Call for Papers: Special Issue of the *Sociology of Sport Journal*

“Sports and the Limits of the Binary: Trans and Nonbinary Athletes and Equity in Sport”

**Guest Editors (listed in alphabetical order)**

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Over the past decade, there has been a proliferation of scholarship focusing on gender inclusivity and equity, particularly given the increasing visibility of trans and nonbinary athletes (e.g., Laurel Hubbard, Alana Smith, Quinn, Layshia Clarendon) and the political mobilization of “debates” regarding trans inclusion and exclusion in sport. The rapidly growing interest and related discussions in the sociology of sport, alongside other related fields (e.g., sociology, sport philosophy, sport management, socio-legal studies, feminist studies, sports medicine) reflects a broader cultural, political, and societal trend. In recent years, both conservative movements and what sociologist Madeleine Pape (2023) refers to as “biofeminist reactionary movements” have mounted mobilized and coordinated attacks against trans and nonbinary people in order to preserve the social, political, and economic status quo. These coordinated attacks attempt to overtly or covertly restrict trans and nonbinary people’s participation and inclusion in sport and wider society.

For example, conservative USA lawmakers have sought to implement laws banning access to gender affirming care (especially healthcare) and continue to make attempts to prohibit trans athletes from participating in gender-affirming sport, instead, requiring individuals to participate in the category of their sex assignment at birth. These attempts have progressed to the point of overturning governors’ vetoes in, for example, Indiana, Kentucky, North Dakota, Utah. Similar political and legal efforts have manifested outside the US as well, in places such as the UK, Australia, and Canada.

Biofeminist reactionary movements have also weaponized a strategic narrative alleging to “save women’s sport” in an attempt to radicalize the general public against trans women’s inclusion in women’s sport. Such messaging implies that cisgender women somehow ‘need protection’ from trans women, despite evidence to the contrary. These policies and rhetorical strategies employ trans exclusionary and post-feminist language to create a political wedge issue
among women's rights advocates for the purpose of excluding and alienating trans and nonbinary people. Such movements have also co-opted science and policy in service of their aims. In response, discussions of which bodies are welcomed in sport have proliferated. We argue these debates are harmful because they implicitly dehumanize these already marginalized groups. The tensions surrounding this topic, in academic circles and beyond, requires thoughtful, innovative, and compassionate engagement.

At the 2022 annual NASSS conference in Las Vegas, Travers pointed out that many scholars are beginning to write on this topic, and that while this growing body of work is important, some scholarship lacks necessary grounding in the subject’s rich history. Thus, contemporary work is at risk of not adequately attending to the racism, classism, and white settler supremacy that is at the core of transphobia. The crucial scholarship of BIPOC, trans, nonbinary, queer, and disabled feminist scholars (including, but not limited to, Travers, Sykes, Susan Stryker, Eli Clare, C. Riley Snorton, Marquis Bey) is too often overlooked in the rush to publish on a “hot” topic. We find it vital to recognize that matters of trans inclusion and justice in sport are not limited only to sex/gender, but are deeply entangled with colonialism, white supremacy, racism, classism, and ableism.

In this special issue, we seek to interrogate the current sociopolitical moment on questions of gender inclusivity in sport (including physical activity, physical play, physical cultures, and other embodied practices) particularly relating to questions around sex/gender/sexuality binaries, colonial/racist legacies, and scientism. We welcome papers addressing multiple levels of sport (i.e., youth, interscholastic, recreational, club, collegiate, semi-professional, and professional) and scholarship from across the globe, especially submissions written within and focusing upon the Global South. This special issue also welcomes research from all possible contexts and with all marginalized groups “beyond the binary.” For example, we welcome papers that address expansive non-Euro-American/Euro-Canadian understandings of gender, such as 2 Spirit, Hijra, Khwaja Sira, and Chibados. We invite scholars’ theoretical, methodological, and empirical manuscripts considering the following:

- how and why sport has become and remains a bastion for conversations around sex and gender binaries within a sociocultural context that increasingly recognizes the fluidity and mutability of these categories;
- the ways sport reflects and negates larger societal conversations around sex and gender;
- connections between transphobia and other forms of oppression, including but not limited to white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and settler colonialism; and
- populist and mainstream discourses around sex, gender, sport, athletes, and bodies.

We also seek submissions proposing reimaginings both through and beyond sport. More than just within sport, we are interested in reimaginings that promote gender inclusivity in ways that are compassionate, ethical, and just. We particularly welcome the contributions of BIPOC scholars and gender diverse scholars, including graduate students and early career researchers.
Authors should follow the “Submissions Guidelines for Authors” used in every issue of the Sociology of Sport Journal found at: https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/ssj/ssjoverview.xml.

Papers should not exceed 8000 words inclusive of endnotes and references. Submit original manuscripts online: https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/hk_ssj

If you have any questions, please reach out to the following guest editors:

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Submissions of papers due: January 15, 2024