance, including medical examinations, monitoring, gathering data (the Athlete Biological Passport) and video surveillance. There are two main purposes of these practices. The first is to improve the athlete's abilities and performances, by examining endurance, lung capacity and video recordings of training and competition techniques. The second is to ensure a 'purity' of sports competition, commonly through anti-doping tests. Gender verification or examination of androgen levels, could be considered one of the tools for maintaining the principle of fair play in sport. However, as a surveillance practice it can also be perceived as a tool for reproducing gender order through processes of inclusion and exclusion.

The article focuses on Caster Semenya's case from 2009 because this case, which was extensively covered in the media, revived the debate on gender verification, eligibility criteria and the presence of intersexual athletes in elite sport. The following questions will be addressed: Whose bodies are under surveillance? What are the latent functions of surveillance practices? How are these practices perceived inside and outside sport? What is the role of surveillance in enforcing the boundary between sex/gender?

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Methodology

The article is based on the author's own research, which involved individual in-depth interviews with sportswomen, coaches and sports activists in five sports disciplines (football, running, boxing, shooting and chess), as well as several interviews with representatives of various feminist organizations. Over 40 interviews with representatives from the above mentioned disciplines were conducted in the first half of 2012.¹ While only female athletes were interviewed, the trainers and activists were mostly men due to their dominance as sports coaches and in positions of authority. All respondents come from the Wielkopolska Province in Poland, with most also being representatives of Poland's national teams and the activists representing national sports federations. Thus, it can be claimed that the data refer to attitudes about sex verification in Polish sport generally. Ten feminists interviewed for this study represent different organizations located in Poznań.

For the Polish sports environment Semenya's case was of particular interest, raising parallels in the Polish media of the stories of Stanisława Walasiewicz (also known as Stella Walsh) and Ewa Kłobukowska. The first was a gold medalist from the 1930s who was suspected of being male and was discovered to be a hermaphrodite. Walasiewicz was later shot dead in the 1980s. The second was the first Olympic athlete with XXY chromosomes to fail a gender test and was subsequently banned from competing in professional sports in 1967. While this paper focuses primarily on respondents from Poland, it seems the discussion and results can be generalized considering the widespread international media coverage of Semenya's case.

Historical and contemporary approaches to gender verification

The use of gender verification or sex testing has been well-described in the literature (see e.g., Cole 2000; Choi 2000; Pilgrim, Martin and Binder 2003). Athletes first underwent gender verification in 1966 during The European Athletics Championships in Budapest. The following year, the rules on gender verification were formally established. Initially, a medical committee would confirm an athlete's sex based on the visual inspection of their external genitalia. From the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico, chromosomal tests that looked for a *Barr* body, the inactivated second X chromosome found in female cells, were conducted. Over the years, the methods of gender verification changed and extended to include polymerase chain reaction (PCR), which detects the presence of the SRY gene, which is present only in males.

Over time, more and more voices, including those of the members of the IOC medical commission (Ljungqvist and Simpson 1992), have opposed gender verification because it was perceived as an unethical and humiliating practice. Even though the International Olympic Committee (IOC) did not agree with accusations that sex testing violates an athlete's human rights, it could not remain indifferent to growing criticism of this form of surveillance. In 1992, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) suspended the gender verification procedures and abolished the obligation of having 'sex passports'. Sportswomen had to wait another 7 years for a similar decision to be taken by the IOC in 1999.

The abolition of obligatory gender verification created leeway for sports organizations to verify the sex of sportswomen in 'suspicious' cases. This is what occurred in the case of Caster Semenya. After winning the 800 meter run for South Africa in World Championships in Berlin in 2009 with an overwhelming advantage, Semenya's unfeminine physical appearance (according to conventional ideals) raised suspicions about her sex. After almost a year, in July 2010, the IAAF announced that Semenya can rightly

¹ This material will be discussed in a forthcoming book about gender and sport in Poland. The gender verification was one of the issues raised in the interviews. Others issues included sports socialisation, training, media coverage and financial dimensions of contemporary sport.

compete against women. While all details of the medical examinations officially remain confidential, informally it is believed Semenya is biologically a hermaphrodite.

It can be assumed that the case of Caster Semenya has led sports organizations to revisit the regulations on the eligibility to compete. Currently, intersex athletes can participate in a sports competition on the basis of their legal sex. However, this regulation does not apply to women with *hyperandrogenism*. It is assumed that androgen hormones improve strength and speed, and thus give an unfair advantage to some participants in women's sports. Based on this assumption, a new regulation on gender verification in 'suspected' cases was established. Under these rules, the hormone levels of some athletes taking part in women's competition is examined, with those recording androgen levels that are too high being excluded due to assumptions they have an unfair physical advantage over other women. Women with hyperandrogenism are not eligible to participate in female competitions. However, they can try to take part in sports competitions for men if they manage to qualify.

Representatives of the IOC maintain that verification of the levels of androgens does not question the sex of athletes and that a person with hyperandrogenism is still considered a woman. However, this condition prevents her competing with other women because of her perceived 'natural' physical advantage. Thus, hyperandrogenism does not question the person's sex, but their eligibility to take part in women's competitions. However, these new regulations can be perceived as a continuation of the surveillance that was historically used for sex testing in sport.

Heteronormativity and 'suspected' cases

All the regulations concerning verifying gender apply only to women. These processes of gendering the female body are not limited to sports only (see e.g., Corones and Hardy 2009), but are highly visible in sports where the female body is prominent.

Confining gender verification to women is also based on the assumption that men have better physical abilities. It is considered that only men taking part in women's competition can have an unfair advantage. A woman or feminized man therefore loses at the starting line. People associated with the sport of running agree with this way of thinking:

It doesn't make sense to examine men, because we always achieve worse results. If the man has feminine characteristics, he just will achieve worse results.
(Athlete 1)

With [a] man, there is no problem. Giving female hormones to the man will rather reduce his athletic potential.²
(Other Respondent 1)

This approach can be considered to be right when we look at sports results in most disciplines. However, the limitation of gender verification as applying only to women can be considered a major tool for strengthening the dominant gender order in sports. Men also differ in the levels of androgens so that some of them could have a 'natural' hormonal advantage over others, yet they are not excluded from competing. In the case of men, a high level of androgens is not perceived as problematic. On the contrary, it makes them not only better athletes but also more masculine. When a woman has high androgen levels, she contradicts her femininity in two ways: either by way of the results—where the defeat of other women challenges the myth of female weakness (or 'the frailty myth')—or, by her physical appearance, which

² I distinguish three groups of respondents: athletes, other respondents (those related to sports, e.g. coaches, activists), and feminist respondents.

does not fit the standards of *heteronormativity*. From this point of view, sex testing that was previously used for 30 years, and has been reintroduced through new rules that guard the ‘natural’ boundaries of gender through intricate biological surveillance of women’s bodies, reproduces the social order (Lyon 2007: 3); in this case with reference to gender.

Current regulations according to which only ‘suspected’ cases are verified have a heteronormative character. Since sex verification examinations concern primarily those athletes who do not conform to traditional feminine images, certain ideas about what a woman should look like are reinforced. The opinions of interviewees associated with running prove the power of these norms and their capacity to reinforce a dichotomous perception of gender. Some questioned the sex of Caster Semenya based on their contact with her.

Frankly speaking, her behavior, the way she moves, she was [like] a man for me, every move, every gesture was not a feminine gesture but a masculine one. ... Her style of running, the way she showed her joy, the clenched fists, for me, it/she was really like a guy, to be honest. Zero femininity. There was nothing feminine about her.

(Athlete 2)

One can see it, physical characteristics, it is not a woman, in short, it is a man. We know that there are various things in nature, there are also genetic errors and some people are born as hermaphrodites. But in terms of these features, they have more testosterone, a different body structure etc.

(Other Respondent 2)

Excuse me for my language, but she is a tomboy.

(Other Respondent 3)

The visually aesthetic aspect is obviously not the main criterion of gender verification or the verification of androgen levels. However, due to the entertaining character of sports in the global media, the visual appearance of women plays a very important role. As Schneider (2003)³ wrote:

... in the places where sport is practiced, there intersexes, transvestites and sportswomen of extreme body image no longer appear ... television took away the right to visibility for optical deviations.

From this point of view, the surveillance of sportswomen’s bodies can be perceived not only as a tool for ensuring fair competition, but also for strengthening heteronormative femininity, and thereby providing pleasure for sports viewers. The term *surveillant scopophilia* (Magnet and Rodgers 2011: 3; Magnet 2011) can be useful here. According to Lyon (2006a: 48), referring to Laura Mulvey (1975):

... [when] applied to the cinema or, more broadly, to the viewer society, *scopophilia* (pleasure of looking) has been translated as the predominantly male gaze of Hollywood that depersonalizes women, turning them into objects to be looked at.

In sport, *scopophilia* can be understood as the possibility to watch or peep at the female body doing sport. The outfits worn in many sports disciplines, such as tennis, volleyball and athletics, as well as the modern technology that allows people to view the body in close-ups, give aesthetic pleasure and attract many viewers to women’s sports. Surveillance practices support the pleasure of looking by identifying those bodies deemed threatening, from the heteronormative point of view. Referring to Mary Douglas’ theory

³ Translated by author.

(1966) these ‘dirty bodies’ must be excluded to maintain the purity of the system. Thus, both visual and biological surveillance is an important means by which female sports spaces are ‘sanitized’ or purified from perceived troublesome others (McCahill 2002).

The privacy of ‘othered bodies’

Surveillance of intimate and private issues is common to both sports and many other areas of social life (see e.g. Lyon 2006a). In medical, travel or athletic contexts, it may be embarrassing for the ‘othered’ body to undergo this type of surveillance (Magnet and Rodgers 2011). However, one major difference between sports and other areas of social life is that elite athletes are public figures and their bodies are also on public display. With certain ideas about what an athlete should look like, there is extensive discussion of the changes in their appearance or their suitability to compete. Questioning the sex of athletes also becomes the subject of immense public discussion, which was shown very clearly by the case of Caster Semenya.

Respondents in this study emphasized the harm and humiliation that such public controversy could bring to an athlete, even though they were convinced that Caster Semenya should undergo the verification of her sex. They especially stressed the impact of the media coverage of Semenya’s case.

It caused terrible harm to her.

(Athlete 2)

It was very hard for her, mentally. And I will say this—I take my hat off to her, for her ability to take and resist it all, and still show up on television ... This is a humiliation on a global scale.

(Athlete 1)

They hurt Caster Semenya, it was embarrassing and distasteful that such intimate issues were brought out to the public.

(Other Respondent 2)

It was a little bit, I do not know, let’s say humiliating, improper for sure.

(Athlete 3)

Respondents suggested these tests should be conducted on the national level before the contestant is able to participate in an important international sports event. The histories of competitors such as Ewa Kłobukowska or Maria Patino show that the public questioning of an athlete’s sex can have serious consequences, both for their sportive and personal lives. Representatives of feminist organizations also described gender verification practices in the case of Caster Semenya as ‘humiliating’ (Feminist Respondent 5), ‘embarrassing’ (Feminist Respondent 2), and one of them even used the term ‘fascist’ (Feminist Respondent 4). From their points of view, such practices are doubly harmful, because the contestant is firstly defined as having an ‘othered’ (stigmatized) body, and secondly, the athlete cannot participate in the sports competition.

According to one runner interviewed in this study ‘if Caster Semenya has something to hide, she should undergo such tests’ (Athlete 3). This statement corresponds to a frequently used justification for surveillance practices: ‘if you nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear’. While this logic might seem correct for the illegal use of drugs in sports, it does not seem to be justified in relation to gender. Firstly, as was often a case in the past, some sportswomen had not been aware of their hormonal disorders until they were diagnosed during the verification tests. Such a standpoint illustrates why equating ‘what is hidden’ with ‘what is shameful’ is problematic for transgender and gender/queer communities (Ball,

Green, Koskela and Phillips 2009: 353). It can also be said that those who agree to take part in competitive sports, also agree to have their bodies controlled and examined. However, the consequences are different for different groups. This gendered 'social sorting' function 'produce[s] coded categories through which persons and groups of persons may be sorted ... and provided differential treatments' (Lyon 2006b: 404). Athletes who were once excluded from sport, and today, those who are required to undergo androgen testing, can be compared to 'being stopped' at the airport, where:

(t)he bodies of Othered subjects who fail to pass the checkpoint, or who are disproportionately adversely affected or violated in the screening process, expose deep contradictions and fallacies in [the] rhetorics of 'freedom of movement' that have historically been articulated to air travel, and that continue to underlie the promotion of new surveillance technologies.

(Magnet and Rodgers 2011: 7)

Theoretically, freedom of movement enables the possibility of traveling all around the world. In practice, however, the opening of multiple boundaries through specific zones, such as the Schengen area, limits free movement via the daily practices of surveillance. Some groups of people are particularly at risk of being checked, due to their physical appearance, race or ethnicity. Being stopped through such surveillance stigmatizes these people as Others and deprives their ability to move freely. Similarly, in sports, there exists a contradiction between Olympic ideals such as equality and participation for all and the detailed verification of 'othered' (women's) bodies. Such surveillance practices operate as a tool of exclusion, especially when private or intimate matters become public.

Surveillance and fair play

As has been mentioned, there are two major justifications for surveillance practices in sports. The first applies to a single athlete or team, and is designed to improve the sporting results. The second concerns the rivalry between athletes or teams, and aims to control the 'purity' of the sports competitions. All respondents describing the case of Caster Semenya acknowledged this second justification for gender verification, based on the idea that Semenya appeared to have an unfair advantage over other female athletes.

This is not *pure* competition because she has an advantage over girls.

(Athlete 2, italics added)

This is not fair to the other women.

(Athlete 4)

I do not think that it was fair to the other girls.

(Athlete 1)

Even if most athletes interviewed in this study had no opportunity to compete against Semenya, their view indicated she was a potential rival on the track who held an unfair advantage due to her physical appearance.

I think I would feel a little mistreated, however, [thinking] that she has some physiological advantage over the rest. Sure I would feel bad about it.

(Athlete 3)

Interviewees also said that the runners' colleagues were divided in the case of Caster Semenya. Some athletes wanted to compete with her, while others opposed her participation in the women's competition. As one runner stated:

In the beginning, when the whole situation started (with this competitor), there was some kind of a boycott. Some contestants said that if she was accepted [into competition], they would not take part in the competition. But then, she passed the test, she was allowed to races, so they did not have a choice and had to compete with her ... They just said so, but when it came to the competition, she and the rest took part in it.

(Athlete 5)

Both athletes and other respondents associated with running believed that the sex of sportswomen should be verified in 'suspicious' cases. This view is illustrated by the following opinions:

... if it is to be fair in sports, then—if she has other conditions and predispositions, other possibilities than the rest of women, and it is evident—why not investigate and check it. We all have various other tests, like anti-doping tests on various substances. I think that these tests should be carried out.

(Athlete 5)

To make the opportunities equal, such things [gender verification] should be practiced. The question is, to some physiologists, how many people in a population are hermaphrodites, have both male and female characteristics. I don't know what the percentage is and if it makes sense [to do gender verification] for such a percentage. However, I think that it should be distinguished for *the purity* of sports spirit.

(Other Respondent 3, italics added)

According to the two respondents quoted above, all athletes should be examined at the highest level of sporting competition in the same way that anti-doping tests are carried out and steroid profiles are created. Sportswomen accept such surveillance practices as useful in protecting the principles of fair play. Athletes perceive both anti-doping and gender verification practices not only as 'normal', but also beneficial in promoting fairness and creating equal potential for sports success. In this sense, the sportswomen themselves help to guard heteronormative gender boundaries.

Looking for a good solution

The answer to the question 'How should sports organizations treat intersex athletes?' caused many difficulties for respondents in this study. Two respondents said a 'suspicious' runner could be subjected to a hormonal treatment 'to increase her level of hormones to the level of a woman' (Other Respondent 2). However, it's worth emphasizing that women have different levels of hormones, so, from the medical point of view, one can only talk about an appropriate range of hormonal acceptability. According to some respondents, Semenya should withdraw from the sport, or at least, not be allowed to compete in the most important sports events. Her presence in the competition, as one respondent said: 'is very bad to other contestants, because they [Semenya and competitors similar to her] take advantage of the greater amount of male hormones' (Other Respondent 3). One respondent said that she 'would direct her to men's competition and let her compete with the stronger sex' (Athlete 4). However, two coaches noted that this is not a good solution because it would doom her to failure right from the start. Many interviewees indicated that it is very difficult to work out a solution that would not be harmful to both the competitor herself and her rivals.

In contrast to the respondents directly involved as participants or other officials in sport, a vast majority of representatives from feminist organizations interviewed in this study were against any form of sex/gender verification. A few interviewees pointed to the possibility of using gender self-identification as a possible solution, which was not raised by any of the sports respondents. This resistance to sex verification testing is illustrated by the following three opinions:

In such unclear cases, to me, it is the most important how such a person identifies herself. If she identifies herself as a woman, lives like a woman, has feminine data on her identity card, which she approves of, for me, she has the right to participate in women's competition.

(Feminist Respondent 5)

We can take the individual feeling of belonging to a sex as a starting point.

(Feminist Respondent 2)

If we assume that everyone can choose the gender with which she or he identifies and would like to compete within, then I can imagine, that these [gender] divisions would continue to exist. The problem arises with a person whose sex/gender is more fluid and unclear. What should we do in such a situation? I think, I would also give such people the right to declare in which sex category they prefer to compete.

(Feminist Respondent 6)

At the same time, representatives from feminist organizations are aware that no sex verification testing could lead to all kinds of abuse. For example:

(w)e can imagine the numerous cases of abuse connected with the fact that men would regularly identify themselves as women to be classified in this category, where lower results give better places.

(Feminist Respondent 5)

Some feminist respondents mentioned the practice of female athletes in East Germany who deliberately got pregnant to achieve better during competition results, while recognizing the significant distinction between the innate character of ambiguous sex status and the deliberate blurring of the boundary between women and men through the use of prohibited drugs. According to one respondent, the probability of abuse with different forms of doping is the reason why sex testing in sports should be permitted to promote fairness for competitors.

Questioning one's sex/gender is something disgusting. But in the world of sports, I would treat it rather as an attempt to eliminate some practices such as doping. I would accept it only in sports and only for the good of the competitors.

(Feminist Respondent 3)

Only one respondent representing feminist organizations claimed that if hermaphroditism or hyperandrogenism has an impact on sports performance the athlete should be excluded from competition:

Probably the fairest solution would be to stop her from taking part in competition, because of the difficulty to assign her to one or the other category; on the other hand, it is difficult to imagine a world championship for hermaphrodites. It is a very drastic solution ... I know, it is very dramatic, but I think that such people should not be allowed to compete, if they cannot be assigned to either one or the other category, and it substantially affects the results of other people.

(Feminist Respondent 7)

This interviewee also recognized that being excluded from sports competitions is a drastic solution, which did not recognize her views on general issues of gender.

Several other respondents stressed that it would be very difficult to eliminate the distinctions between women and men or feminine and masculine in sport, primarily because of their durability and cultural significance. As one woman said: 'we are in a trap of sex ... I do not know whether we can go beyond the categories of sex' (Feminist Respondent 2). Another respondent indicated these divisions exist in sport because 'the vast majority of the population fit into one of two categories' (Feminist Respondent 6). Another respondent drew attention to the degree of medicalization, commercialization and mass-popular appeal to indicate that gender division is largely cultural rather than biological:

From the point of view of culture, it makes sense, because these are two different performances ... Culturally, it is impossible not to have this classification. Because it is too deeply ingrained culturally, and the tradition is too long [but it is also] based on stories about nature and biology, which are the simplest stories about the world.

(Feminist Respondent 1)

Some assume that gender is internal to the body, while others regard gender as relevant to the body's visual appearance (Slopp 2012: 86). It seems that intersexuality is not a problem if it remains hidden inside the body. When it becomes visual, it disrupts the conventional gender dichotomy and there is no place for such 'otherness' in sport. As a form of mass-media entertainment, the interest in sport is dependent on and reinforces traditional images of femininity and masculinity. Intersexual athletes, therefore, are perceived as 'others' not because of their chromosomes or internal gender, but due to the image of the visible gendered body.

Cultural constructions of biological sex

The body is of particular importance in the surveillance society, as evidenced by developments in biometrics. The body is treated as a repository of correct information and biometric data are perceived to be more reliable than other data for identification and authentication (Bright 2001: 236). For example, anti-doping tests are used to identify and authenticate the biologically 'natural' predispositions of sportsmen. When the biology of sex is questioned, the appearance of the body is used to confirm the 'true' sex.

Gender is perceived as one of the *soft biometrics* displaying 'characteristics that provide some information about the individual, but lack the distinctiveness and permanence to sufficiently differentiate any two individuals' (Jain, Dass and Nandakumar 2004: 732). Magnet (2012) considers that soft biometrics divide people into categories based on their gender or race by reducing the complexity of human nature into simple and often binary categories that marginalize 'other' bodies. Adopting a single one-size-fits-all paradigm of biometric logic is a primary reason for the failure of these surveillance systems.

In sport, every athlete has to fit into one binary gender category. Representatives of the IOC and IAAF perceive the problems of sex attribution and sex differentiation as biological or medical issues by adopting

the categories based on ‘sex’ rather than gender. As one feminist respondent indicated, there exists ‘a biological parameterization’ in sports, as ‘sports refer to biology, nature, the story of a world without intellect, although it is highly supported by medicine, technology’ (Feminist Respondent 1). In contrast, sex and gender are socio-cultural categories, which almost all representatives of the feminist movement pointed out. The arbitrary assignment of sex as the key criterion for separating athletes is based on cultural, not biological, definitions of masculinity and femininity. These ‘new’ definitions of gender are clearly the result of the development of science and new knowledge about human biology from the physiological and medical fields, which are implicitly objective, but invoke elements of subjective knowledge.

This clearly shows how cultural-rooted is this biological construct of sex, if medical research once examines by watching, at another time by checking chromosomes or the level of hormones. And all this happens within the 20th century. This shows that the biological construct of sex is very unstable.

(Feminist Respondent 1)

For many, many years, not only in research, but also in various areas of science, gender has been taken into account, and it impossible to contest the fact that the biological sex is somehow conventional, because we have evidence for the existence of hermaphrodites and various other controversial cases; we need to realize that this division into male and female disciplines, it is also, to some extent, [a] conventional division.

(Feminist Respondent 6)

According to Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000: 3):

labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender—not science—can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kind of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place.

Relying on the bio-medical data supports and maintains the existing heteronormative gender order that promotes a clear distinction between women and men. However, in the broader socio-cultural context this binary division is often blurred. Clear biological classifications in sport help to control social reality and impose a specified social order. The Olympic Movement, which celebrates humanity in all its diversity, does not recognize this sufficiently through biological sex classifications.

The natural—unnatural boundary

One problematic issue is whether it is possible in today’s sport to maintain the boundaries between what is considered natural and unnatural or artificial (see e.g., Magdalinski 2009; McCullough 2010). Despite the fact that modern sport seems to have little to do with ‘nature’ and the ‘natural’ body, these ideas are still present. One can point to two reasons for their importance. Firstly, sport is the sphere of activity that determines the limits of possibility in human physical performance. Secondly, the ‘naturalness’ of the body creates the boundary between human beings and the artificial, which now includes biological machines or cyborgs.

Maintaining the clear line between the ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ body is also a mechanism to maintain the boundary between male and female. References to ‘natural’ differences are one of the dimensions of the reproduction of male domination and discrimination against women in sport. According to Sarah McCullough (2010: 6 et seq.), the naturalized discourse is used to define the boundaries between what is ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’, acceptable and unacceptable, and ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’. What goes

beyond the 'natural / normality' division is seen as a threat to the existing order and, as such, is marginalized or eliminated. One such example is the issue of athlete intersexuality.

The nature of today's sports makes the boundary between 'natural' and 'unnatural' and 'feminine' and 'masculine' associated with visual appearance. Therefore, it seems more important not to have a 'natural' female body, but to have the look of a 'natural' (female) body. The body does not have to be so 'natural', but has to resemble it. In many cases, not only the results, but the look was the reason for questioning the sex/gender of athletes, as illustrated both by the 100 meters final during the Olympics in 1936 and its medalists (Helen Stephens, Stanisława Walasiewicz and Käthe Krauss), and lastly by Caster Semenya's case. It was first of all her 'male' look, posture and manner of running that raised doubts concerning her gender. Interestingly, the athlete was not suspected of drug use, in spite of the remarkable improvement in her scores; rather, attention was focused on her appearance, 'unnatural' female body.

Conclusion

Some surveillance practices are used to regulate all athletes. The exclusion of people with any 'unnatural' advantage, such as doping, is claimed to assure equal opportunities for all and to protect against unfair competition. On the other hand, using some surveillance practices only with reference to women seems to contradict the idea of equality in sport. In the past, women who did not fit into established medically based definitions of femininity were excluded. Nowadays, this practice applies only to 'suspicious' women with diagnosed hyperandrogenism. Such practices do not apply to men, even if abnormally high hormone levels are innate. This idea of protecting women from unfairness can equally be perceived as a hidden form of exclusion of those who display non-standard visual or biologically appropriate sex characteristics from sport.

Surveillance practices in sport maintain heteronormative gender boundaries. As such, they are not gender-neutral in sport or other areas of social life (Magnet 2012). It is crucial, however, to emphasize that people working outside of the sports world are more likely to recognize this problem. Feminists or academics commonly acknowledge the issues of women's marginalization and the exclusion of 'othered' bodies. This research demonstrates that sportswomen and other representatives involved in sports coaching and administration perceive the problem of hyperandrogenism as one that challenges ideals of fair play, winning, of sporting success. The interview data presented in this paper reveal the contradiction between the way the surveillance practices associated with sex verification are seen from inside and outside the world of sports.

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