

“He’s Not Even Trying to Look Like a Woman”: Cisgenderist Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories in Online Talk About Transgender Women Athletes

Gabriel Knott-Fayle

is a Postdoctoral Scholar of Masculinities Studies in Education in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. Their work can be found in various journals including *Feminist Media Studies*, *Feminism & Psychology*, the *Journal of Bodies, Sexualities, and Masculinities*, as well as in edited volumes such as *Gender Diversity and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Increasing Inclusivity* (Witcomb & Peel, 2022).

✉ gabriel.knottfayle@ucalgary.ca

Contemporary gender debates have crystallized in and around sport. The discrimination of transgender people is particularly potent in sport due to the relentless male/female categorization and the consistent somatic inspection. Whilst the role of cisgenderism—that is, the systemic discrimination of transgender people—has been explored in relation to legacy media and sporting policies, little has been written on how it functions in online sports talk. In this article, online posts about transgender athletes are examined using feminist discourse analysis. The analysis highlights three important discursive patterns related to misinformation and conspiracy theories. Firstly, a “Confused Medicalization” spreads misinformation about gender-affirming care and bodily morphology, misgendering and marginalizing the experiences of transgender athletes. Secondly, a “Pseudohistory of Gender Fraud” pathologizes transgender athletes through accusations of cheating to enter women’s sport. Thirdly, these discursive patterns feed into a broader conspiracy theory about a plot to destroy cisgender women’s sport. Fundamentally, these discursive patterns function to exclude and erase transgender athletes as well as obfuscate the workings of cisgenderism.

KEYWORDS cisgenderism; sport; misinformation; conspiracy theories; online discourse

DOI [10.57814/630J-CR18](https://doi.org/10.57814/630J-CR18)

LICENSE Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives ([by-nc-nd](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/))

Toni Bruce (2013, 126) notes that we are “enveloped” by sports media due to its popularity which “means that its messages reach millions if not billions of people.” Due to this “envelopment,” sports media plays a significant role in our understandings of society.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that contemporary understandings of gender and gender-diversity have unfolded, in part, in sports media. Representations of transgender athletes are germane to societal and cultural recognition of transgender people. Unfortunately, sports media, whether that be legacy, digital, or social media, more often than not portray transgender athletes in discriminatory ways.

Authors have explored the ways that transgender mixed martial artist Fallon Fox was portrayed as deviant, abnormal and other across media (Fischer and McClearn 2020; Knott-Fayle, Peel, and Witcomb 2022; Love 2019). Further, Fischer and McClearn (2020) make it clear that both racist and sexist assumptions intersect in media discourses of Fox, with suspicion over Fox's gender identity entangled with racist stereotypes of aggressive Black and Brown men threatening White women. Critical race scholars working in the sporting space have noted that the invasive policing of women in sports is premised on a Western colonial gaze designed to discipline Black and Brown bodies whilst simultaneously naturalizing, and thus obfuscating, the functioning of racism, sexism and cisgenderism in elite level sports (Magubane 2014; Nyong'o 2010). These sports media representations feed into, and are themselves sustained by, neocolonial and cisgenderist discourses and practices which impact how transgender people are (mis)recognized in society. Other researchers have illuminated the ways that transgender discrimination has crystallized in media representations of weightlifter, Laurel Hubbard—including in print media (Lucas and Newhall 2019; Scovel, Nelson, and Thorpe 2023) and in social media (Xu 2023). Hubbard, who competed at the Olympics in Tokyo in 2021, was subjected to transmisogynist scrutiny, having her gender identity called into question for not appearing conventionally feminine.

These examples are indicative of the reality that, in sports media, it is deemed legitimate to speculate on and scrutinize the identities, motives, and bodies of transgender women athletes. It is perhaps unsurprising that these discriminatory practices occur in sports media given the history of transgender discrimination in media (Billard 2016; Halberstam 2005; Schilt and Westbrook 2009; Sloop 2004). However, it is exacerbated in sporting contexts due to the racist, sexist, and cisgenderist history of sex testing in women's sport. Sporting culture has thus developed notions of fairness that are tied to binary man/woman categorizations as well as biomedical epistemic privilege which equates "scientific knowledge with knowledge itself" (Karkazis and Jordan-Young 2018, 8) rendering transgender people always already suspicious in sporting contexts. Consequently, sports media is uniquely situated in the media landscape to proliferate racist, sexist, and cisgenderist discourses about transgender athletes and people.

In this article, taking sports media seriously as a site of transgender discrimination, I build on Knott-Fayle et al.'s (2021; 2022) description of cisgenderism in sports media to explicitly understand how cisgenderism functions in online posts about transgender athletes. Whilst there is important work that explores the systemic nature of transphobia, in this article I follow research traditions that use the term "cisgenderism" to foreground "the wider social ideology that works to invalidate or pathologise self-designated genders" (Pearce et al. 2024, 47; see also Ansara, 2015; Israel & Ansara, 2021; Lennon & Mistler, 2014). Here, I expand on the relatively limited amount of research that explores depictions of transgender athletes on social media, in order to develop an analysis of how cisgenderism functions in online sports talk.

Taking a snapshot of posts from X (formerly known as Twitter) and engaging in a discursive analysis I explore how media suspicion and scrutiny of transgender people and athletes supports and sustains cisgenderist misinformation and conspiracy theories about the ostensible power of transgender people and advocates and their desire to destroy cisgender women's sport.

There is a close relationship between misinformation and conspiracy theories. Here I take "misinformation" to be "an umbrella term encompassing all forms of false or misleading information regardless of the intent behind it" (Altay, Berriche, and Acerbi 2023). Conspiracy theories refer to "a belief that two or more actors have coordinated in secret to achieve an outcome and that their conspiracy theory is of public interest but not public knowledge" (Douglas and Sutton 2023, 287). In addition, conspiracy theories attempt to explain political and social events as conspiracies which "typically attempt to usurp political or economic power, violate rights, infringe upon established agreements, withhold vital secrets, or alter bedrock institutions" (Douglas et al. 2019). In Altay et al.'s. (2023, 2) survey of experts, "most experts... also agreed that pseudoscience and conspiracy theories represent forms of misinformation." Similarly, Pierre (2020) posits that mistrust and misinformation are central pillars to the belief in and propagation of conspiracy theories. In this article, I layout the ways that misinformation and conspiracy theories interact with cisgenderist online talk about transgender women athletes.

THE CURRENT STUDY

Data and Methods

In this article I explore the discursive constructions of transgender athletes and transgender inclusion in sport in online posts on X (formerly known as Twitter). Research has pointed to a link between social media usage and the belief and propagation of misinformation and conspiracy theories (Enders et al. 2023) and X has been shown to be the most prominent social network used to spread homophobia and transphobia (Sánchez-Sánchez, Ruiz-Muñoz, and Sánchez-Sánchez 2024)—a reality that is likely to be exacerbated since the rules regarding hate speech have been relaxed following Elon Musk's takeover (Center for Countering Digital Hate 2023). As such, it is unsurprising that cisgenderist misinformation and conspiracy theories offer a salient framing for understanding talk about transgender athletes on X. This data needs to be understood as a snapshot of this specific place in the media eco-system rather than representative of all or even typical sports discourse. X continues to hold a prominent place in that media eco-system. Since Musk's takeover the number of active users on X has dropped. Globally, figures for usage of the app fell 15% from Musk's takeover to February 2024, to 174 million daily active users (Ingram 2024). Despite relative falling numbers it remains a highly used social media platform by both the general public as well as politicians, organizations, and celebrities—in 2023 Twitter/X had 353.9 million users worldwide (Statista 2024). Consequently, the data represents a concrete and significant, though specifically situated, snapshot of online discourse around transgender athletes.

Using a data-mining service, Phantombuster, I collected publicly available posts (Tweets) from X. The parameters of the posts were that they had to include the words "Transgender" AND "Sport" OR "Athlete" and were posted in the month of June 2023.

The posts that comprise the dataset were posted after Elon Musk took over Twitter in 2022 but before he changed the name to X (in July 2023)—though data collection occurred after (September 2023). In total the search parameters collected 773 posts. All posts were downloaded and examined individually for descriptive coding. Posts that were unclear, were obviously responses to other posts, or were particularly rich in data were also examined on X as part of the threads where they were posted. As is often the case with qualitative research, this required exploring “creative hunches” developed through careful and thoughtful examination of a rich dataset source (Jarzabkowski, Langley, and Nigam 2021, 71).

As the posts are all publicly available there is not necessarily a reasonable expectation of privacy. However, there is complexity involved when using public posts including the fact that some users may have since deleted their posts or not have expected them to be collected for research purposes. Consequently, one cannot apply a simplistic understanding of public data across all online research (Ravn, Barnwell, and Barbosa Neves 2020). With this in mind, despite their being no necessity to anonymize the posts, the usernames have been replaced with pseudonyms created by a random username generator. As long as they remain publicly available, the posts may be found through online searching, but this measure creates an extra degree of anonymity for the posters. This anonymization also helps to protect the author. Users are less likely to become aware that their posts are critiqued in a journal which protects the author from online hate and doxing which are both possibilities when it comes to fraught topics such as gender-identity and inclusion in sport.

Methodology

The posts are analyzed here using a feminist and critical discourse analysis (Lazar 2007; Thompson, Rickett, and Day 2018). The aim is to explore the rhetorical and discursive devices used and how they perpetuate discrimination of transgender athletes and a buttressing of cisnormative and transphobic ideology. The analytic process involved (1) labelling the posts with descriptive codes, (2) identifying recurring codes, (3) identifying discourses, (4) identifying discursive patterns, and (6) theoretically accounting for those patterns. The coding took place inductively which involves condensing raw data into codes, establishing links between the coding and the research questions and finally developing a model or theory to account for the patterns identified in the data (Thomas 2003). These descriptive codes were low inference codes designed to describe the rhetorical content of the posts, with at least one code applied to each post. For example, the following post was given the descriptive codes “Misgendering transgender athletes,” “Transgender athletes seeking an unfair advantage,” “Presenting transgender women as men seeking entry into women’s spaces,” “Presenting transgender athletes as seeking an unfair advantage,” “Presenting gender fraud as an ongoing problem in sport,” and “Depicting those who speak out as being unfairly labelled bigots or transphobes.”

“Transphobe” is a word used by people who support men cheating in sport and hanging around in girls changing rooms. What these people aren’t is transgender. They’re perverts. There’s a big difference to someone who makes the change and quietly lives their life. (MaySometimes, June 18)

The descriptive codes “Misgendering transgender athletes” and “Presenting trans-

gender athletes as seeking an unfair advantage” were grouped with other descriptive codes including “Comparing transgender athletes testosterone levels to doping athletes,” and “Presenting transgender women athletes as failed cisgender men athletes” to form the discourse “Assumptions about gender fraud in sport.” Then this discourse was grouped with other discourses including “Assumptions about gender fraud in culture” and “Pseudohistory of cheating in sport” to form the discursive pattern “Pseudohistory of gender fraud.” Table 1 shows the inductive coding process including descriptive codes that were applied five or more times, discourses and discursive patterns. The purpose of this analysis is not to give an overview of all discursive patterns but instead to theoretically account for some of those discursive patterns as forms of cisgenderist misinformation and conspiracy theory.

FINDINGS

What follows is an exploration of three discursive patterns—“Confused Medicalization,” “Pseudohistory of Gender Fraud,” and “Plotting Against (Cis)Women’s Sport.” In line with the form of feminist discourse analysis employed, this is underpinned and suffused throughout with theoretical accounting of these discursive patterns. In particular, this theoretical accounting explores how these discursive patterns can be explained as cisgenderist misinformation and conspiracy theories.

Linking these findings to frameworks of cisgenderist misinformation and conspiracy theories allows for a deepening and extending of our understandings of how cisgenderism functions in social media discussions of transgender athletes and transgender inclusion in sporting spaces. Further, in the analysis I extend the discussion to consider what these instantiations of cisgenderism do for the propagation and legitimization of transgender discrimination more broadly.

Confused Medicalization

Across the online posts there is a deployment of biomedical understandings of sex in lay terms. That is to say, this is not about the deployment of peer-reviewed biomedical knowledge (which has its own issues with cisgenderism) but instead about the way that biomedical language and (mis)understandings are utilized for rhetorical purposes by non-experts in the online posts. These posts muddle and muddy both biological and social understandings of sex and gender. In particular, (often imagined) somatic markers are deployed as convenient ways to reduce the complexity of sex and gender to one basic biological “truth.” Consider the diversity of biological markers that are presented as proof of cisgenderist (mis)understandings of sex and gender in the following posts:

Uha hum I’d say drop your drawers, you’re a man or woman. Simple test! I think I am, isn’t the correct answer. (RavenBaa, 2023, June 22)

How many female athletes have to get injured before the rules allow for a Trans Athlete category? There is no other solution. XY≠XX and never will! (BusstopVines, 2023, June 16)

Table 1. Discursive Patterns and Descriptive Codes Identified in Critical Discourse Analysis

Discursive Pattern	Discourse	Descriptive Code (n)
Confused Medicalization	Misgendering based on morphological assumptions	Misgendering based on observed or imagined musculature (46)
		Comparing images of assumed transgender and cisgender athletes (33)
	Focusing on genitalia	Making assumptions about an athlete's genitalia (25)
		Presenting genitalia as a determinant of athletic ability (14)
	Discussions of blood, testosterone, and bones	Making assumptions about an athlete's testosterone levels (17)
		Presenting testosterone as the determinant of gender (55)
		Discussions about the size and shape of the pelvis (15)
		Discussions about bone density (18)
	Comparison with doping athletes	Presenting testosterone as the determinant of athletic ability (78)
		Presenting transgender athletes as overly physically powerful (61)
Pseudohistory of Gender Fraud	Significance of chromosomes	Comparing transgender athletes' testosterone levels to doping athletes (40)
		Presenting chromosomes as indicative of sex and gender (75)
	Assumptions about gender fraud in sport	Presenting chromosomes as the determinant of one's athletic ability (28)
		Presenting chromosomes as easily aligning with other biological markers of sex (49)
	Assumptions about gender fraud in sport	Comparing transgender athletes' testosterone levels to doping athletes (40)
		Presenting transgender athletes as seeking an unfair advantage (104)
		Misgendering transgender athletes (228)
		Presenting transgender women athletes as failed cisgender men athletes (82)
		Presenting gender fraud as an ongoing problem in sport (39)

Discursive Pattern	Discourse	Descriptive Code (n)
Plotting Against (Cis)Women's Sport	Assumptions about gender fraud in culture	Presenting the potential for gender fraud as a problem in sport (48)
		Hypothetical and made-up scenarios of cisgender men athletes taking part in women's sport (7)
		Presenting transgender women as cisgender men seeking entry into women's spaces (36)
		Presenting transgender women as sexual abusers (49)
		Presenting transgender women as deceitful (41)
	Left-wing/centre-left politics presented as destroying (cisgender) women's rights	Presenting gender fraud as a common historical problem (58)
		Justin Trudeau presented as attacking (cis) women's rights (14)
		Joe Biden presented as attacking (cis) women's rights (30)
		Other left-wing or liberal politician presented as attacking (cis) women's rights (5)
		Unnamed left-wing or liberal politician(s) presented as attacking (cis) women's rights (12)
		Politicians presented as actively replacing cisgender women/ athletes with transgender women/ athletes (19)
	Presenting sporting organizations as destroying (cisgender) women's sport	Sporting organizations presented as unfairly supporting transgender women athletes (29)
		Sporting organizations presented as actively replacing cisgender women athletes with transgender women athletes (31)
	Presenting companies as destroying (cisgender) women's sport	Companies presented as pandering to transgender athletes/ people (13)
		Companies presented as bowing to "woke mob" pressure (9)
		Companies presented as ignoring cisgender women/ athletes (6)
	"Woke mob" presented as destroying (cisgender) women's sport	"Woke mob" presented as attacking cisgender women (56)
		"Woke mob" presented as authoritarian (24)

Discursive Pattern	Discourse	Descriptive Code (n)
Justifying Transgender Discrimination in and through Sport	Presenting transgender athletes as attacking or hurting cisgender women athletes	“Wokeness” presented as a dangerous ideology (91)
		Sharing the story of cisgender woman volleyball player being hurt by a transgender woman volleyball player (27)
	Cisgender women/ athletes presented as being cancelled for defending (cis)women's sport	Transgender athletes presented as a threat to the safety of cisgender women athletes (78)
		Cisgender women presented as losing their jobs for speaking out (12)
		Cisgender women presented as silenced in conversations about transgender inclusion (48)
		Cisgender women presented as being attacked if they speak out (51)
	Supporting trans rights but not in sporting contexts	Sport presented as having specific safety concerns that make it a special case for transgender exclusion (92)
		Sport presented as having specific fairness concerns that make it a special case for transgender exclusion (130)
		Demonstrating general support for trans rights as legitimizing argument for transgender exclusion in sport (69)
	Arguing for transgender exclusion in certain sports	Arguing for trans exclusion in combat sports (81)
Transgender Athlete Support	Arguing for separate transgender categories	Arguing for trans exclusion at elite level but not recreational and amateur levels (19)
		Arguing there should be a transgender category (31)
	Defending transgender athlete participation	Arguing there should be an ‘open’ category (14)
		Arguing cisgender women should create trans exclusionary leagues/ competitions/ events (28)
		Transgender athletes as discriminated against and in need of support (5)
		Defending need to access health benefits of sport (6)
		Rejecting the idea that transgender women are a threat to cisgender women (10)

Discursive Pattern	Discourse	Descriptive Code (n)
Meta-Commentary About the State of the Conversation About Transgender Inclusion/Exclusion	Transgender athlete visibility	Rejecting the science around transgender athletes as a threat to fairness (15)
		Highlighting the lack of transgender representation in sports (9)
		Sharing stories of transgender athlete participation in a supportive way (10)
	Proponents of transgender exclusion presented as being silenced	Tweets from or about transgender athlete participation in a supporting way (8)
		People defending cisgender women against transgender women presenting themselves as being cancelled (83)
		“Woke mob” presented as attacking and cancelling people who argue for trans exclusion in sports (66)
	Proponents of transgender inclusion presented as being silenced	Cisgender women presented as losing their jobs for speaking out against transgender inclusion (12)
		Cisgender women presented as silenced in conversations about transgender inclusion (48)
	Cultural conversation presented as not making sense	Cisgender women presented as being attacked if they speak out (51)
		Transgender voices as silenced or excluded from the conversation (8)
	Posts that were unclear	Allies and advocates silenced or excluded from the conversation (5)
		Fluidity of words and language presented as making it impossible to follow the arguments (16)
		Ostensible obviousness of binary sex and gender presented as obfuscated and muddled by proponents of transgender inclusion (28)
Posts that were unclear	Posts that were unclear	Posts that were unclear (43)

Transgender “women” aren’t women, they are men who identify as women. Their bodies are male. Logic would tell you they don’t belong in women’s sport. Sport is solely about bodies. (LiteraryCheep, 2023, June 6)

Testosterone gives transgender women a lasting and unfair advantage when they compete in sport against ordinary women. (GripScoot, 2023, June 23)

In these posts the users refer to multiple variables including genitals (“drop your drawers”), bodily morphology (“their bodies are male”), hormones (“testosterone gives transgender women a lasting and unfair advantage”), and chromosomes (“XY≠XX”). Each of these competing discourses is presented as an irrefutable truth. Throughout the history of sex testing in sport there have been various techniques applied including naked parades in which athletes in the women’s category were paraded in front of doctors who examined their bodies and genitalia, chromosome tests, and testosterone level measurements—often it was women who failed to meet Western standards of femininity who were subjected to these tests (Krieger, Pieper, and Ritchie 2019; Cooky and Dworkin 2013; Pieper 2014). The above posts reflect this history of sex testing with each test claiming to prove once-and-for-all the dimorphic categorization of bodies. For example, the idea of the “Simple test!” of examining the genitals of an athlete to determine one’s category was implemented in the naked parades that female athletes were subjected to in the past. This post by RavenBaa, presents genital examination as a scientifically sound and rational practice in contrast to what RavenBaa deems indeterminate notions of self-identification (“I think I am, isn’t the correct answer”). However, these naked parades were discontinued as both dehumanizing but also medically unsound ways of determining an athlete’s categorization. Similarly, chromosome tests as reflected in BusStopVines’ post and testosterone measurements as reflected in GripScoot’s post have also been discontinued at different times due to their ineffectiveness at determining beyond doubt how to categorize athletes as men or women (Krieger, Pieper, and Ritchie 2019). Nevertheless, these posts each posit that there is a clear way to define and demarcate athletic bodies. Significantly, each of these posts presents a different feature of the biological mosaic as a definitive measure of one’s sex. Yet we know that these different features do not always align in cisgenderist ways (Fausto-Sterling 2000). As such, this discursive pattern entangles transgender athletes in a web of competing corporeal expectations.

This entanglement is further complicated by contradictory dictates on morphological markers of sex. For some users, like RavenBaa, the imagined existence of a penis is enough to categorize someone as a man. However, BopMotion, states:

Whichever way you look at it, men are men and women are women, because a man wears women’s clothing it does not make him a woman. Even if he has the chop, he still has the body of a man. Let transgender have their own category/classification in sport. (BopMotion, 2023, June 19)

In this case, the user uses grotesque language (“has the chop”) to refer to surgical gender-affirming care. However, in contrast to RavenBaa for whom the genitals easily map onto the male/female binary, BopMotion determines that genitals do not determine one’s sex as even without a penis a transgender women athlete “still has the body of a

man". Consequently, the internal confusion of transphobic online posts with regards to medicine and biology forms a discursive pattern full of contradictions. However, instead of destabilizing these transphobic arguments the various competing discourses create a flexibility in cisgenderist misinformation which ultimately means that transgender women athletes, regardless of the specifics of their experience of sex and gender, are disqualified not just from women's sports but from womanhood itself.

The confusion caused by this discursive pattern thus stems from the contradicting ways that bodies are biomedically defined and the resulting impossibility of transgender experiences being legitimized. Furthermore, this cisgenderist biomedical misinformation is given epistemic dominance due to a culture of sport which, as LiteraryCheep puts it, "is solely about bodies." Indeed, this reflects a broader issue in sport in which "biomedical studies are overvalued in sports policies in comparison to social sciences studies" (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport 2021, 6; see also Karkazis and Jordan-Young 2018) This is a position that severs sport from its socio-cultural and political contexts and consequences, which, in the case of transgender athletes, reduces their identities to cisgenderist narratives about bodily categorizations.

In addition to this objectifying dissection of transgender athletes, this confused medicalization spreads further misinformation insofar as transgender athletes are often equated with athletes who take illicit performance-enhancing drugs:

Fairness is the issue. If even a single female athlete is deprived by one transgender female having testosterone levels above reference standards then it's not fair. Did you defend Lance Armstrong having an unfair advantage over the other Tour de France cyclists? (ChordPolitely, 2023, June 20)

In this post the user asks a supporter of transgender athlete inclusion whether they defended former cycling star and infamous doping athlete Lance Armstrong when his regime of illicit performance-enhancing drugs became public. This user thus compares transgender women athletes to doping athletes. This further reflects confusion that exists in the scientific literature itself as "most studies on the effects of testosterone on sport performance involve examination of individuals who use performance-enhancing drugs" (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport 2021, 4), thus constructing comparability between transgender and doping athletes in the literature itself. Such comparability is based on and further perpetuates various misunderstandings about gender-affirming care, sporting regulations, and the use of performance-enhancing drugs. Although there are various types of performance-enhancing drugs, those most commonly referred to in lay talk are ones that stimulate testosterone growth. However, if a transgender woman is competing in the women's category, she will have had to reduce testosterone levels in order to align with sporting regulations. A more fundamental piece of misinformation peddled by this discourse is the idea that transgender women are seeking an illicit advantage over their competitors in the same way that doping is used. This is degrading to transgender women athletes themselves and disregards the socio-cultural, interpersonal, organizational, and physical barriers that act as obstacles to transgender women taking part, let alone competing at a high level, in sports (López-Cañada et al. 2020; 2021).

The confused medicalization that surrounds transgender athletes underpins the spread of misinformation about transgender women in sporting spaces. When trans-

gender women enter sporting spaces they are always already suspect and subjected to somatic inspection due to the misinformed link between transgender athletes and doping athletes and the broader set of contradictory corporeal expectations to which transgender athletes are subjected.

Pseudohistories of Gender Fraud

Gender fraud has a complicated history in which media discourses present transgender people as deceitful and, whilst often a pseudohistory, there is also a history of transgender people living stealth for various reasons. In the case of sport, the anxiety is not that transgender people are presenting as cisgender but that cisgender people are pretending to be transgender in order to sneak into women's sport and/or attack women. This is an idea that is underpinned by a broader media discourse in which transgender people are presented as deceptive and violence is justified as a response to this deception (Billard 2016; Schilt and Westbrook 2009). This has also been reflected in a long-standing pseudohistory of gender fraud in sport in which athletes that are suspected of being "Other," whether that be non-Western, transgender, or intersex, have their "Otherness" emphasized through sporting delegitimization portrayed as they are as men competing in women's sport (Heggie 2010; Krieger, Pieper, and Ritchie 2019; Wiederkehr 2009). The narrative in these discursive patterns view transgender women athletes as cisgender men pretending to be women to sneak into and supposedly dominate women's sport as well to attack cisgender women in the process, and even to enact sexual violence in locker rooms.

The assumption that transgender athletes are men posing as women is articulated in the online posts:

Males posing as females do not belong in female sports. (InstantlyNever, 2023, June 20)

There is no such thing as a transgender athlete.
These guys are fail-males who cheat. Despicable creeps. (HenceOuch, 2023, June 17)

OK, just like wrestling is a bunch of phony crap, so is the idea of transgender athletes, they're male athletes who couldn't make it as a man in a man's sport and they decide that cheating is OK, cheating in any sport is not OK, form your own league, but leave the women alone! (BooSlowly, 2023, June 29)

In these posts the fundamental narrative around transgender athletes that is produced is one of gender fraud—that is, "Males posing as females." This anxiety around gender fraud has existed in sports for decades despite no evidence of it occurring at elite levels (Wiederkehr 2009). Consequently, these discussions reflect an historic and ongoing myth of gender fraud which misgenders, pathologizes and denigrates transgender identities. The fact that there is a well-established anxiety about men competing as women in sport makes the cisgenderist accusations of gender fraud levelled at transgender people in society more broadly (Sharpe 2018) more sayable and accepted in sporting spaces. In other words, common cisgenderist mis-

information about transgender people as deceitful is easily (re)articulated in online sports talk.

The posts above premise their accusations of gender fraud on the notion that transgender women athletes are cisgender men who are competing in women's sport illicitly in order to win. This is accompanied by accusations of them under-performing in men's sport ("fail-males who cheat" and "male athletes who couldn't make it as a man in men's sport"). However, there are also narratives that reflect broader accusations of gender fraud which often accuse transgender people of fabricating their gender for abusive and sexual purposes:

That is not a transgender player that is a man who is pathetic and gets off hurting women in sport. And pathetic is also the team he is on for allowing him to be on their team! #SaveWomensSports he is not even trying to look like a woman! What a farse (BoomSunrise, 2023, June 29)

Conservative men don't care about gay men or lesbian women. It's transgender saying it's okay to be attracted to 8 year olds. Men identifying as women only for real women to be abused or because they weren't good enough to play mens sport but can excel in womens sport. (Time-sAwkward, 2023, June 30)

Does a transgender athlete like Lia use the same locker room as other competitors. I can picture her parading around with her/his Willi hanging out in the shower. (YippeeMostly, 2023, June 29)

Kieren Perkins is full of cult doctrine bullshit.

How dare he tell women & girls it isn't males/men entering female sport.

He sounds just like an abuser. (BeforeDuring, 2023, June 16)

These highly vitriolic posts demonstrate the articulation of misinformation around abuse and transgender athletes in these online posts. In the first three posts, transgender athletes are presented as abusers and sexual predators. They exhibit the assumption that transgender women are really cisgender men and that they compete in women's sport in order to glean pleasure from enacting gender-based violence on the sports field ("gets off hurting women in sport"). The idea that transgender people are sexual abusers and pedophiles reflects similar misinformed accusations historically levelled against sexual minorities. As with the content of the discursive pattern of confused medicalization there is a focus on genitalia ("I can picture her parading around with his/her Willi hanging out in the shower"). Riggs et al. (2016) note the obsession with transgender people's (imagined) genitals as a prominent form of transgender discrimination in the media. Notably, this focus functions to misgender and objectify as well as spread misinformation about gender-affirming care, transgender experiences, and, in this case, sport.

The fourth post above exemplifies the way that advocating for inclusion of transgender people in sport is also equated with being an abuser or complicit in abuse ("He sounds just like an abuser"). This transphobic and cisgenderist narrative requires ignoring the reality that transgender women are most at risk of violence (Klemmer et al. 2021; Lund, Burgess, and Johnson 2021; Wirtz et al. 2020) especially when forced to use

the wrong locker rooms and bathrooms and instead positions transgender women as threats to cisgender women.

The ongoing construction of gender fraud misinformation is also apparent in the online posts:

Messi will play at WWC [Women's World Cup] as transgender athlete.
(WireIce, 2023, June 28)

What was the name of the male athlete that was ranked above 400 something? Became a transgender and beat all the women. The asshoke Dem politicians think this is fair to women because they say they support women. More lying Democrat bullsht. (MinidiscCrochet, 2023, June 25)

In these posts the construction of contemporary gender fraud myths is clear. WireIce states that Lionel Messi, widely considered the greatest male footballer of all time, will play at the Women's World Cup as a transgender athlete. This post, whilst possibly an attempt at humor, betrays the historical and ongoing propagation of gender fraud myths. Messi has never expressed any transgender identity nor the desire to play as a woman in women's sports. Thus, this hypothetical and hyperbolic post further spreads discriminatory misinformation about transgender athletes—namely, either that Messi is going to compete as a transgender athlete or that this scenario is comparable to what is currently happening. Additionally, MinidiscCrochet asks the name of a male athlete who was low ranked before dominating when competing as a woman. It is unclear who the transgender athlete being reference is, if it is indeed a real story at all. This cisgenderist misinformation about cisgender men athletes suddenly switching to women's sport functions to construct and cement contemporary pseudohistories of transgender women illicitly competing in women's sport and dominating those competitions.

Similarly, LitheDrummer offers the untrue fact that WNBA player Brittney Griner is “male born” and playing as a transgender athlete:

Is Brittney Grinner Transgender? Know the Real Facts. Yes she's the 1st Male born athlete to play in women's professional basketball. Brittney Griner came out as transgender during an interview with Sports Illustrated in 2013. (LitheDrummer, 2023, June 17)

Here the entanglement of racist, sexist, and cisgenderist discourses (Fischer and McClearen 2020; Nyong'o 2010; Magubane 2014) comes to the fore with Griner, a Black woman, having her gender called into question. The Sports Illustrated article in which Griner supposedly came out as transgender does not in fact contain such a moment. Instead, Griner, amongst other things, discusses her lesbian identity. This post further demonstrates transgender misinformation in the construction of pseudohistories both at the macro-level (i.e. transgender women are dominating women's sports) and at the micro-level (i.e. the individual biographical history of Griner as transgender). Furthermore, it is representative of the ways that all women regardless of gender identity are caught up in transphobic posts and cisgenderist misinformation and the ensuing forms of trans-misogynistic and racist somatic scrutiny made available in sporting discourses. Fundamentally, these pseudohistories underpin discriminatory discourses about transgender athletes and ultimately, as I go on to explore, feed into cisgenderist conspiracy theories.

Plotting Against (Cis)Women's Sport

This cisgenderist misinformation, instantiated in the discursive patterns of confused medicalization and pseudohistories of gender fraud, buttresses a conspiracy theory that there is a large-scale, coordinated and systemic plot to destroy (cisgender) women's sport. This widespread idea is attributed across the online posts to a disparate cluster of actors including left-wing politicians, sporting organizations, a nebulous "woke" agenda, women athletes who support transgender inclusion, a liberal agenda, and colleges, along with transgender athletes.

Mirroring the White supremacist conspiracy theory of the "Great Replacement," in which it is perceived that white, Western populations are being actively replaced by non-white, non-Western immigrants (Obaidi et al. 2021), some posters argue in response to a story about a cisgender girl getting an injury whilst playing volleyball against a transgender girl that "Democrats are erasing Women and replacing them with Men" (LavaAvailable, 2023, June 18). This accusation levelled against politicians for actively attacking cisgender women and girls is not limited to the US context. For example, another poster posits the same theory in the Canadian context:

It would be great if Sport Canada would support girls and women in sport and stop throwing them under the transgender bus being driven by Trudeau. (CoffeeTop, 2023, June 17)

Here, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of the centrist Liberal Party, is depicted as trampling over (implicitly cisgender) women and girls. Though these posts do not always explicitly make reference to nationality or ethnicity, it is pertinent that these cisgenderist discourses map onto and connect with racist and nationalist conspiracy theories such as the "Great Replacement" theory insofar as it exemplifies the entanglement of racism, sexism, and cisgenderism. These posts exemplify the way that cisgenderist misinformation about transgender athletes feeds into and is grafted onto existing political divisions and associated conspiracy theories.

CoffeeTop's post above also shows the accusations that are levelled against sporting organizations with Sport Canada accused of not supporting (again, implicitly cisgender) women and girls. Other organizations such as the International Olympic Committee and colleges are also accused of being complicit in this plot to destroy cisgender women's sport:

How about the IOC failing to try and sort out the injustice to female athletes via their refusal to rule on the transgender issue? Trans identifying Males are destroying female participation and opportunities in sport - and you are leading the way in supporting this. #SexMatters (BellhopSio, 2023, June 19)

The key words being "as of now". Will that continue-- as it should to any person capable of rational thought? If articles I've seen are to be believed transgender athletes are being recruited by colleges. Already women are all levels of sport are being robbed of wins by men!!! (DataMessage, 2023, June 22)

There is ample evidence that transgender people are systemically excluded from sporting spaces due to discrimination, inadequate resources, inadequate spaces such as changing rooms, and exclusionary regulations (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport

2021; López-Cañada et al. 2020; 2021). Considering the difficulty that transgender people have participating in sport at recreational and especially elite levels (see for example Union Cycliste Internationale 2023; World Aquatics 2022; World Athletics 2023) the idea that sporting governing bodies and governments are strong advocates and allies to transgender people and athletes, let alone part of a conspiracy to oust cisgender women in the name of transgender participation, requires a particularly acute stretch of the imagination. Nevertheless, these posts present these organizations as part of the cadre plotting against cisgender women's sport.

This ostensible attack from transgender people and advocates of cisgender women athletes, it is argued in the online posts, is supported and sustained through attacks on those who speak out against it:

A rugby phrase that doesn't apply anymore for men's rugby IT TAKES LEATHER BALLS TO PLAY RUGBY, I guess they would lose their funding if they stand up against this woke agenda, not surprising given the minister of sport pushes this bs transgender agenda. (ElderlyWaterski, 2023, June 27)

We have more than 50 transgender women in the sport. And what's going on in the background is that women are just quietly walking away. They think, "Why bother, if it's not fair?" Women who speak out get cancelled, they get silenced, their jobs are threatened. It's real. (NewLocation, 2023, June 21)

Is there not a world in which one can be supportive of the transgender community and curious about the fairness of Trans athletes in sport yet not be labeled a transphobe or a bigot as we ask questions? Do we yet know the answers? And do we even want to know the answers? (SwitchHoney, 2023, June 26)

These posts demonstrate the ways that this supposed destruction of cisgender women's sport is policed. It is argued that those who challenge "this woke agenda" (ElderlyWaterski) either lose their funding (ElderlyWaterski), get cancelled, silenced and have their jobs threatened (NewLocation) or are labelled bigots (SwitchHoney). These assumptions are premised on the idea that transgender people and transgender advocates have their hands on the levers of power. That is, in this conspiracy theory, one of the most disenfranchised groups is purported to have the power and the desire to destroy cisgender women's sport and silence those who speak out.

This conspiracy theory is sustained by and sustaining of a broader cisgenderist environment. This cisgenderist conspiracy theory delegitimizes and pathologizes transgender athlete identities—and transgender identities more broadly—by misgendering transgender women as men cheating at women's sport. Furthermore, it renders transgender athletes, and transgender women in particular, as a threat to cisgender women and girls both physically, through the myth of transgender women attacking cisgender women and girls in changing rooms, and structurally, through the conspiracy theory that transgender women are ousting and usurping cisgender women and their rights. Perhaps the most important function of this cisgenderist conspiracy theory is that it masks the existence and activities of cisgenderism itself. By embellishing

the power held by transgender people, athletes, and advocates it hides the power that is asserted over them by a cisgenderist and transphobic (sporting) culture.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In these findings I have highlighted the propagation of cisgenderist misinformation and conspiracy theories in the context of posts of X. Historical and ongoing suspicion and scrutiny of transgender people in elite sports underpins cisgenderist conspiracy theory that politicians, organizations, transgender athletes, and transgender advocates are plotting to destroy cisgender women's sport. This feeds into cisgenderist depictions of transgender athletes as other, duplicitous, and inauthentic. More fundamentally, it has the effect of obfuscating the reality of cisgenderism in elite sporting cultures, with transgender people and advocates instead presented as powerful and dangerous.

These findings further suggest that misinformation and conspiracy theories are an important characteristic of the proliferation of cisgenderism. If we are to take Bruce (2013) seriously when she describes the sway that sports media has on cultural understandings, then we must recognize and further explore the ways that cisgenderist misinformation and conspiracy theories in sports media, such as the belief that there is a plot to destroy cisgender women's sports, impact the recognition and experiences of transgender people in sports and society more broadly.

In order to develop this research further, future research may take a larger dataset than the one-month snapshot analyzed here. Whilst the quantity and richness of this snapshot attests to the prevalence of online talk around transgender athletes, future research may benefit from taking a longer view of this every day, digital conversation. Additionally, here I have focused on sports media but it is clear that the misinformation conspiracy theories are grafted onto and themselves taken from various non-sporting contexts. As such, further research is needed to explore the dynamics of cisgenderist misinformation and conspiracy theories as they shift from context to context.

REFERENCES

- Altay, Sacha, Manon Berriche, and Alberto Acerbi. 2023. "Misinformation on Misinformation: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges." *Social Media + Society* 9 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221150412>.
- Altay, Sacha, Manon Berriche, Hendrik Heuer, Johan Farkas, and Steven Rathje. 2023. "A Survey of Expert Views on Misinformation: Definitions, Determinants, Solutions, and Future of the Field." *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review* 4 (4). <https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-119>.
- Ansara, Y. Gavriel. 2010. "Beyond Cisgenderism: Counselling People with Non-Assigned Gender Identities." In *Counselling Ideologies: Queer Challenges to Heteronormativity*, edited by Lyndsey Moon, 167–200. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Ansara, Y. Gavriel. 2015. "Challenging Cisgenderism in the Ageing and Aged Care Sector: Meeting the Needs of Older People of Trans and/or Non-binary Experience." *Australasian Journal on Ageing* 34 (S2): 14–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajag.12278>.

- Billard, Thomas J. 2016. "Writing in the Margins: Mainstream News Media Representations of Transgenderism." *International Journal of Communication* 10: 4193–4218.
- Bruce, Toni. 2013. "Reflections on Communication and Sport: On Women and Femininities." *Communication & Sport* 1 (1–2): 125–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479512472883>.
- Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. 2021. *Transgender Women Athletes and Elite Sport: A Scientific Review*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. <https://www.cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/pdf/transgenderwomenathletesand-elitesport-ascientificreview-e-final.pdf>.
- Center for Countering Digital Hate. 2023. *X Content Moderation Failure: How Twitter/X Continues to Host Posts Reported for Extreme Hate Speech*. Washington, DC: Center for Countering Digital Hate. https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/230907-X-Content-Moderation-Report_final_CCDH.pdf.
- Cooky, Cheryl, and Shari L. Dworkin. 2013. "Policing the Boundaries of Sex: A Critical Examination of Gender Verification and the Caster Semenya Controversy." *Journal of Sex Research* 50 (2): 103–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2012.725488>.
- Douglas, Karen M., and Robbie M. Sutton. 2023. "What Are Conspiracy Theories? A Definitional Approach to Their Correlates, Consequences, and Communication." *Annual Review of Psychology* 74 (1): 271–98. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-032420-031329>.
- Douglas, Karen M., Joseph E. Uscinski, Robbie M. Sutton, Aleksandra Cichocka, Turkey Nefes, Chee Siang Ang, and Farzin Deravi. 2019. "Understanding Conspiracy Theories." *Political Psychology* 40 (S1): 3–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12568>.
- Enders, Adam M., Joseph E. Uscinski, Michelle I. Seelig, Casey A. Klofstad, Stefan Wuchty, John R. Funchion, Manohar N. Murthi, Kamal Premaratne, and Justin Stoler. 2023. "The Relationship Between Social Media Use and Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories and Misinformation." *Political Behavior* 45 (2): 781–804. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09734-6>.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic books.
- Fischer, Mia, and Jennifer McClearen. 2020. "Transgender Athletes and the Queer Art of Athletic Failure." *Communication & Sport* 8 (2): 147–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479518823207>.
- Guess, Andrew M., and Benjamin A. Lyons. 2020. "Disinformation, Misinformation and Online Propaganda." In *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform*, edited by Nathaniel Persily and Joshua A. Tucker, 10–33. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Halberstam, Jack. 2005. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives. Sexual Cultures*. New York: New York University Press.
- Heggie, Vanessa. 2010. "Testing Sex and Gender in Sports; Reinventing, Reimagining and Reconstructing Histories." *Endeavour* 34 (4): 157–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.endeavour.2010.09.005>.
- Ingram, David. 2024. "Fewer People Are Using Elon Musk's X as the Platform Struggles to Attract and Keep Users, According to Analysts." NBC News, March

22. <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/fewer-people-using-elon-musks-x-struggles-keep-users-rcna144115>.
- Israel, Berger, and Y Gavriel Ansara. 2021. "Cisgenderism." In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Trans Studies*, edited by Abbie E. Goldberg and Beemyn Genny. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jarzabkowski, Paula, Ann Langley, and Amit Nigam. 2021. "Navigating the Tensions of Quality in Qualitative Research." *Strategic Organization* 19 (1): 70–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127020985094>.
- Karkazis, Katrina, and Rebecca M. Jordan-Young. 2018. "The Powers of Testosterone: Obscuring Race and Regional Bias in the Regulation of Women Athletes." *Feminist Formations* 30 (2): 1–39. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2018.0017>.
- Klemmer, Cary L., Joshua Rusow, Jeremy Goldbach, Shanna K. Kattari, and Eric Rice. 2021. "Socially Assigned Gender Nonconformity and School Violence Experience Among Transgender and Cisgender Adolescents." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 36 (15–16): NP8567–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519844781>.
- Knott-Fayle, G., E. Peel, and G.L. Witcomb. 2022. "Representing Diverse Genders in Sports Media." In *Gender Diversity and Sport*, edited by Gemma L. Witcomb and Elizabeth Peel, 134–55. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003050568-8>.
- Krieger, Jörg, Lindsay Parks Pieper, and Ian Ritchie. 2019. "Sex, Drugs and Science: The IOC's and IAAF's Attempts to Control Fairness in Sport." *Sport in Society* 22 (9): 1555–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1435004>.
- Lennon, Erica, and Brian J. Mistler. 2014. "Keywords: Cisgenderism." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1 (1–2): 63–64. <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2399470>.
- López-Cañada, Elena, José Devís-Devís, Sofía Pereira-García, and Víctor Pérez-Samaniego. 2021. "Socio-Ecological Analysis of Trans People's Participation in Physical Activity and Sport." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 56 (1): 62–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690219887174>.
- López-Cañada, Elena, José Devís-Devís, Alexandra Valencia-Peris, Sofía Pereira-García, Jorge Fuentes-Miguel, and Víctor Pérez-Samaniego. 2020. "Physical Activity and Sport in Trans Persons Before and After Gender Disclosure: Prevalence, Frequency, and Type of Activities." *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* 17 (6): 650–56. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2019-0192>.
- Love, Ada. 2019. "Media Framing of Transgender Athletes: Contradictions and Paradoxes in Coverage of MMA Fighter Fallon Fox." In *LGBT Athletes in the Sports Media*, edited by Rory Magrath, 207–26. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lucas, Cathryn B., and Kristine E. Newhall. 2019. "Out of the Frame: How Sports Media Shapes Trans Narratives." In *LGBT Athletes in the Sports Media*, edited by Rory Magrath, 99–124. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lund, Emily M., Claire Burgess, and Andy J. Johnson, eds. 2021. *Violence against LGBTQ+ Persons: Research, Practice, and Advocacy*. Cham: Springer.
- Magubane, Zine. 2014. "Spectacles and Scholarship: Caster Semenya, Intersex Studies, and the Problem of Race in Feminist Theory." *Signs* 39 (3): 761–85. <https://doi.org/10.1086/674301>.
- Nyong'o, Tavia. 2010. "The Unforgivable Transgression of Being Caster Semenya." *Women & Performance* 20 (1): 95–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07407701003589501>.

- Obaidi, Milan, Jonas Kunst, Simon Ozer, and Sasha Y Kimel. 2021. "The 'Great Replacement' Conspiracy: How the Perceived Ousting of Whites Can Evoke Violent Extremism and Islamophobia." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 25 (7): 1675–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430221102829>.
- Pearce, Ruth, Carla Pfeffer, Damien W. Riggs, Francis Ray White, and Sally Hines. 2024. "Trans Birth Parents' Experiences of Domestic Violence: Conditional Affirmation, Cisgenderist Coercion, and the Transformative Potential of Perinatal Care." *Bulletin of Applied Transgender Studies* 3 (1–2): 45–68. <https://doi.org/10.57814/NKC8-TC97>.
- Pieper, Lindsay Parks. 2014. "Sex Testing and the Maintenance of Western Femininity in International Sport." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31 (13): 1557–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2014.927184>.
- Pierre, Joseph M. 2020. "Mistrust and Misinformation: A Two-Component, Socio-Epistemic Model of Belief in Conspiracy Theories." *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 8 (2): 617–41. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v8i2.1362>.
- Ravn, Signe, Ashley Barnwell, and Barbara Barbosa Neves. 2020. "What Is 'Publicly Available Data'? Exploring Blurred Public–Private Boundaries and Ethical Practices Through a Case Study on Instagram." *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 15 (1–2): 40–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1556264619850736>.
- Riggs, Damien W, Chloe Colton, Clemence Due, and Clare Bartholomaeus. 2016. "Mundane Transphobia in *Celebrity Big Brother UK*." *Gender Forum* 2016 (56): 1–15.
- Sánchez-Sánchez, Ana M., David Ruiz-Muñoz, and Francisca J. Sánchez-Sánchez. 2024. "Mapping Homophobia and Transphobia on Social Media." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 21 (1): 210–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-023-00879-z>.
- Schilt, Kristen, and Laurel Westbrook. 2009. "Doing Gender, Doing Heteronormativity: 'Gender Normals,' Transgender People, and the Social Maintenance of Heterosexuality." *Gender & Society* 23 (4): 440–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243209340034>.
- Scovel, Shannon, Monica Nelson, and Holly Thorpe. 2023. "Media Framings of the Transgender Athlete as 'Legitimate Controversy': The Case of Laurel Hubbard at the Tokyo Olympics." *Communication & Sport* 11 (5): 838–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21674795221116884>.
- Sharpe, Alex. 2018. *Sexual Intimacy and Gender Identity "Fraud": Reframing the Legal and Ethical Debate*. New York: Routledge.
- Sloop, John M. 2004. *Disciplining Gender: Rhetorics of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Statista. 2024. "Number of X (Formerly Twitter) Users Worldwide from 2019 to 2024." *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/303681/twitter-users-worldwide/>.
- Thomas, David R. 2003. "A General Inductive Approach for Qualitative Data Analysis." *American Journal of Evaluation* 27 (2): 237–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>.
- Union Cycliste Internationale. 2023. *Eligibility Regulations for Transgender Athletes*. Aigle: Union Cycliste Internationale. https://assets.ctfassets.net/761l7gh5x5an/5Qwu5ycbagkT3ApUSZg9N9/c7b5fea8d1d-49aab3b0375d95769b721/20230714_Modification_Transgender_Regulation

[Juillet_2023_ENG_red.pdf](#).

- Wiederkehr, Stefan. 2009. "We Shall Never Know the Exact Number of Men Who Have Competed in the Olympics Posing as Women: Sport, Gender Verification and the Cold War." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26 (4): 556–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360802658218>.
- Wirtz, Andrea L., Tonia C. Poteat, Mannat Malik, and Nancy Glass. 2020. "Gender-Based Violence Against Transgender People in the United States: A Call for Research and Programming." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 21 (2): 227–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018757749>.
- World Aquatics. 2023. *Policy on Eligibility for the Men's and Women's Competition Categories*. Lausanne: World Aquatics. <https://resources.fina.org/fina/document/2023/03/27/dbc3381c-91e9-4ea4-a743-84c8b06debef/Policy-on-Eligibility-for-the-Men-s-and-Women-s-Competition-Categories-Version-on-2023.03.24.pdf>.
- World Athletics. 2023. *Eligibility Regulations for Transgender Athletes*. Monaco: World Athletics. <https://worldathletics.org/download/download?filename=c50f2178-3759-4d1c-8fbc-370f6aef4370.pdf&urlslug=C3.5%20%E2%80%93%20Eligibility%20Regulations%20Transgender%20Athletes%20%E2%80%93%20effective%2031%20March%202023>.
- Xu, Qingru. 2023. "Competing as the First Out Transgender Female Olympian: A Twitter Network Analysis of Laurel Hubbard During the 2020 Tokyo Games." *Communication & Sport* 11 (5): 854–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21674795221090422>.