


Chapter 17

The Pedagogical Possibilities of Critically Examining Gender and Sexuality in Initial Teacher Education Through the Lens of Intersex

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ABSTRACT

Although pre-service Health and Physical Education (HPE) teachers may be acquainted with media headlines categorizing intersex bodies as “deviant,” “non-biological,” “different,” and/or “non-natural” in their reporting on eligibility testing in women’s elite sports, few appear to be familiar with what intersex includes and what these tests were designed to reveal. Drawing on Evan and Rich’s advocacy to critically analyse body-policies with strong normative body-pedagogies, this chapter unpacks how athletes marked by this category cannot be understood as separate from the corporeal instructions and ‘authorities’ that mark and regulate their bodily representation. The chapter inspires and encourages HPE teachers to take the ‘risk’ of engaging students in disruptive practices which explore the inscription of power onto particular bodies and abilities in sports and how they as both pedagogues and members of society are all ethically implicated in these relations of power.

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INTRODUCTION

Indian sprinter Dutee Chand appeals against ban for failing ‘gender test’ (Headline from The Guardian, 2014).

Caster Semenya: Should South African middle distance runner compete as a woman at 2016 Rio Olympics? South African - who won Olympic silver at London 2012 - has levels of testosterone levels three times higher than an average woman due to hyperandrogenism. (Headline from The Sun, 2016)

Caster Semenya loses testosterone case against the IAAF in CAS ruling: Double Olympic 800m champion Caster Semenya has lost her appeal against new IAAF regulations requiring female athletes to reduce testosterone levels (Headline from Olympic Channel, 2019).

Drawing from experiences and knowledge as “critical teacher educators” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 4), with pre-service Health and Physical Education (HPE) teachers, this chapter is an account for an innovative critical teaching (Evans & Rich, 2011; Evans, Rich, Allwood, & Davies, 2008; McWilliam, 1996) implemented in a tertiary Sociology of Sport course in the HPE teacher education stream. This analysis addresses and challenges the ways in which athletes with intersex variations are understood in contemporary conversations about non-normative bodies and athletic abilities in female elite sports. As the sensationalised and pathologizing media headings above suggest (T. Jones et al., 2016) unfamiliarity with and myths surrounding “intersex bodies” sometimes result in those born with variations in sex characteristics being herded into social spaces in which they are regarded as “deviant”, “non-biological”, “different” and/or “non-natural” both within and outside sporting milieus (Jarvie, 2013, p. 300). As this chapter will explore, while some pre-service HPE teachers may be acquainted with the “gender test” and “gender row” headlines surrounding Chand and Semenya, few are familiar with *what* hermaphroditism, intersex and/or hyperandrogenism entail or, *what* these “gender tests” have involved and may involve in the future. Fewer know *when*, *how* and *why* these tests, technologies and policies around the body came about or, *who* the authorities and authors of these corporeal tests were, identifying female athletes with specific intersex variations as a cohort that needs to be policed by “regulative and instructional principles of prevailing, dominant ideologies and shape communication ... pertaining to body ... shape and health” ideals (Evans & Rich, 2011, p. 367) in female elite sports. Similarly, some may notice ethical discrepancies in how and why these authorities mark, discipline and regulate particular bodies and endogenous athletic abilities in female classified sports through policy material and yet overlook others. Fewer still, seem comfortable to incorporate these conversations into the Sociology of Sport classroom through interactive activities inspired by an inclusive framework where there is an intersex visibility, rather than intersex being invisible, overlooked or even avoided (Intersex Society of North America, Koyama, & Weasel, 2001, pp. 6-7). This chapter aims to showcase how some of these conversations can and have been introduced in a tertiary Sociology of Sport course within the HPE teacher education suit of courses in Queensland, Australia.

As sociologists the authors understand, “sex” “and, by extension, intersex” (Holmes, 2011, p. 394) to be socially and medically constructed (G. Davis, 2015). Intersex is “a term whose meaning is contested” as it is disputed as an identity, described as *disorders of sex development* in medical milieus (Lee, Houk, Ahmed, & Hughes, 2006) and erroneously still referred to as “hermaphroditism” within the general public (G. Davis, 2015, p. 2). Intersex people “are born with physical sex characteristics that don’t fit

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