

# Sociology of sports critical thinking example

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



## **Introduction**

Sports and gender is not quite phenomenal since it has lived on since time immemorial. Even so, gender inequality is something that has been sung for quite some time and some attempts have been made to try and level of the balance so that women can have the benefits that men seemingly enjoy. On many occasions, games that mainly feature men are the ones that have been invested ever since and only recently have they started to feature women in the respective games like football, rugby, athletics, and even handball. On many occasions, the global sports have tried to capture many female games but still the scale remains unbalanced because of the many capabilities of men unlike women who seem weak in terms of physical strength. This has been the greatest contributing factor for the gender inequity all over.

## **Discussion**

### Part One

Wells and Darnell, 2014 article “Caster Semenya, Gender Verification and the Politics of Fairness in an Online Track & Field Community” offers critical perspectives and insights on gender discrimination exist in the field of sports. The article notes that gender verification has proven to be biased leaning on women heavily. Just like Caster Semenya went through after setting a record in the 800m women race. She was subjected to the test by those claiming she might have an advantage due to her masculine physique and even deep voice. It was claimed that a male type of body can give a woman greater advantage than other women hence the gender verification

test was actually given attention more than usual but still failed to see the unbiased nature of their claims (Wells & Darnell, 2014).

In the global sports today, the sport activities actually depict a pattern that actually proves that these sports are male dominated as the sports coverage mostly focuses on men. Moreover, sports are male identified in which case, only men are deemed to know about sports and so they handle most sport-related activities, for instance, men are usually the sports commentators even in the female games in the British female soccer games. Furthermore, sports are male centered all over the world just as one can imagine the great number of football fans that we have in the world are men, the top 100 athletes of the century list of the ESPN coverage news is dominated by the men as well as the professional athletes that are rising are actually men implying that the world sport is mostly for men.

Caster Semenya is an 18 year old gold medalist holder in the 800 meters women race in Berlin World Championships in the year 2009. Her case has really been the focus of gender equity related arguments all over the globe. Even after her win on that day when the Kenyan, Jepkosgei Janeth, finished 2. 45 seconds behind her, the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) immediately asked for the gender verification of Caster Semenya to verify whether or not, she is eligible to participate in the women's race (Cooky & Cheryl, 2013). From the media, it was projected that there were already doubts about the Semenya's eligibility to participate in the female races because of her muscular build, rapid improvements and deep voice. After going through the gender verification test, she was qualified as a woman and so could participate.

The binary system that is used for the making of the major assumptions in the gender verification testing has three major conceptual assumptions. The first and foremost assumption is that sex actually exists and is exhibited naturally like the dichotomous binary since the technological constraints during the historical times limited the knowledge on genes and even now there is still no accurate answer to what can ascertain sex. According to the IAAF 2011 principle that is to ensure that the respect for the very essence of the male and female classifications in athletics is maintained and this can very well be the defining principle that depicts the centrality of sex binary to the sex policies and how the sex testing can be focused on these two genders.

The next vital assumption is that sports should be of homogeneous masculinity and in so speaking implies that improvement in sport and related activities should be as a result of talent and not in any way advantages that other athletes do not have. As a result, unfair advantages that other athletes do not have are policed out in order to make sports a level play field (Hanson, 2007). This tries to explain the reason as to why Semenya was requested to undergo the gender verification test after winning the race superbly and also try to explain her body physique. This assumption has two critiques where the first implies that a sport being thought of as a leveled playing field is something that can never be possible and in any case, it is a field where the broader forms of social inequity is tolerated. On the other hand, sports organizations do tolerate a number of advantages that athletes do have.

The final assumption of this test is that intersex athletes do have an unfair

advantage in sports. So, if the second assumption is desirable at some point, then it is of interest to police out advantages that some athletes have and others don't. It has been reaffirmed that male competitors are better at sports unlike the female competitors. It has also been stipulated that sport is not really a matter of genes or even sex. In the United States, it has been legally stated that sex is not and will not be a hindering factor that will inhibit the ability in athletics (McDonough& Pappano, 2007). As long as the belief of men's superiority over the females in sports goes on, then this sex testing will always target the female athletes.

In terms of the sex test focusing only on females, situations such as some males having more testosterone above normal range as well as above others, should be considered to be having an advantage over others, that is if they desire to level the sports playing field. Up to now sex discrimination is quite evident, and if only women's records are the only ones going to be revoked by the IAAF due to some of them using pacers or even genetic advantages, then this issue of gender inequality will never be resolved in sports and it will always make the woman suffer more because of her inferiority. In any case, it is quite apparent that sex testing in sports has provided us with biological reality of sex continuum instead of leveling the field.

Up to now, the coverage of sports still neglects the possibility that women can indeed be entertaining in sports and can really draw attention just like the men. In other words, the gender imbalance is still an issue up to date. The everyday activity in sports in the news everywhere, women are trying to get attention in terms of sports but still, their efforts are neglected. The

female football games, rugby for women and even athletics have actually been looked down upon by everyone to such an extent that women are deemed to be of low intellect when it comes to sports forgetting that they may be so, but still what is of importance is the talent an individual possesses. Nonetheless, the women will one day get their spotlight amidst the men of today and may shine brighter.

## **Part Two**

Close to fifty-six global sports were scrutinized in the extensive study by the BBC sports and out of the thirty five that actually offer the prize money, twenty five pay equally in terms of gender whereas ten of these games do not pay equally. As depicted, women are still not treated on the same level with the men even though they do race on equal grounds for instance, horse racing. Since 2004, various sports including, skating, bowling, athletics, tennis, marathons, shooting and even volleyball have all been paying equal amounts of the prize money. Seemingly, in the past decade, nine more sports have also joined in the same including diving, sailing, windsurfing, taekwondo, and even cycling events, but still the disparity in the awards is still major and should be looked at.

For instance, Grant was actually encouraged by the good number of sports that pay an equal amount of prize money by saying that there is parity in about 70% of the sports that were giving awards and so the rest of the sports were encouraged to begin moving in that direction as well. Another instance in the awarding that brings out the great disparity in terms of gender is the season's men FA cup winners, a competition that is watched worldwide in over 120 countries, will pocket £1. 8 million in terms of prize

money whereas the women's team that wins the women's cup will only get £5, 000 which is very small compared to the former. This disparity has been attributed by the Football Association claiming that men and women's football are on two different levels and are incomparable with the men higher than the women (Thompson & Lewis, 2014).

The golfers for example, earn a handsome reward but still, the woman is looked down upon by the men given that the value a woman earns is way little compared to that of a man. Given Michelle Wie who took home a sum of £452, 000 for winning the women's United States Open but the value is actually less than the £1 million cheque that Martin Kaymer, the winner of the men's US Open this year. The chief executive of the Ladies European Tour, Ivan Peter, said that he was really striving for the parity in the prize money since the gap cannot actually be justified given the quality of the women golfer worldwide as well as their competitiveness nature even though parity would require significant effort from the governing bodies (Thompson & Lewis, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Sports and its related activities should actually be for both the genders without any bias given that women have proven to be able to participate in activities similar to men including American football, soccer, rugby and even athletics for that matter. From the above case study involving Caster Semenya, sex testing has been shown to really focus on the women forgetting the fact that men can also be at an advantage based upon sex. Similarly, the awards that have been mentioned in the second case study that show disparity, is a clear indication of the gender imbalance that our

world has been. In summary, the world should actually focus on making the sports field to be of gender balance and equality by starting on improving on the disparity of awards and the female-biased gender testing.

## References

- Cooky, C., & Dworkin, S. L. (2013). Policing the Boundaries of Sex: A Critical Examination of Gender Verification and the Caster Semenya Controversy. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50(2), 103-111.
- McDonagh, E., & Pappano, E. (2007). *Playing with the boys: Why separate is not equal in sports*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thompson, A. & Lewis, A. (2014, October 28). Men gets more prize money than women in 30% of sports. BBC Sport. Retrieved From: [http://www. bbc. com/sport/0/football/29744400](http://www.bbc.com/sport/0/football/29744400)
- Wells, C., & Darnell, S. C. (2014). Caster Semenya, Gender Verification and the Politics of Fairness in an Online Track & Field Community. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 31(1), 44-65. doi: 10. 1123/ssj. 2012-0173