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# Governing Bodies: Caster Semenya and the Rhetorical Management of Sex and Gender Ambiguity in Professional Athletics

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**GOVERNING BODIES: CASTER SEMENYA AND THE RHETORICAL  
MANAGEMENT OF SEX AND GENDER AMBIGUITY IN PROFESSIONAL  
ATHLETICS**

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ENGLISH

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
May 2015

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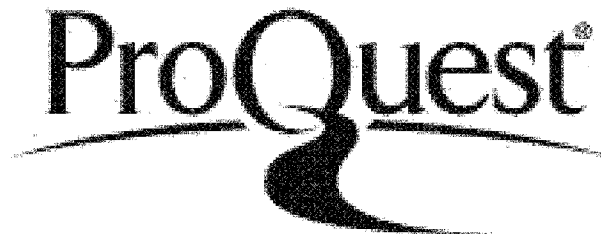


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## **ABSTRACT**

# **GOVERNING BODIES: CASTER SEMENYA AND THE RHETORICAL MANAGEMENT OF SEX AND GENDER AMBIGUITY IN PROFESSIONAL ATHLETICS**

Samuel Robert Evans  
Old Dominion University, 2015  
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Sport has long been thought of as an “opiate for the masses,” where a collective can forget about social, political, racial, or economic differences and unify to compete in the same space or root for a common team (Eitzen and Sage 202). Scholarship in sports communication, sports rhetoric, and sports sociology, however, has shown that this view of sport as an apolitical cultural institution separate from impactful political debate is oversimplified. Rather, sports are key sites in which beliefs about gender, race, class, and politics are made manifest.

This dissertation uses the case of Caster Semenya, a female South African middle-distance runner who was wrongly accused of being a man competing in a women’s race, to shed light on the ways athletics shape definitions of sex and gender. I suggest that governing bodies in professional athletics have employed rhetorical silence in rules to maintain the power to determine who can access the gendered space of an athletics competition and under what pretenses. I assert that despite the fact that competitive spaces restrict athletes’ gender deliveries to a great degree, athletes such as Semenya still retain some autonomy in delivering their gender to viewers, though that delivery does have significant consequences. And finally, I suggest that U.S. media coverage of Semenya reaffirms a binary gender ideology by rhetorically scapegoating Semenya, separating her from the collective and symbolically sacrificing her to reaffirm binary gender ideals. By identifying the methods in which sex and gender ambiguity are presented and treated in sports, this dissertation identifies a need for a clearer, non-alienating way of discussing sex and gender variance in sport and society.

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For my parents, Dan and Connie, who raised me to believe in the power of education; for my wife, Kristi, who gave me unfathomable love and support through this journey; and for my children, Libby and Grace, who, in their short time with me, have inspired me to be better.

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I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge my gratitude to a handful of my peers who have helped me during this phase of my academic career. Mathieu Reynolds has gifted far too much of his time and energy to listening to me when I was frustrated, providing me helpful feedback and constructive criticism when solicited, and motivating me when I was ready to give

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Tracing Intersections: Sex, Gender, Semenya, and The Academy .....	8
Binary Paradigms of Sex and Gender.....	12
From Paradigm to Ideology .....	15
Institutions and the Production of Consent.....	17
Binary Sex Paradigms in Sports: Reification and Reformation.....	21
Recognizing Gender Variation in Sports: An Intersectional Approach.....	27
Sex & Gender Management in Professional Athletics: What's to Come .....	32
II. FALLING THROUGH THE GENDER GAPS: THE IAAF'S DEFINITIONAL SILENCE ON SEX AND GENDER .....	34
Silence as Rhetoric.....	38
Authority and the Institutional Discourse of the IAAF.....	45
Definitional Silences.....	51
Silencing With Pronouns .....	61
Conclusion .....	66
III. SPEEDY DELIVERY: A FIELD-SPECIFIC THEORY OF GENDER DELIVERY & THE FIFTH CANON .....	69
Gender Performance & Gender Delivery .....	70
Delivery through the Ages.....	73
The Field in Gender Delivery .....	82
Gender Delivery in the Track Field: Caster Semenya at The 2009 IAAF World Championships.....	86
The Next Steps for a Theory of Field-Specific Delivery .....	105
IV. PUTTING SEXUALLY AMBIGUOUS ATHLETES TO THE TEST: SCAPEGOATING CASTER SEMENYA .....	108
Weeding Out Difference: The Rhetoric of Scapegoating .....	116
Methodology .....	118
Framing and Medical Rhetoric as Means for Division.....	119
Psogos, Metaphor, and Symbolic Sacrifice .....	128
The Impact of Scapegoating & Sacrifice in U.S. Media.....	138
V. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CASTER SEMENYA? .....	141
WORKS CITED.....	154
VITA .....	175

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A performance occurred at the 2009 African Junior<sup>1</sup> Athletics<sup>2</sup> Championships that had a major impact on the worlds of both sport and rhetoric. Hailing from a small, rural, impoverished South African village, athlete Caster Semenya, young and unproven, entered the women's 800-meter (800m) race virtually unheard of by the racing world. That all changed, however, when Semenya won the event with a stunning time of 1 minute 56.72 seconds. This time was not only a South African junior women's record, shattering the previous record of 2 minutes posted by South African track legend Zola Budd, but Semenya's 1:56.72 marked the fastest time any woman in the world, junior or senior, had run 800m that year. If Semenya had not been on fans' radars before the Junior Championships, she certainly was now.

With her outstanding performance at the African Junior Championships, Semenya was added to the South African team roster to compete at the 2009 IAAF World Championships of Athletics, a biennial competition that is one of the most prestigious athletics events outside of the Olympic Games. The eyes of athletics fans the world over would be focusing on her to see if she could succeed on the much larger (and higher pressure) stage of the World Championships. Semenya consolidated her outstanding performance at the African Junior Athletics Championships with solid preliminary and semifinal performances at the World Championships. She won her preliminary heat despite getting tangled up with another athlete and nearly falling, and she recorded the fastest time in the semifinal heats to qualify for the final race. During these races, however, people began questioning whether Semenya was actually a woman. Semenya's

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<sup>1</sup> A junior meet is an athletics competition in which an athlete has to be under the age of 20 to be eligible to compete.

<sup>2</sup> Commonly referred to as track and field in the U.S., athletics is a sport comprised of running, jumping, throwing, and walking events. It is different from track and field in that athletics can also include road running events (such as the marathon), cross country running, and race walking, whereas track and field deals with events that go on within the arena itself. Uses of the term "athletics" in this dissertation can be assumed to mean the sport of athletics rather than sports in general unless otherwise noted.

athletic prowess and muscular physique, incited whispers as to whether she was qualified to compete in the women's division. For instance, in an article typical at the time, Simon Turnbull, writer for the London-based *Independent*, refers to the Semenya as "strong" and "boyish-looking" in his assessment of her gender (14). Hours before the 800m final race was scheduled to take place, shockwaves were sent through the athletics world when a spokesperson for the IAAF Council, the administrative body of the IAAF tasked with overseeing day-to-day operations, said that it was "obliged to investigate" Semenya, following her stunning times, and this investigation would include sex-verification tests (Smith).

Receiving this disheartening news only hours before the final could have easily shaken Semenya's focus or negatively impacted her performance. When the starting gun fired, however, Semenya bolted from the starting line and settled comfortably into second position behind 2008 Olympic silver medalist Janeth Jepkosgei. Semenya overtook Jepkosgei halfway through the race and never relinquished her lead. Perhaps the most interesting part of the race, though, came when Semenya had the decision well in hand. With 150 meters to go, Semenya glanced over her shoulder at her competition, and then, as though she received a jolt of energy, sprinted to the finish widening the gap between herself and the second-place finisher by 2.45 seconds, an almost unfathomable margin for the 800m, especially considering the high-caliber competition Semenya was running against.

What should have been a moment of reveling for Semenya, however, turned into months of emotional pain and embarrassment. That Semenya could win by such an enormous margin justified for many the IAAF Council's investigation into her sex. Despite the fact that, initially, the council had announced that Semenya would be allowed to continue competing while being tested, Semenya was absent from competition for nearly a year while she underwent physiological, endocrinologic, chromosomal, and psychological tests (Motshegwa and Imray). Finally, on July 6, 2010, almost 11 months after Semenya cruised to victory in the 800m final, the

IAAF released a brief statement saying simply that Semenya had been cleared to compete once again in the women's division.

Semenya's performances at the African Junior Championships and the World Championships in Athletics as well as the public response to her performances raise interesting questions about definitions of terms such as sex and gender, masculinity and femininity, and male and female in the context of athletics. What elements caused so many to question whether Semenya was female? Was it the way she dressed? Was it her musculature, race, or other bodily factors? Was it that she ran so fast, or that she ran so much faster than her closest competitor?

Despite the fact that Semenya had, by all accounts, always considered herself a woman, questions about Semenya's femaleness came to the fore because her body and performance did not match the social expectations for female athletes held by those in positions of power. Elements of her physique as well as her thoroughly dominating performance went against what many expected to see when tuning into women's athletics. It was easy to question Semenya because she was a viewable, tangible articulation of difference. However, reversing that lens of interrogation by questioning where these rules and expectations for gender performance come from and why they are so culturally ingrained provide an opportunity to explore in greater depth important cultural assumptions about how *sex* and *gender* are defined socially, how binary categories are constructed and reified in sports, and how elements of sports and sports journalism manage definitions of sex and gender rhetorically.

The core argument of this dissertation is that the case of Caster Semenya reveals that sports are powerful institutions through which binary frameworks of sex and gender are simultaneously reinforced and challenged through many types of written, embodied, and performed rhetorical texts. These texts include institutional documentation, athletic bodies and performances, and journalistic accounts. By failing to conform to conventional expectations of femininity in the space of the competitive track, Caster Semenya took on a sexually ambiguous role. Public, institutional, and media audiences had difficulty resolving her body and gender

performance within a conventional binary framework. This sexual ambiguity is significant because it created a kairotic moment where audiences that long assumed there were two essentially different sex categories in which everyone fit had to resolve Semenya, who had always identified as a female but whose body and performances flouted expectations of the conventional woman athlete.

Semenya's 2009 performances and the ways in which they were framed through institutional and media discourse are significant for multiple reasons. From a rhetorical perspective, the case of Semenya offers a new way of examining the rhetorical management of sex and gender in the realm of sports, a burgeoning site for rhetorical analysis and examination. Further, the institutional texts that were in place during the 2009 season are key documents through which we can better understand the IAAF's views of sex and gender and how such documents not only reinforce a binary gender paradigm but also support a belief that the athletics is by default a masculine space. Additionally, Semenya's body and performance can be read as rhetorical texts as well. The way she looked at the 2009 World Championships as well as how she performed athletically were forms of gender delivery that challenged sports' gender conventions. Exploring this delivery and the context in which it occurs can provide information on how sports both reinforce and challenge popular gender paradigms. Finally, by examining the negative treatment of Semenya in U.S. sports media, we can better understand the ways in which ambiguous figures like Semenya are punished for transgressing gender norms and scapegoated so that binary gender and sex paradigms remain intact after being called into question.

Scholars in rhetoric and communication have begun recognizing the power of sports to influence cultural beliefs, especially over the past few decades. This has not always been the case, though. In fact, for centuries sports were commonly thought to be apolitical institutions that served as an opiate for the masses (Eitzen and Sage 202). A wealth of scholarship written over the past few decades has proven just the opposite, however. Sports are highly political and intricate parts of indoctrinating people into a culture's value system and reinforcing social ideologies

(Thompson 82-4). Works such as Barry Brummett's *Sporting Rhetorics* and Michael Butterworth's *Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity* among many others demonstrate that sports and rhetoric are not distinct entities from one another. Sports do not exist on one hand and rhetoric on the other, rather sporting events and performances *are* rhetorical events and performances; athletic bodies are always argumentative and rhetorically salient. Sports are integral in shaping how participants in sports discourse (not only athletes but also fans, coaches, regulators, sports media members, etc.) interact with the world around them (Meân and Halone 253). Rachel Kraft and Barry Brummett highlight the rhetorical nature of sports noting that "although [sports] are games, they are not merely games. There is a rhetoric in sport and games: they are persuasive communications, texts that, intentionally or unintentionally, influence the social and political attitudes held by the public" (11). Additionally, recognizing how sports texts signify and how they are produced, born within and from contextual conditions, places sports texts well within an English studies definition of rhetoric and composition as "the teaching *and* study of writing and rhetoric in context" (Lauer 107).

In addition to being rhetorical, sports are particularly important when examining rhetorics of gender, though many have suggested that this line of inquiry is underdeveloped. Butterworth, for example, notes as much, writing, "Sport must play a more prominent role in rhetorical scholarship, therefore, because it is the cultural institution that arguably provides the most vivid and persistent articulations of oppressive gender norms" ("Katie" 270). Susan Birrell and Cheryl L. Cole further note the importance of understanding rhetorics of sex in sports in their article on transsexual professional tennis player Renee Richards, writing "the confusion that followed Richards' actions illuminates sport as an important element in a political field that produces and reproduces two apparently natural, mutually exclusive, 'opposite' sexes" (2). Furthermore, Lisa Disch and Mary Jo Kane refer to sport as "arguably the most important public arena for the performance of gender as an asymmetrical, oppositional relation based on natural sex differences" (126). Because many sports, including professional athletics, separate athletes into one of two

categories based on sex, these sports function rhetorically as gatekeepers of a binary sex paradigm. Simply put, those who do not conform do not compete. Occasionally, though, athletes that blur the line between man and woman have gained access to competitive, rhetorical spaces. This dissertation argues that sports, as evidenced through an examination of professional athletics, are particularly important in shaping participants' views of sex and gender because sex is so stringently policed in sports and because so many fail to recognize sports discourses on sex as highly political and agenda-driven. Though some scholars (e.g. Dickinson et al.; Elsas et al.; Heggie; Hood-Williams; Ritchie) have problematized sports' *sex verification processes*, the processes used to assign athletes a sex for competitive purposes, these works have only cursorily, if at all, examined this process via a rhetorical lens of inquiry. I intend to show that professional track and field, through its policies and practices, and sports media coverage of sexually ambiguous athletes sustains a view of sex and gender that is oversimplified and, as is seen in the case of Semenya, oppressive. Judith Butler suggests that athletic bodies are canvases on which gender norms are assigned and through which these norms persist ("Athletic Genders"). Kraft and Brummett note the significance of sports' place in defining gender, writing, "Through sport and games we construct difference, saying who we are not, saying who is normal and who is not" (11). Athletes like Semenya bring Kraft and Brummett's idea to the fore, putting difference front and center. She reveals glaring holes in the mythos of sports as well as the issue of who should have access to compete. Because athletic bodies play a significant role in social constructs of gender, understanding athletic bodies, their performances and capabilities, and how they are managed, classified, or discursively constructed is critical for understanding the way sex and gender are rhetorically constructed and discoursed. I suggest that just as athletic bodies can be used to reify ideals of a binary gender ideology, the bodies and performances of *sexually ambiguous athletes*, those athletes who cannot easily be classified as masculine or feminine, can be used to critique practices and policies of sports institutions precisely because they disrupt the clear binary distinction required for a two-sex paradigm to be unquestioningly consumed.

My investigation of sex verification policies rooted in binary or dichotomous views of sex and gender will uncover some of the myriad rhetorical methods the IAAF employs to reinforce this belief system. For example, the fact that the IAAF divides its competitions into two sex categories assumes that those categories are universal and all-inclusive and that any competitor should fit into one or the other. Additionally, though the IAAF does not test the sex of every athlete, it reserves the right to test those that do not obviously fall into either men's or women's competitive categories. As long as an athlete seems to conform to the proper gender expectations for his or her sex category no sex testing is needed. For female athletes, this has often meant being relegated to second-class status as female athletes are consistently expected to perform less adeptly than their male counterparts (Wackwitz 555). As long as their bodies or athletic performances are in line with gender expectations for female athletes, these competitors face little administrative resistance to competing, and a dichotomous view of gender is further naturalized. Whenever there is a professional athletics competition, there is always policing of female athletes' bodies to ensure they can easily be classified into the women's competitive category.

The remainder of this chapter establishes a framework for the case study of Caster Semenya. After briefly examining the ways in which she has impacted the current scholarly climate, I define and explain briefly binary paradigms of sex and gender. Next, drawing from Kenneth Burke, I suggest that from such paradigms emerge a *gender ideology*, a naturalized belief system that reifies two essential sexes and genders, the power of which can be examined through rhetorical inquiry. Next, I put forward that a key way in which this ideology is perpetuated is through cultural institutions and argue that sport is a critical cultural institution for the perpetuation of a two-sex framework. I develop this point by briefly examining the history of sex testing in sports and discussing how these tests influence rhetorical definitions of *male* and *female*. Finally, I conclude with an outline for the rest of the project.



## **TRACING INTERSECTIONS: SEX, GENDER, SEMENYA, AND THE ACADEMY**

The case of Caster Semenya has garnered much scholarly attention from various academic disciplines. Legal scholars have used the case to examine issues of human rights. Shawn M. Crincoli argues, for example, that legal steps may need to be taken to compel sports organizations to adopt policies that do not place such a high burden on athletes who perform an unconventional gender to prove they are on an equal level, competitively speaking, as their opponents (139). Additionally, Claudia Weisemann, prompted by Semenya's ordeal, examines the tension between sex testing procedures in sports and an individual athlete's right "not to know," arguing persuasively for a healthy discussion of whether this right can or should be incorporated into sex verification policies in professional sports. One's right not to know offers a person the right to self-determine access to and awareness of his or her medical information. Most commonly, this right is invoked in cases where one's genetic makeup may predispose them to a disease since one's genetic makeup cannot be altered, but Weisemann wonders if such a policy might have some footing in the realm of athletics (217).

As one might expect, the case of Semenya also gives medical and sociological discourse communities an opportunity to examine the significance of the sport's policies and medical practices in 2009. Many articles in these disciplines use Semenya as a jumping off point for discussing the problematic social implications of forcing people to check one of two sex boxes in order to compete in elite-level sports (Cahn). To create a more understanding and inviting environment, sports sociologists argue, sex categories must be challenged. By encouraging a multiplicity of gender performances, rigid sex categories become more permeable and boundaries become more blurred (Griffin 52).

In addition to encouraging diverse gender performances, scholarship has also used the case of Semenya as an opportunity to reflect on the problematic history of sex testing (also referred to as sex verification, gender verification, or gender testing) policies in sports. This has generally meant pointing out flaws in past and current testing procedures (Camporesi and

Maugeri; Foddy and Savulescu; Wonkam, Fieggen, and Ramesar). However, studies like Cheryl Cooky and Shari L. Dworkin's have also taken sports policies to task, pointing out that numerous assumptions made in the creation of policies on identifying sex categories, including the belief in a binary sex system, the belief that sport is a level playing field, and the belief that intersex athletes have unfair competitive advantages over women who are not intersex, are fallacious. Adhering to these policies, then, signals the importance of a two-sex system to governing bodies such as the IAAF.

The case of Caster Semenya has also been used by scholars of rhetoric and media studies to explore ways in which gender is articulated and interpreted. Jaime Schultz argues that the difficulties Semenya faced professionally and in the media show that debates surrounding "gender verification" need to be reframed. Rather than making the debate about whether an athlete is or is not female, it may be more productive to consider whether the athlete possesses conditions which may afford her unfair advantages (229). Unless such debates are reframed, exceptional female athletes that do not conform to conventional definitions of femininity will continue to be labeled by sports, medical, and media voices as "disordered" or "afflicted" to perpetuate an existing hegemonic gender ideology and binary sex model that subvert the connection between femininity and physical prowess (Vannini and Fornssler 243).

Media descriptions and depictions of Semenya have played a significant part in the public interpretation of her body. Following the IAAF Council's decision to require Semenya to submit to sex-verification procedures, Semenya took part in an interview, makeover, and photo shoot with *You*, a South African family-oriented magazine, in an attempt to feminize her persona. In a series of photographs, she traded in her track uniform and running spikes for leather pants, a sequined top, a grey skirt, and a black-and-white cocktail dress. The cover of the magazine proudly trumpeted this transformation, proclaiming, "We turn SA's [South Africa's] power girl into a glamour girl--and she loves it!" The article attempted to feminize Semenya through the use of conventionally feminine clothing and by positioning her as a conventionally feminine object of

viewer interest, the focus of the photo shoot (Winslow 308-310). However, Semenya's success at building a feminine ethos was ultimately mitigated by the timing of this article, which appeared only a few weeks after she faced accusations of being a man. Other examinations of media surrounding Semenya argue for a better understanding of the power inherent in linguistic resources to talk about issues of sex and gender. Dee Amy-Chinn, for example, suggests that Semenya was the victim of a *hermeneutic epistemic injustice*, a violation that occurs when there is a "gap in collective interpretive resources" (313). Because a binary gender ideology requires media outlets to interpret Semenya's performance through a two-sex narrative, they could not access linguistic resources to more accurately address the complexities of human bodies. Though Amy-Chinn argues that a lack of linguistic resources was at the root of the mistreatment of Semenya in the media, not all treated the case of Semenya the same. In a comparison of U.S. and South African accounts of Semenya, Cheryl Cooky, Ranissa Dycus, and Shari L. Dworkin identify foundational differences between the two. Generally, U.S. media framed the Semenya controversy as a medical debate, focusing on finding Semenya's "true" sex through medical assessment. South African media, however, constructed the case as an issue of human rights, never questioning Semenya's identification as a woman, instead, examining whether the IAAF may have been motivated by racial or national considerations (39-48). Though the case of Semenya has added much to disciplines such as law, sociology, and medicine, the focus of this dissertation is to mine its rhetorical dimensions by exploring how this case informs, complicates, or changes foundational rhetorical concepts such as silence, delivery, and scapegoating.

This dissertation suggests that the case of Caster Semenya can illuminate the ways in which the performance and management of gender in professional athletics is rhetorical. This objective warrants a discussion of key concepts used throughout this work. Central to this study are the concepts of *sex* and *gender*. Though these terms are often conflated in casual or common discourse and in institutional sports discourse as well, each has a distinct meaning in rhetoric and gender studies. In this project, I use the term *sex* as a way to describe the anatomical markers used

to assign subjects to one of two sexual categories: male or female (Fausto-Sterling 3). Anatomical factors used to determine one's sex may include the appearance of external genitalia, levels of androgenic and estrogenic hormones, or one's genetic or chromosomal makeup. Though tests created to identify whether an athlete is male or female are often referred to as *gender verification tests* in sports policies and public discourse, these tests are designed to measure biological variables and to assign an athlete a sex. For this reason, I refer to the procedure of collecting data to assign an athlete a sex as *sex testing* or *sex verification testing* as opposed to *gender verification*.

While the term *sex* has generally been used to refer to one's biology, *gender*, on the other hand, has conventionally referred to social roles and expectations based on perceived sexual differences. "Gender," writes Judith Butler, "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (*Gender Trouble* 45). Gender, in this view, is about how people express themselves within a sociocultural context. If one's sex is designated as female, she is expected to embody and perform conventionally feminine qualities such as delicacy, timidity, passivity, or fragility. If one is biologically designated male, he is expected to adopt *masculine* behaviors and internalize markers and attributes that society interprets as manly such as ruggedness, aggression, speed, and power. Maintaining conventional femininity can be difficult for females competing in professional athletics. Because athletics competitions reward conventionally masculine qualities such as speed and power, female athletes who wish to maintain a feminine gender role must search for ways to reinforce their femininity while also adopting conventionally masculinely gendered qualities associated with successful athletic performance.

Though distinctions between sex and gender are often simplified to distinctions between nature (*sex*) and culture (*gender*), I adopt the position of Judith Butler, Anne Fausto-Sterling, and others who suggest that neither of these constructs can ever be divorced from the cultural. Though

the physical characteristics of a person's body are not socially constructed, the meaning and significance of those characteristics are always socially determined (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 10). Examining the case of Semenya means considering rhetorical aspects of both sex and gender. Semenya's delivery of gender, her implementation of performance or embodiment of qualities socially designated as masculine or feminine, instigated an examination of her sex, elements of her body such as her genes, chromosomes, hormone levels, and anatomy. While these biological factors were "objectively" measured and analyzed to indicate Semenya's sex, the use of these factors and their importance in defining her sex were socially constructed and managed.

### **BINARY PARADIGMS OF SEX AND GENDER**

The idea that there are two essentially different sexes, males and females, with each having its own unique set of performances to gender each sex reflects *binary paradigms of sex and gender*. I use the term *paradigm* because it suggests "an accepted model or pattern' that guides those engaged in complex information-producing tasks" (Reese 391). In other words, a paradigm is a way through which people view an aspect of the world, manifested most obviously in this dissertation by the way a group views systems of sex and gender. A binary sex paradigm suggests, then, that sex is often viewed in terms of two distinct, separate options: male and female. And a binary gender paradigm says that each of these sexes has a set of gendered practices associated with it that signal who is a member of which group (Condit 92-3).

The binary sex paradigm that holds that there are two essential sexes from which two genders emerge is not without its critics, however. Thomas Laqueur and Michel Foucault, for example, question the idea of two essential sexes and genders posited in binary paradigms. In *Making Sex*, Laqueur suggests that one's physical sex does not exist outside of cultural interpretations but rather within them. To prove his claim, he painstakingly traces the roots of the two-sex model only to find that the model that seems to be an obvious observation of essential biological difference is only a few hundred years old and was preceded for millennia by a one-sex model that viewed men and women as comprised of the same anatomical parts, though the parts

were expressed differently. Laqueur demonstrates that both the one- and two-sex models are just as dependent on the cultural climate to interpret data as on medical technology to provide it.

Medical practices and technology yield information about examined bodies, but those results are still interpreted through a cultural framework that can fit that data into existing gender ideologies that reify the masculine body while backgrounding the feminine body.

Foucault suggests that a binary gender paradigm is not as "natural" as it seems. Rather, this paradigm took hold with the rise of the bourgeoisie, which used such cultural institutions as medicine, psychiatry, criminal justice, and religion to create taboos around pleasurable sexual activity that is not procreative through the institution of marriage (10, 30-1). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Foucault claims, governments became particularly focused on the vital statistics of their population, and discourses of sex were appropriated by these institutions that have sought to redefine sex as an object of knowledge rather than something to be joked about (17). To emphasize the importance of a procreative sexuality, such a sexuality had to be naturalized, as did the central figures, the male and female, that were a part of that procreative sexuality.

With this emphasis on procreative sexuality, fitting into binary sex and gender paradigms became increasingly important. This is perhaps no clearer than when we consider the emphasis placed on resolving the sex of newborns in a binary sex paradigm. Oftentimes the first question new parents ask when their child is born is, "Is it a boy or girl?" (that is, if they had not already found the answer to that question months earlier during a fetal ultrasound). This desire to know, often from the first instance in which a fetus's or newborn's sex is intelligible, suggests that there is great significance in being able to distinguish the sex category to which a child belongs. Fitting a child into a binary sex paradigm seems "natural" to many, but such a model is under constant scrutiny even by those in the medical field who parents might look to for the authoritative answer on whether a child is male or female. Fausto-Sterling notes that identifying anyone as a male or female is never simply a biological distinction. Rather, it is always at least partially a social choice as well (5). Though physicians use various chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical factors

or measurements as ways to justify calling a body male or female, these factors and measurements are based on social decisions to separate sexes and genders into two categories and characterize acceptable criteria for those categories. In her study of the way a sex is assigned to an intersexed child, Suzanne J. Kessler writes that “biological factors are often preempted in [physicians’] deliberation by such cultural factors as the ‘correct’ length of the penis and capacity of the vagina” (3). Physicians, who because of their knowledge and training are imbued with a high degree of authority on matters of sex, often enter a case believing in the social necessity of enforcing a two-sex system along with certain beliefs of what constitutes a male or female infant. In turn, doctors’ beliefs about what constitutes a proper male or female infant influence medical suggestions made to parents of infants that diverge from either a male or female norm, which can mean surgically altering an infant to fit comfortably in one of the two categories. Though a child born with a divergence of sexual development may still be healthy, social pressures still covertly exist that dictate the child be able to fit into one of the two “natural” sex categories. This pressure stays throughout an individual’s entire life, and is reinforced through myriad social policies and practices, one set of which is often maintained by governing bodies of sports who use generally perceived differences between male and female sexes as a natural divider for competitor categories as well. Athletes are rewarded for being able to be classified as a man or woman, given the opportunity to compete for fame and riches. The risks that go with such rewards are also great for those competing in the women’s division. If there is ever any question whether an athlete claiming to be a woman is anything but, she could potentially experience years of an invasive, public examination and dissection of her body and her lifestyle.

Rather than viewing sex or gender as an essential designation, this project encourages a reframing of the concept to acknowledge the social and rhetorical aspects of defining a person’s sex and gender. Butler bases her concept of *performativity* on the idea that gender may be most productively viewed as a set of performances born from a culture’s gender *ideology*, its deep-seated beliefs about gender. In *Gender Trouble*, she posits that one’s gender is not an essential or

natural part of that person as a binary gender paradigm might lead one to believe. That would mean gender would exist outside of culture and language, which there is no evidence to suggest. Rather, one's gender is developed from the performance of various actions and rituals that are gendered within a given context. "Performativity," Butler writes, "is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (xv). One's socially (and one's personally) interpreted gender is created through practices, performances, and rituals that have been gendered by a given social group. Definitions of sex and gender are constantly being shaped and reshaped by those who hold an audience's attention before, during, and after a competition. The case of Caster Semenya shows that gendering is a constant process of defining in which terms dealing with sexes and genders can be reconstructed and negotiated.

#### **FROM PARADIGM TO IDEOLOGY**

Binary paradigms of sex and gender create the framework through which we make sense of bodies and performances. They are also the basis through which an ideology forms. *Ideology* refers to "the mental framework—the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and systems of representation—which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works" (Hall 26). If a binary gender paradigm essentializes and naturalizes two gender categories, the values and beliefs that come to be associated with each gender and the socially valued methods for performing each gender can be said to comprise gender ideology. To use sports as an example, because its gender ideology equates masculinity with toughness, power, speed, and aggression, the competitions that reify and reward these qualities in competitors are gendered masculine. This naturalizes the presence of men in those spaces and often marks women who enter such spaces as "other," dissociating them from females who practice more conventional forms of femininity. Ideologies are not simply objective systems of beliefs, however, but are themselves powerful tools of rhetoric. Kenneth Burke expounds on this idea in his *Rhetoric of Motives*:



'Ideology' . . . usually refers to a system of political or social ideas, framed and propounded for an ulterior purpose. In this new usage, 'ideology' is obviously but a kind of rhetoric (since the ideas are so related that they have in them, either explicitly or implicitly, inducements to some social and political choices rather than others). (88)

An ideology, according to Burke, is a system of beliefs that always has within it an ulterior purpose, and this largely unrecognized system of beliefs shapes how people interpret the world around them. Because an ideology advances interpretations of the world developed by a dominant group with a certain agenda, ideologies are always forms of rhetoric, as are the means through which they are perpetuated. Additionally, ideologies are also a way of explaining "the hierarchical arrangements of dominance and subordination through which society organizes itself" (Cherney). Ideologies always function, then, as a way of interpreting the world and typically reinforce existing cultural power relationships.

The concept of ideology is particularly important to this dissertation and the case of Semenya because popular beliefs about sex and gender can be said to function ideologically. That is, many people grow up being told that there are two sexes and that members of each sex act in particular ways, and they never have reason to question the idea or investigate the validity of the claim. Rather, when someone violates this dichotomous framework or disproves the model, they are isolated and viewed as abnormal or anomalous. This dissertation identifies the ways in which binary sex and gender paradigms as well as gender ideology are embedded within sports institutions, enacted or resisted in sporting events, and discussed by the media. These sites and such analyses reveal what Jordynn Jack refers to as the "process of gendering," or identifying the gender evolution of an object or action ("The Extreme Male Brain?").

If, as Burke said, ideologies always serve ulterior purposes, the ulterior purpose of sorting of humans into one of two sexes deserves to be illuminated here. Much of the criticism of gender

ideologies rooted in binary paradigms suggests that they have been used for centuries as a way to reassert men's dominance over women. Butler draws from Luce Irigaray to suggest that the substantive grammar of gender, which assumes men and women as well as their attributes of masculine and feminine, is an example of a binary that effectively masks the univocal and hegemonic discourse of the masculine, phallogocentrism, silencing the feminine as a site of subversive multiplicity (26).

Butler problematizes binary gender ideology by suggesting that it fails to account for the different forms that femininity can take and emphasizing that the "correct" or archetypal femininity which such a system values and which all women are supposed to strive for subjugates them.

### **INSTITUTIONS AND THE PRODUCTION OF CONSENT**

Burke, Louis Althusser, and Norman Fairclough stress that the rhetorical power of ideologies comes from the degree to which they have been naturalized by members of a group. Studying the processes by which these ideologies become naturalized is key, then, to understanding the rhetorical power of gender ideology. A key way of understanding the naturalization of beliefs is through examining *institutional discourse*, discursive content created through cultural and political bodies. To understand the way sex and gender are rhetorically managed through sports, one must also understand the role social institutions, including sports, play in larger cultural conversations of sex and gender. As is discussed below, this project uses the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, and Louis Althusser to identify institutions that help naturalize a binary gender ideology. *Institution* in this case works on two levels. First this project examines the cultural institution of sports, which along with other cultural institutions including medicine, criminal justice, and religion, reinforce binary paradigms of sex and gender. Additionally, smaller more conventional institutions, such as the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), the governing body of professional athletics, act in ways that reify conventional binary paradigms of both sex and gender. This concept of *institution* is a

foundational part of the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who foregrounds in his definition power relations that exist in institutional relationships:

[An institution is] not necessarily a particular organization but any relatively durable set of social relations which *endows* individuals with power, status and resources of various kinds. It is the institution, in this sense, that endows the speaker with the authority to carry out the act which his or her utterance claims to perform . . . the efficacy of the performative utterance presupposes a set of social relations, an institution, by virtue of which a particular individual, who is *authorized* to speak and *recognized* as such by others, is able to speak in a way that others will regard as acceptable in the circumstances (8-9).

For Bourdieu, then, the study of institutions is the study of social conditions and how such relationships are rhetorically adopted, enacted, or employed in specific settings. An institution can be a corporation or organization as is commonly thought, but also important, as Bourdieu points out, is the authority institutions possess in a given context, how institutions retain authority, and how institutions use their authority.

Though Bourdieu stresses that the authority of an institution to create or perpetuate ideology is only as strong as the social relationships that endow the entity with power, others have focused on identifying specific institutional bodies that consistently flex their social muscle to shape the ways in which larger, less powerful, and less organized bodies think about sex and gender. Foucault, for example, notes that medicine, psychiatry, and criminal justice are some (though not by any means all) of the institutions through which discourses on sex and sexuality were managed in earlier centuries:

First there was medicine, via the 'nervous disorders'; next psychiatry, when it set out to discover the etiology of mental illnesses, focusing its gaze first on 'excess,' then onanism, then frustration, then 'frauds against procreation,' but especially when it annexed the whole of the sexual perversions . . . criminal justice, too. . . .

toward the middle of the nineteenth century, broadened its jurisdiction to include petty offenses, minor indecencies, insignificant perversions (30-1).

Foucault shows how each of these institutions gradually annexed a greater role in defining herteronormative sexuality, a foundational aspect of a binary gender ideology. Because of the authority granted these institutions by the social power structure of the time, they were able to greatly shape and define both normal and deviant performances.

Althusser also discusses the role of institutions in reinforcing a binary gender ideology in his foundational essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". He is in line with Bourdieu and Foucault because he recognizes that the conditions of production are primarily driven by institutions he identifies as *ideological state apparatuses* (ISAs). ISAs, Althusser argues, are particularly effective means for perpetuating belief systems because they work through the tacit generation of consent rather than coercion or violence. These ISAs include religion, education, family, the legal system, politics, trade union, literature, sports, and communications (e.g. press, radio, and television). In this project, I interpret the IAAF as an institution that embraces and encodes the binary sex paradigm and gender ideology in myriad ways including through the construction of competitive categories, the rules runners must follow to compete, and the featuring of gendered uniforms.

Finally, Burke also notes the power of dominant social institutions in perpetuating ideology. In his explanation of *symbolicity*, which concerns the social impact of words and actions, Burke notes that it is not enough to consider only verbal discourse within social institutions such as education, politics, religion, and commerce. Rather, a more complex and fruitful understanding of symbolicity also addresses nonverbal systems such as "mathematics, music, sculpture, painting, dance, architectural styles, and so on" (*Language as Symbolic Action* 28). Though Burke fails to include sports in his list of symbol using/misusing institutions, this dissertation suggests that it too plays a vital role, through verbal and nonverbal methods, in regulating articulations and interpretations of gender in sporting spaces. Sports institutions create

symbolic texts that regulate gender performances, including the IAAF rulebook, designed to be an authoritative guide on what's allowable in competition. However, it is also a document that reifies a binary sex paradigm by failing to address protocol for sexually ambiguous athletes despite the fact that, as is explained in greater detail below, such athletes have been a part of modern sports since women began competing.

Because institutions work from places of cultural power, the words of those who speak on behalf of institutions carry authority that the speaker can use to produce new, imposing discourse. Bourdieu notes that institutions flex their authority partly through the use of performative language to “enact categories that ‘produce what they designate’ or that ‘actualize’ power relations” (qtd. in Jack 288). Bourdieu refers to these performative decrees as *acts of institution*, utterances that “impose new differences or exploit pre-existing differences (such as biological ones) in order to ‘produce discontinuity out of continuity’” (qtd. in Jack 288-89).

Institutions are not simply bodies that decree acts that are automatically internalized and naturalized, however. Such acts of institution always/already encode dominant ideological beliefs through the implementation of exercises based on institutional discourse. Institutional practices, as Norman Fairclough writes, are repeated so often and so routinely that people do not question the implicit power relations within them or what they represent:

Institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations.

Practices which appear to be universal and commonsensical can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and to have become *naturalized*. Where types of practice, and in many cases types of discourse, function in this way to sustain unequal power relations . . . they are functioning *ideologically*. (27)

Applying Fairclough’s idea to the case of Semenya, this dissertation explores the institutional policies and practices employed in professional athletics that naturalize two sex categories into

which athletes are sorted. These institutionally defined categories in turn regulate gender performances in sports, and I explore the consequences of this framework for athletes such as Semenya.

### **BINARY SEX PARADIGMS IN SPORTS: REIFICATION AND REFORMATION**

There is arguably no more overt way that sports perpetuate a binary sex paradigm than through the processes used for sex testing female athletes. The practice of sex testing, in which female athletes are forced to undergo a battery of tests to reaffirm their right to compete as women, is particularly controversial, invasive, and mysterious, despite the fact that it has been around in some form for over half a century. It is performed only on those athletes in the women's category. In theory, this is done to keep male athletes from competing in women's events, which generally have slower winning times (in running events) or shorter winning distances (in throwing or jumping events) than men's events.

With the rapid rise in popularity of women's sports in the 1950s and 1960s, some became consumed with ensuring that the athletes competing in the women's division were, in fact, women. This was motivated by Cold War politics and the dominance of female athletes from the Eastern Bloc (Pool 65). Many questioned whether dominant women athletes from the Soviet Union were women at all and called for rules that required them to undergo some form of sex verification (Dickinson et al. 1541). These sex tests, designed to fit competitors into one of two sex categories are a primary example of how the binary sex paradigm is embedded within and sustained by sports institutions. This testing began in earnest for all athletes competing in women's sports at the 1966 European Athletics Championships with so called "nude parades," an anatomically based sex test in which all women athletes stripped nude and were inspected by a panel of female physicians (Elsas et al. 250). Initially, many found these tests to be successful in warding off controversial athletes. Soviet athletes Tamara and Irina Press, who between them had five gold medals and set twenty-six world records, opted, with a handful of other athletes, not to be tested and were therefore barred from competition. Their decision fueled speculation that they

were, in fact, men (Pool 65). Needless to say, many athletes found nude parades to be invasive, unpleasant, and crude. Not only were such tests uncomfortable for female athletes, but they were not necessarily accurate either. Crude physical examinations of external genitalia would tell doctors whether an athlete had a penis or descended testicles, but doctors could not tell if, for example, an athlete had internal testicles, which might cause elevated testosterone levels commonly associated with men but not women.

To combat the negative sentiment associated with the nude parades, International Olympic Committee (IOC) officials announced that they would implement a chromosome-based sex test for the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City called the Barr Body test. Testers would obtain a buccal smear sample, a collection of cells obtained by swabbing the inside of an athlete's cheek (Heggie 160). They would then examine this sample for the presence of a Barr body, a "dense chromatin body" formed by the deactivation of an X chromosome in females. Conventionally, humans' sex is determined by a chromosomal pair. Upon conception, an embryo will normally have one of two sex-chromosome pairs, XX for female or XY for male, that will guide it down a certain path of sexual development. It is impossible to tell an XX fetus from an XY fetus for the first seven weeks after conception. During the eighth week of development, differences begin to emerge. If the embryo has an XY pair, the sex-determining region of the Y chromosome (SRY) emits a signal to begin the flow of testosterone that, when received by the embryonic body, will begin the production of male sex organs (Pool 65). Because only one X chromosome is needed for biological function, the spare X chromosome in the female homologue folds in on itself, forming a dense chromatin body known as the Barr body (Heggie 160). If cells gathered from the buccal smear are chromosomally female, they'll have an X chromosome along with a Barr body.

Much like external examinations, however, the Barr body test also proved to be inadequate on its own. Though XX and XY sex-chromosome pairs are present in the vast majority of humans, many are born with one or even three sex chromosomes. Furthermore, not all XX or XY humans develop into females or males, respectively. For example, a person born

with an XY chromosomal pair will produce higher levels of testosterone that will often lead to the development of masculine sexual characteristics. However, conditions such as Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS) exist where the body is unable to recognize and use some or all of the testosterone it produces. A person with an XY sex-chromosome pair and AIS would appear to be female and display female secondary sex characteristics because her body could not process testosterone. Yet, the Barr Body test would disqualify the person from competing as a woman despite the fact that this person's body would be feminized, and this person probably would have been raised as a girl and would have self-identified as such.

Despite the shortcomings of the Barr Body test, sports institutions continued to use it for decades. In 1992, however, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) changed track, announcing that it would no longer mandate sex testing for all female competitors but still reserve the right to test any female competitor if the need arose. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) also stopped using the Barr Body test in 1992, but rather than stop mandatory testing altogether, the organization opted instead to implement another test which it believed to be more accurate, the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing technique. Rather than searching for the Barr Body, the PCR test identified the presence of the sex-determining region of the Y chromosome (the SRY gene) from a buccal smear, which suggested the athlete was male (Ritchie 91). However, this test continued to produce false positives. At the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, for example, the PCR technique found eight female competitors who had the SRY gene. After these competitors underwent further examinations, all eight were allowed to compete as women despite the failed PCR tests. Finally, in 1999 the IOC joined the IAAF in eliminating mandatory testing for athletes in the women's division reserving the right to test any suspicious athlete.

I have elected to focus this project on Caster Semenya because I was both intrigued and disturbed by the international attention she received as one such athlete selected for testing because of her gender performance. It is worth pointing out, though, that Semenya is not the only



athlete whose presence and performances in competitive spaces has suggested the need to explore how sports institutions deal with gender variance. According to Fausto-Sterling, one in fifty people diverge from the traditional binary sex paradigm (51), and there are multiple examples of this in sport.

The earliest known case of a woman failing a standardized sex verification test was Ewa Kłobukowska, a Polish sprinter who won a gold medal and bronze medal at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and multiple medals at the 1966 European championships. Kłobukowska was banned from competing professionally in 1967 when officials said that a chromatin test revealed that she possessed a mosaic condition in which some of her sex cells had an extra Y chromosome (Ferguson-Smith and Ferris 18). A year earlier, however, Kłobukowska had passed the so called “nude parade,” the first form of sex testing. Even though she was not hypermuscular or markedly more successful than her competitors, Kłobukowska was banned from professional competition following the 1967 chromatin test, and her records were wiped from the record books (Carlson 539). Following this ban, she reportedly fell into a deep depression and broke off all contact with members of the professional track-and-field community (Patiño et al. 315).

The depression and isolation Kłobukowska felt is, unfortunately, a common thread in many cases of sexual ambiguity in sports. Another example is the case of Spanish hurdler María José Martínez Patiño. In 1983, at the age of 22, Patiño competed in the 1983 World Track and Field Championships in Helsinki, Finland. In order to compete, Patiño passed a sex verification exam and was given a “Certificate of Femininity,” a form that verified she was eligible to compete as a woman. On her way to the 1985 World University Games, Patiño realized that she had forgotten her certificate and would be forced to retake the sex test, an annoyance but mere formality, she thought, since she had passed a similar test two years earlier. However, upon retaking the test, she was advised there was a problem with her test results and she would be unable to compete in that day’s race. The test doctor encouraged Patiño to say she was withdrawing due to injury and to return to Spain where a karyotype analysis would be performed

to get a clearer picture of her chromosomal makeup (Patiño S38). When the results finally did arrive, they showed that Patiño had XY sex chromosomes. Patiño was diagnosed with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS), a condition that meant her body was producing relatively high quantities of testosterone but that her cells were not able to respond to the hormone. Despite the fact that Patiño had been raised as a girl, identified as a girl, and had female sex characteristics, sporting rules prohibited her from competing as a woman.

Despite the results of her karyotype analysis, Patiño continued to train, and in January 1986 entered the Spanish national championships winning the 60m hurdles. After her victory, her sex-testing ordeal was leaked to the press, which cost Patiño dearly both athletically and personally, as she acknowledges:

I was expelled from our athletes' residence, my sports scholarship was revoked, and my running times were erased from my country's athletics records. I felt ashamed and embarrassed. I lost friends, my fiancé, hope, and energy. (Patiño S38)

Patiño was prohibited from competing in a sport to which she had dedicated her life. However, rather than remain silent and fade away, as she had been encouraged to do by her team's doctors, Patiño fought her banishment from athletics for nearly two years, during which time her story was "told, dissected, and discussed in a very public way" (Patiño S38). In 1988, IAAF Medical Chairman Arne Ljungqvist finally conceded that Patiño gained no unfair competitive advantage from her abnormality and gave her license to once again compete. The combination of time away from competing and an aging body proved too much for her to overcome, however, and her comeback bid to make the Spanish Olympic team fell short.

One of the more recent cases of sex testing involved runner Santhi Soundarajan (whose story is told in greater detail in Chapter 4). Despite an impoverished upbringing in India, Soundarajan blossomed into one of India's major athletic talents in 2005, capturing titles in the women's 800m, 1500m, 3000m, and 3000m steeple chase at a national meet in Bangalore. After

her success there, Soundarajan ran at an international competition, the Asian Championships in Incheon, South Korea, where she took the silver medal in the 800m. The following year, 2006, Soundarajan competed in the Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, a significant international meet. Despite the intense spotlight, Soundarajan showed that she was prepared by once again taking the silver medal in the 800m race.

The joy Soundarajan experienced after winning the silver medal at Doha was short lived, however. Following the race, Soundarajan was forced to submit to chromosomal sex testing. She was devastated when Dr. Manmohan Singh, the chief doctor for the Indian Olympic Association, revealed, "The gender [of Soundarajan] is not female but male" (Giridharadas 1). Soundarajan would never be allowed to compete professionally again. Her name was erased from the record books, and she was forced to return her silver medal.

As a result of the sex testing and the public announcement of the results, Soundarajan was ashamed and attempted to take her own life at the age of 26 ("Sex Test Failure"). Though her suicide attempt failed and she was able to eventually obtain a position coaching young athletes, her contentment was short-lived. She was eventually relieved of her coaching position and now works as a brick laborer alongside her parents for a daily wage of 200 Rupees, or roughly \$3.72 (Swamy).

Seemingly forgotten from this case, however, is the fact that Soundarajan allegedly cleared gender tests at the Asian Championships in Incheon ("Asian Games Medalist"). By all accounts, she was raised as a woman; she believed herself to be a woman; her birth certificate also identified her as a woman; and she was allowed to compete as a woman at previous national and international events. Still, the second Soundarajan failed the sex test in Doha, she was immediately banned. These details suggest that there is enormous variability in testing procedures or in the interpretation of test results. In the course of roughly a week in 2006, Soundarajan went from being a very good professional female athlete who had won numerous medals over her budding three-year professional career to being a sex imposter and an international disgrace. Such

a radical swing is evidence of both the horrific consequences negative test results can have on athletes and the heavy-handed manner with which sex and gender are policed in athletics.

### **RECOGNIZING GENDER VARIATION IN SPORTS: AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH**

This dissertation recognizes that one's gender does not exist in isolation from other personally identifying elements such as one's race, class, sexuality, and nationality. Rather, I adopt an intersectional approach that recognizes that these elements of identity inform one another. In her foundational study on experiences of black women, Kimberlé Crenshaw highlights the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of race and gender, writing, "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (140). Though more scholarship in sports studies is attending to the ways race inflects women's lived experiences (e.g. Bruening; Cooky, Dycus and Dworkin; Cooky, Wachs, Messner, and Dworkin; McKay and Johnson; van Ingen), few have examined how it impacts an audience's interpretation of an athlete's delivery of gender. For this reason, I draw from intersectional feminism to guide my analysis of Semenya's gender delivery. Moreover, I suggest that many additional factors outside of sexual biology were used to determine whether she could compete in the women's division of professional athletics. Using the lens of intersectionality, this dissertation begins the discussion of how Semenya's delivery of gender was influenced by intersectional elements of her identity, in particular race.

Additionally, I suggest that class and nationality also impacted this performance. Her upbringing in rural South Africa shaped her ideas of femininity and gender, which, in turn, impacted her gender delivery in the 2009 World Championships. Acknowledging Semenya's body as a product of her nationality and socioeconomic background is critical to better understanding her gender delivery at the World Championships. Semenya was born in Gama-Masehlong in South Africa's northern Limpopo province, and when Semenya was 13, her parents

sent her to live with her grandmother in the nearby village of Fairlie. Accounts of both places describe them as remote, working-class environments in which residents had only the basic necessities. A *Mail & Guardian* article, for example, refers to Ga-Masehlong as an “impoverished village about 300km north of Johannesburg where many homes have no electricity or indoor plumbing” and are made of “mud or concrete and roofed with thatch or tin” (Bryson). Fairlie is described in similar terms, a tiny hamlet, “built on a remote African plain and accessed by a single dirt road” (Malone, Miller, and MacLean).

The fact that Semenya lived primarily in remote locations of South Africa with little exposure to western hegemonic femininity, the type of femininity women athletes are expected to adhere to, impacts her gender delivery on the track. As a South African from a rural, working class background, Semenya was exposed to femininities that ran contrary to western hegemonic conventions. Rather than conforming to tenets of hegemonic femininity that promoted passivity, vulnerability, and emotionality, working-class South African women and girls had a history of militant activism in the face of apartheid and strong leadership. Though much more research is needed to explore the gendered practices of black working-class South African girls, the extant research suggests it is common and socially acceptable for members of this group to act aggressively, even violently in certain situations. Though working-class South African girls often grow up being the victims of violence, they also often employ physical violence to protect themselves or improve their social situations in the context of school (Bhana 406). In fact, in her study of violence in a South African primary school, Deevia Bhana notes that it is common for girls to obtain agency, even if it means using violence, in shaping the distribution of goods and social status (401). Growing up in this culture, Semenya witnessed and practiced a form of South African working-class femininity in which she was expected to be physical, aggressive, and assertive. However, exhibiting these qualities within the international track and field arena problematized her gender delivery, which ran contrary to normative expectations that women athletes embody and perform a femininity closer to hegemonic standards.

To identify an investigative approach appropriate for examining intersectionality from a rhetorical perspective, I turned to the work of feminist scholars in English and communication studies. Barbara Biesecker, for example, suggests focusing on the process of *radical contextualization*, concentrating less on who is speaking and more on the “forces [that] made it possible for a particular speaking subject to emerge” (148). Jessica Enoch seconds this type of research encouraging a focus on “the everyday rhetorical processes that create difference and grant privilege” (115). Her emphasis on the everyday suggests that rhetorical scholars should move beyond landmark rhetorical events such as moving speeches, political addresses, or courtroom arguments. Rather, it is also vital to explore processes, performances, and tasks that everyone takes part in daily and how those events work rhetorically, especially in terms of reinforcing or challenging conventional definitions of sex and gender. Jordynn Jack expands Enoch’s idea suggesting that “feminist rhetoricians should pay more attention to gendered rhetorics of bodies, clothing, space, and time *together* in order to construct more thorough accounts of the rhetorical practices that sustain gender differences” (“Acts of Institution” 286).

Viewing gendering as a multivariate, intersectional process means identifying and explaining the multiple rhetorical means that shape cultural definitions of sex and gender. Studies using rhetorical frameworks have sought to flesh out a methodology for understanding gender as a process. For example, in her article on the regendering of the factory during World War II, Jordynn Jack notes space, time, bodies, and dress were all rhetorical aspects that “produced and exaggerated a system of masculine domination” in the 1940s American factory and that women’s races often dictated the type of work they were assigned (“Acts of Institution” 299). Though this combination of rhetorical variables was used to justify women’s entry into factory work during the war years, these same rhetorical variables also reestablished the factory as a male-centered space following the war’s conclusion. Jack’s study of the rhetorics of 1940s American factories reveals that a methodological approach that examines a single case from multiple rhetorical vantage points (in this instance employing rhetorics of bodies, clothing, space, and time) can

provide a rich and comprehensive analysis of a given rhetorical situation and social climate. Extrapolating on Jack's methodology, I argue that such an approach can be useful for examining gender as an intersectionally based process in athletics. I explore the ways in which multiple rhetorical variables such as definition, silence, the raced body, dress, and delivery are all used to shape and reshape the way an audience views athletes and understands what it means to be both female and an athlete. By examining multiple rhetorical variables surrounding Semenya and her treatment by the IAAF and U.S. sports media, I show that gender in athletics is under constant negotiation and that the process of gendering an athlete is complex, multifaceted, intersectionally rooted, and, at its foundation, rhetorical. Both the athlete and the institution have varying degrees of control over that process through their implementation of rhetorical concepts and adherence to social expectations.

This project responds to Jack's call by examining a single rhetorical event from multiple methodological vantage points. I examine the controversy that enveloped South African athletics star Caster Semenya's performance at the 2009 World Championships in Athletics, which I argue can best be understood from a rhetorical perspective, one that focuses specifically on the interanimation of gender paradigms, institutions, athletes' bodies, race, and discourse. In so doing, rhetorical analysis helps to identify the social practices that create and sustain gender difference and inequity, a key objective of feminist scholarship. It is also important to remember that gender inequity is not a singular concept. Rather, intersectional elements of one's identity including gender, race, class, and nationality can make gender inequity a non-universal, if not distinctly unique and individual experience. This project illuminates the need to explore the ways in which attitudes toward an individual's gender are influenced by intersectional elements of his or her identity. I show the ways in which the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) Council (the governing body of the 2009 World Championships), the U.S. media, and Caster Semenya used multiple rhetorical tools such as definition, silence, delivery, metaphors, and framing to fortify or to challenge binary paradigms of sex and gender that shape the production of

athletics competitions and social attitudes toward sex and gender. Exploring the case of Semenya from these rhetorical vantage points benefits the discipline of rhetoric by opening up an underexplored venue, professional athletics, that can perpetuate or subvert oppressive gender norms via rhetorical means. Additionally, I examine, complicate, and redefine core rhetorical concepts, highlighting the discursive and performative construction of sex and gender paradigms by sports institutions and athletes.

Caster Semenya's popularity and fame as an international athlete combined with the budding field of sports rhetoric scholarship place her squarely at the intersection of studies of rhetoric, gender, and sports, an area that affords researchers myriad ways to explore how these concepts along with race, nationality, and other intersectional elements that comprise Semenya's gender, overlap and inform one another. I chose Semenya specifically not only because of her fame or because the gender controversy engulfing her was at a fever pitch when I started this project. At present, she is perhaps the most famous case of gender ambiguity in sports. Though ambiguity often has negative connotations, I argue that it creates a kairotic opportunity to interrogate, destabilize, and complicate simplistic binary constructs of sex and gender. In his *Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke acknowledges the power of ambiguity, writing that "it is in the areas of ambiguity that transformation takes place" (xix). I see similarities between ambiguities in language that Burke writes about and the rhetorical power of an ambiguously gendered athlete. Semenya's gender performance unsettled dichotomous gender ideology that suggests that there are two genders, masculine and feminine, into which all people should be easily classified. Because of her ambiguously gendered presence, audiences must somehow confront the idea that bodies and gender performances exist outside of the prescribed masculine/feminine gender roles and are always informed by intersectional elements such as one's race, class, and nationality.



## **SEX & GENDER MANAGEMENT IN PROFESSIONAL ATHLETICS: WHAT'S TO COME**

This study consists of three body chapters that each feature a distinct rhetorical framework and together highlight the ways in which the study of sports texts and bodies can inform the discipline of rhetoric. Chapter 2, "Falling through the Gender Gaps," suggests that a foundational way in which athletes are publicly gendered is through the rules established by sports' governing bodies. These rules generally dictate the sex categories recognized within a sport and define methods of determining in which competitive category an athlete is allowed to compete. In this chapter, I examine the 2009 International Association of Athletics Federations Competition Rules handbook, a key act of institutional discourse sponsored or produced by a sport's governing body, to explore how the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) defines sex and determines procedures for assigning one to an athlete. Using Cheryl Glenn's theorization of silence as a rhetorical expression and Edward Schiappa's work on definitions as rhetorical devices, I suggest that rules about sex verification are vague, underdeveloped, and fail to address a number of pertinent topics. The organization's failure to address in full topics that help illuminate sex and sex testing procedures for competitors empowers the IAAF Council, as administrator of the rules, to respond to situations as it sees fit. By remaining silent on definitions of sexual eligibility the IAAF Council retains the power as gatekeeper in making the ultimate decision of who can and cannot compete but also prevents discussions that can facilitate more accurate definitions of sex categories as used in athletics.

In Chapter 3, "Speedy Delivery," I turn to the 2009 IAAF World Championships in Athletics competition. Relatively little was known about Semenya before this race, but her impressive 2.45-second margin of victory in the women's 800m race propelled her to instant fame as well as heavy scrutiny. Indeed, media backlash following the race suggests that her body and performance were not only powerful athletically but rhetorically as well. This chapter details how Semenya's body, dress, race, and performance acted rhetorically to project an ethos of

sexual ambiguity. I read Semenya's race through the fifth rhetorical canon of delivery and conduct a context-specific analysis of her gender delivery. However, I also complicate such a view by calling for the need to recognize how institutions shape a given rhetorical context. In Semenya's case, this means recognizing measures put in place by the IAAF to restrict the ways in which athletes could perform their genders. I argue that the field of delivery, the professional track, also functioned as a rhetorical element that shaped the available means of gender delivery.

Following Semenya's gender delivery at the 2009 World Championships, journalistic media outlets were quick to interpret what they had seen and relate the results of Semenya's "sex tests" to their respective readerships or viewerships. Chapter 4, "Putting Sexually Ambiguous Athletes to the Test," examines U.S. media accounts of Semenya. I suggest that U.S. media used the rhetorical process of scapegoating to reaffirm the authority of dichotomous systems of sex and gender. The scapegoating process transpired chiefly through the press's use of metaphors. By employing a metaphor of the medical test that focused on Semenya as a whole person as opposed to an aspect of her body, media outlets assigned agency to the athlete despite the fact that she had no control over her chromosomal or genetic makeup. Additionally, media's use of a "clearing" metaphor to describe Semenya's reinstatement as a woman following the test's positive outcome further detracted from her ethos by invoking courtroom rhetoric, tarring her with suspicion of wrongdoing that seriously undermined her credibility and was impossible to undo. The media's metaphors divided Semenya from the social collective and symbolically sacrificed her; in the process, reinforcing binary sex and gender paradigms while framing Semenya as a "freak."

In the concluding chapter of this work, I summarize Semenya's career and life since her reinstatement, focusing specifically on aspects I deem significant to the framework of this study. I review my findings and discuss their implications for the disciplines of rhetoric and sports communications. Finally, I consider future research opportunities for scholars who, like me, are interested in the nexus of gender, sex, and sports.

**CHAPTER II**  
**FALLING THROUGH THE GENDER GAPS: THE IAAF'S DEFINITIONAL SILENCE**  
**ON SEX AND GENDER**

In "The Social Constructions of Freaks," Robert Bogdan notes that one cannot understand deviance fully without examining those who have the power to define deviance:

Whenever we study deviance we have to look at those in charge--whether self-appointed or officially--of telling us who deviants are and what they are like. Their versions of reality are presentations, people filtered through stories and world views. (35)

Rather than looking with suspicion on deviant behaviors or bodies, Bogdan proposes that it is just as important to examine the motives of who creates and upholds definitions of deviance and how the perspectives of the institutions that define deviance become powerful and authoritative.

Bogdan's idea of shifting one's gaze from the deviant to instead focus on who or what defines deviance provides an interesting setup for viewing the case of Caster Semenya. In this case, the IAAF Council, as the day-to-day administrative body of professional athletics, was empowered to define categories of sex and gender in track and field, to sort athletes into identifiable categories, and to mark as deviant any who troubled the institution's categorical constructs. Semenya's encounter with the IAAF Council began when officials from Athletics South Africa (ASA), the national governing body that oversees all aspects of South African track and field, enrolled Semenya to compete in the women's 800-meter (800m) race for South Africa in the 2009 IAAF World Championships. After Semenya ran successfully in the event's semi-finals and qualified for the finals, the IAAF Council announced that Semenya would be required to undergo sex tests administered by a medical panel, who would offer a recommendation of whether or not Semenya should be able to compete as a woman, which the IAAF Council could accept or decline. The conditions under which the Council made this announcement, hours before

the women's 800m final, caused many to question how the two sex categories were defined, the rules and processes in place to help IAAF member countries determine athletes' sexes, the processes used to identify an athlete requiring sex testing, and the consequences of these rules.

In this chapter, to find answers to these questions, I turn to the 2009 IAAF Competitions Rules (also referred to here as the "Rules") handbook that was in place at the 2009 IAAF World Championships where Semenya competed. Amended every other year by the IAAF Congress, a collection of representatives from member IAAF delegations, and enforced by the IAAF Council, the Competition Rules handbook serves as the authoritative text on virtually every aspect of professional athletics ("IAAF Congress"). The 272-page 2009 Competition Rules handbook goes into great detail on a number of topics including the authorization necessary to stage an international competition, regulations for competitive spaces and equipment, doping regulations, and the responsibilities of delegates and officials monitoring international competitions. It takes great care to articulate even the minutest detail of many topics. For example, it dedicates whole paragraphs to describing the allowable dimensions of a hurdle, how to properly measure wind, and where judges should stand to monitor events. However, the rulebook avoids the same level of detail on defining sex categories established for athletes. The chapter on athlete eligibility fails to define who is allowed to compete as a male athlete, who can compete as a female athlete, what these definitions are based on, how athletes' sexes will be tested to verify their sex self-identifications, and how those tests will be interpreted to ensure competitive balance and fairness. Additionally, some of the rules and writing conventions within the rulebook, specifically, the use of masculine pronouns as a generic to represent both men and women, reinforced an archaic tradition that gendered athletics as a masculine activity and naturalizes the male athlete as standard.

I suggest here that handbooks such as the IAAF Competition Rules are important rhetorical documents that can be used to assess the sporting culture's views toward sex and gender (Teetzel 387, Cooky & Dworkin 105). More specifically, I contend that the IAAF Council

used a rhetoric of silence in its enforcement of the 2009 Competition Rules to maintain its institutional power that simultaneously afforded Council members the ability to decide who could and could not access the competitive athletics space and preserved the idea that sex and gender are composed of two essential categories in which athletes should be obviously filtered. This power allowed the IAAF to preserve the two-sex system at the core of its competitions even if a natural, non-artificially-enhanced body called that system into question. Concurrently, linguistic choices made in the rules about what to include and exclude both reveal and reinforce a culture that centralized the male athlete while undermining and devaluing female athletes. Such a culture disadvantaged “deviant” athletes like Semenya who ended up competing at their own risk. Despite the fact that they have been identified/identify as female their entire lives, they are forced to undergo sex-testing procedures and risk their careers because of the ways in which they perform their gender.

Though rhetoric is conventionally viewed as the study of the persuasiveness of language, this study of the IAAF rulebook posits that what is unstated can be just as important as what is stated, and silence or omission are powerful rhetorical tools that shape the distribution of power, conditions of access, and the naturalization of gender norms. This chapter adds to research on rhetorically framed investigations of silence done by Robert L. Scott and Richard L. Johanessen as well as ideas posited more recently by feminist rhetoricians including Cheryl Glenn, Julie A. Bokser, and Susan Zaeske that explore the relationship between rhetorical silence and gender. I suggest that the study of institutional silences such as those posed by the IAAF in its 2009 Competition Rules is key to understanding the ways in which rhetorical definitions of sex and gender are developed and naturalized by cultural institutions including sports. Furthermore, I propose that understanding the rhetorical nature of silence in rules documents, embodied in this instance by the 2009 IAAF Competition Rules, is a vital method for exploring the ways institutions retain and exercise the authority to control who can and cannot access a given space or set of resources and under what conditions they may do so.

In this chapter, I suggest that through its avoidance of clearly defined gendered and sexed terms, practices, and processes in its 2009 Competition Rules handbook, the IAAF Council employed a powerful rhetoric of silence that reinforced institutional power and disadvantaged athletes, especially those with an atypical gender presentation. To support this claim, I begin by examining the concept of rhetorical silence and identify the potency with which it can be employed by powerful institutions to further their agendas or beliefs. Drawing from the definition of institution posited by Pierre Bourdieu, I suggest that the IAAF Council, as the active administrative and policing body for the most recognizable organization in professional track and field, is in a particularly powerful position to reinforce or reshape cultural definitions of sex and gender in athletics. Because athletics are so prevalent internationally, they are important sites of rhetoric that foreground certain arguments while backgrounding others. This power is revealed to audiences through the performance and display of the actual competition, but these displays are born from a stringent set of rules that dictates who has access to a space and under what conditions. Though the Rules specify what athletes are able to do in competition and what they must do to be eligible for competition, the Rules, I argue, are not all inclusive. It is critical to examine key elements missing from those rules to identify what the governing bodies of sports view as worthy of articulation in the rulebook, what is not, and the consequences of these views.

After establishing the theoretical foundation for understanding institutional speech and silence, I perform a rhetorical analysis on the 2009 IAAF Competition Rulebook. Specifically, I show how the definitional gaps on controversial issues revolving around sex and gender, combined with their foundational importance in the sport, allowed the IAAF to retain ultimate power in deciding who could and could not compete on a case-by-case basis using testing methods and measurements that are inaccessible to public audiences. Finally, I conclude by discussing the ramifications of sports discourse in greater cultural definitions of sex and gender and identify future sites in institutional sports discourse that can further illuminate the way in which institutions shape or enforce articulations of gender in international sporting spaces.

## SILENCE AS RHETORIC

Though rhetoric may be conventionally associated with the study of written and spoken texts, the use of pause and silence surrounding or within those texts also has a long, albeit lesser explored, tradition in the discipline. Isocrates suggests a close relationship exists between silent, internal dialogue and external dialogue in his *Antidosis*, noting that orators can use the same argumentation techniques internally to argue with themselves as they use when debating others (qtd. in Scott 156-7). Additionally, other Ancient Greek or Roman rhetorical concepts including *aposiopesis*, *interpellatio*, *obticentia*, *praecisio*, and *reticentia* emphasize the importance of managing, whether through employing or breaking, silence. Despite this tradition, much work still remains in developing understanding of the ways in which silences function rhetorically, a point noted by Cheryl Glenn who refers to silence as one of the most “under-understood” rhetorical arts (2). This need to theorize silence remains important to the discipline as is evidenced by numerous contemporary works that seek to unpack instances of its implementation, especially in maintaining or subverting power relationships (e.g. Bokser; Cady; Cloud; Glenn; Glenn & Ratcliffe; Wooffitt & Holt; Zaeske). Though not all silence is employed by conscious rhetorical decision, silence can always be communicative, or as Richard L. Johannesen puts it, even through silence, “A person cannot not communicate” (29). Johannesen’s quote is particularly interesting from the viewpoint of rhetorical silence because it validates the study of silence as communication. Even when a person or text is silent about a topic, that silence is still communicative, carrying with it a significance to which an audience can attribute meaning. Because silence can be a meaningful part of communication and expression, it is an important aspect of rhetoric.

Despite the fact that silence has been a part of the rhetorical tradition for millennia (or perhaps because of it), the concept has many definitions and offshoots. If one takes silence by its denotative definition as the absence of sound, then it encompasses an expansive collection of tokens and examples. All silences, however, are not created equally, rhetorically speaking.

Though all silences have the potential to function rhetorically, for the purposes of this chapter, rhetorical silences are those absences of sound or gaps in texts that can be identified as having a significant impact on a person, group, or culture. By this definition, a rhetorical silence is one that can first and foremost be identified and attributed with significance. Failing an audience's ability to identify a silence, it will "say nothing" (Bokser 15). Cheryl Glenn agrees with the importance of recognizing the function of a silence in her own definition, "Like zero in mathematics, silence is an absence with a function, and a rhetorical one at that" (4). When the consequences of a silence are felt or when the rhetorical effect of a silence is acknowledged, it becomes particularly significant. Barry Brummett also notes the importance of situating a silence in order to explore its meaningfulness. In his article on the role of silence in politics, Brummett develops the concept of strategic silence, or invoking silence in a situation where speech is expected (289). By choosing silence when a response is expected, Brummett argues, the silence becomes particularly meaningful and viable for examination through rhetorical analysis. As Brummett's definition of strategic silence suggests, even though it is a period in which nothing is articulated verbally, the invocation of silence does not mean communication has been stopped. Rather, a rhetor's invocation of silence can say volumes about the rhetor's attitude or ability to speak and is thus a critical part of communication (Saville-Troike 10).

Silence can be a particularly tricky phenomenon not only to identify but also to interpret because it can be deployed in myriad situations for a multitude of rhetorical ends. For example, in his foundational article "The Functions of Silence: A Plea for Communication Research," Johanssen creates a list of 20 functions of silence or reasons one may choose to employ silence as a rhetorical option (a list he recognizes as nonexhaustive). He notes people may employ silence because they do not have enough information to talk about a topic, because they feel no urgency to talk, because they are thinking about what to say next, because they do not want to talk about a controversial topic (29). Additionally, silence can be used to express agreement, disagreement, doubt, indecisiveness, boredom, awe, impoliteness, concern, inattentiveness, or anger (29-30). Or



it can be used to isolate oneself from another person or group, or as a reflection of an empathetic exchange (29-30). Additional scholars have noted that silence can be an irritant (Bokser 16). It can be used to threaten or punish others (Scott 147). It can be used as a sign of unity, respect, or deference (Lippard 145). It can be a strategic maneuver in the management of a political persona (Brummett 289; Johannesen 32). It can be used to maintain or subvert power relationships (Glenn 15). Or it can be used to create mystery or communicate uncertainty, passivity, or relinquishment (Brummett 290).

Because of its ambiguity, assigning meaning to silence becomes perilous. The value of silences appears only when put into perspective alongside the verbal and nonverbal symbols of a situation (Johannesen 26). This means recognizing both cultural factors as well as situational factors that influence the way silence may be perceived (Cloud 181). Silence often plays a significant but varying role in cultural doxa. Many Western cultures, for example, identify silence as a desirable quality in children as is obvious in the prevalence of the saying that “children should be seen and not heard” (Johannesen 27). In adults, however, many of these same cultures view silence as unfriendly or antisocial behavior. Many American Indian tribes hold silence in much higher esteem. Here, it can be a sign of effective listening, carefully planned diction, and thoughtful introspection (Johannesen 27; Glenn 117). Furthermore, situational contexts also shape the ways in which silences can be read. For example, if I am teaching a class and receive silence when I inquire, “Does anyone have any questions about the material we have covered today?” I may tentatively assume my students have a general understanding of the material, and I can proceed with the dismissal. If, however, I respond with silence when my spouse asks, “Did you remember to pay the cable bill?” she will probably assume that either I do not remember if I paid the bill or I did not pay the bill since, in our relationship, I have established an expectation of responding quickly in the affirmative if I have completed a task. Though the performance is the same (silence is used in both instances), the situational contexts in which the silence occurs shapes the audience’s interpretation of it.

The myriad meanings rhetorical silence can take always establish, maintain, or rearrange power relationships among parties involved in a given situation. Whenever critics examine silences, they must not only examine the sociocultural and situational context surrounding the silence but also the distribution of power among those in a situation involving rhetorical silence. “The meaning of silence,” Cheryl Glenn writes, “depends on a power differential that exists in every rhetorical situation: who can speak, who must remain silent, who listens, and what those listeners can do” (9). In addition to invoking one’s own silence, silencing, the act of forcing silence upon a particular person or group, also deals with issues of power. That is, analyses using the framework of silence are obliged to investigate who has the power to use silence in a given situation as well as who has the power to impose silence on another. In an article focusing on accounts of a 1930s cotton mill strike, Dana L. Cloud shows how cotton mill workers use multiple forms of silence to “gesture incompletely toward what cannot be uttered in a context of oppression” (178). The transcripts Cloud analyzes show how a marginalized or disempowered group, in this case African American cotton mill workers, were able to use silence to broach complex workers’ rights issues in their interviews while simultaneously appearing on the surface to “toe the company line” by not addressing these issues outright. The case of the cotton mill workers that Cloud examines is complex. Silence is simultaneously employed to empower and disempower the workers. The workers interviewed employ silence strategically to broach topics of unfair work practices but stop short of articulating specific arguments for fear of facing corporate repercussions. By doing this, they bring to light unfair working conditions while simultaneously avoiding articulating an argument against their employer that could be taken as overtly threatening. However, the reason they cannot talk of their plight directly and must resort to inferences from their silences is because those in power at the cotton mills, the owning and managing parties of cotton mills who made workforce-related decisions, impose the condition of silence upon those workers who wished to remain employed.

Those in positions of power not only have the ability to silence less powerful groups, but empowered entities also have the ability to decide when they themselves will select silence. Cheryl Glenn provides a detailed example of this fact in her exploration of the 1993 nomination of Lani Guinier for Assistant Attorney General. Despite being amply qualified for the position, Lani Guinier was withdrawn as a candidate for the position by President Clinton after her political writings were grossly misrepresented by politicians and the media (Glenn 65-66). Throughout the nomination process Guinier was asked to keep with “White House protocol” and remain silent, often being reassured that “The president won’t abandon [her]” (Glenn 68). Clinton, who nominated Guinier, chose to remain silent as the cries for him to withdraw her nomination became louder. In a final attempt to salvage her nomination, Guinier appeared on Nightline to explain her ideas to a national viewing audience, but it was to no avail. Breaking his own silence, Clinton withdrew Guinier’s nomination only hours later, stating that he had never familiarized himself with the entire body of Guinier’s work and referring to some of her ideas as “antidemocratic” (Glenn 70-1). Much like the case of cotton mill workers, the case of Guinier shows the way in which a powerful entity can silence one with less authority. Though Guinier wanted to address publicly attacks on her civil rights scholarship, she obeyed requests from the White House to remain silent until it was too late to save her nomination. Clinton, on the other hand, shows the ways in which silence can also be employed by bodies in power to keep the status quo. By adopting a strategic silence in regards to Guinier, he gave himself the opportunity to distance himself from her politically and mitigate damage done to his political persona by endorsing her earlier (Glenn 71).

Silence has also been an salient aspect of racial rhetorics in sports. Perhaps one of the best examples of this is the role of silence as it applied to the experience of Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play in Major League Baseball’s modern era. In *Sweaty Palms: The Neglected Art of Being Interviewed*, H. Anthony Medley, recounts Robinson’s initial interview with Brooklyn Dodgers general manager, Branch Rickey, noting that after the two were

introduced, Rickey silently studied Robinson for several minutes, looking for signs of discomfort or uneasiness (265-66). Rickey broke his silence, proceeding to foreshadow the hate and vitriol Robinson would experience and asking Robinson if he thought he could handle it. Rather than responding immediately after Rickey was through, Robinson himself remained silent for several minutes before responding that if Rickey would give him an opportunity in Major League Baseball, Robinson would not fight back.

Rickey imposed silence in the interview to apply pressure on Robinson, studying his character and confidence. Rickey understood that even though Robinson was an exceptional athlete, “if the first black man to play baseball in the National League in fifty years fought back, he’d set the cause back twenty years” (Medley 265). Robinson’s silence following Rickey’s question communicated that Robinson was more than a supremely gifted athlete. By remaining silent, for minutes after Rickey’s question of whether he [Robinson] would be able to handle the pressures of integration without fighting back to criticism or threats, Robinson showed that he was intelligent, introspective, and self-aware; his silence communicated that he realized what he would go through would be trying and difficult.

Indeed, life in the major leagues for Robinson was incredibly trying. *Sports Illustrated* writer Bill Nack noted that “Robinson was the target of racial epithets and flying cleats, of hate letters and death threats, of pitchers throwing at his head and legs, and catchers spitting on his shoes” (qtd. in Schwartz). Despite this adversity, Robinson remained silent for years, proving his ability and establishing himself as a force in the game, before becoming an outspoken advocate for integration and racial equality (“Robinson, Jackie”).

As seen in the examples above, both self-silencing and the silencing of others can be effective strategies for gaining or retaining power in a given context. The relationship between silence and power becomes even more significant and interesting when applied to issues of gender. Traditionally, this has meant recognizing the gendered roles associated with those who have the power to silence others or choose silence for themselves and those who are silenced by

others. Having the power to choose silence for oneself or others is often gendered masculine, whereas the feminine gender role is often marked as the less powerful position where one is silenced by others (Glenn xix). Applying this paradigm to the Clinton-Guinier example described above, Clinton is often read as employing silence in a masculine fashion, as he is in a position where he can both choose silence for himself as a method of distancing himself from Guinier and imposing silence on Guinier. Guinier, on the other hand, is often read in the feminine role since she acquiesces to Clinton's request for her to remain silent during a period critical to determining her future role in government. It is worth noting, however, that though the power to silence is often seen as masculine and the dearth of power usually interpreted by being silenced can be seen as feminine, this is not a rule. Both men and women have employed the "masculine" strategy of self-silencing successfully to their own ends (Bokser 15; Cady 39; Zaeske).

Though the processes of silencing and being silenced have become significant rhetorical aspects of gender performance, silence can also be an important aspect of more literally defining sex and gender, especially in the context of athletics. In each of the definitions of silence listed above, silence is always put in relationship to sound, and more specifically to speech. One either speaks or is silent. However, my analysis suggests that it is shortsighted to classify silence simply in relationship to opportunities to speak. Rather, rhetorical silence can be just as useful in the questioning of written texts as it is in spoken texts. That is, the silences present in an authorial voice are just as important as the silences present in a speaker's voice: "Every decision to say something is a decision not to say something else . . . In speaking we remain silent. And in remaining silent, we speak" (Scott 146). Just as Scott's opportunity to say something is an opportunity not to say something else, the opportunity to write something is also a decision not to write something else.

Importantly, using silence to explore topoi in written texts is different from exploring its uses in spoken texts. In spoken discourse, silence can be used as an immediate response to a question or statement, which can foreground dissension between parties, for example. Written

texts, though, cannot be interrupted the way spoken discourse can. Silence in written discourse does not contain the same opportunities for analysis as is evident in spoken discourse. However, as is demonstrated in the analysis below, asking the question, "What is this written text not addressing?" in addition to analyzing the text present can be an effective way of assessing what a rhetor believes is valuable, obvious, or unnecessary. Also critical, using the framework of silence on a written text still affords the critic an opportunity to examine relationships of power between the author and the audience. By exploring what is present and missing from the rulebook's definition of sex categories, how policies in the rulebook frame issues of sex, and how these rules dictate the way the competitive space foregrounds or backgrounds aspects of gender, I build on works in sports sociology that acknowledge a history of rhetorical silence employed around gender testing and policy making. Furthermore, I suggest that tokens of institutional sports discourse, exemplified by the 2009 IAAF Competition Rules, are examples of influential discourse, dictated from a source of authority, that use silence rhetorically to maintain current sex and gender paradigms and power relationships. Athletes who perform gender that deviates from cultural norms pay the cost of this maintenance. Those athletes who do not embody or perform a conventional gender and greatly shape the ways in which audiences conceive of a gender are susceptible to public questioning as well as institutional scrutiny (Cooky and Dworkin 105; Wackwitz 552).

#### **AUTHORITY AND THE INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE OF THE IAAF**

The study of silence becomes most useful when the context in which it occurs is considered. This means not only understanding sociocultural attitudes toward silence but also the situational context in which a silence occurs, specifically the balance of power between or among the entities in a given situation involving rhetorical silence. Understanding the relationship between the IAAF Council as the primary governing body in athletics, and athletes, coaches, and spectators reveals that the Council possesses a great deal of power in deciding who can compete, under what conditions they can compete, and naturalizing a certain type of gendered athlete

within the culture of athletics. This power stems from the Council's role as the institutional authority of professional athletics and the uses of silence it chooses to implement because of its position of power.

Created over a century ago in Stockholm, Sweden, the IAAF was developed to address the need to have an official, independent governing body represented internationally that oversaw all aspects of competitive professional athletics, including establishing a competition program, documenting technical and equipment specifications, and documenting rules, records, and procedures ("About IAAF"). Because the IAAF was created with these responsibilities in mind and because these tasks remain the core of what the group does, it still retains its role as the primary voice in all matters regarding professional athletics. The IAAF administers and enforces the rules in the rulebook; it creates and administers a schedule of competition; and, impressively, in addition to its role in developing a schedule of athletics events for each season, the IAAF is also the primary organizational body in charge of orchestrating athletics events at every summer Olympics (Competition Rules 18).

The sheer volume of member nations, however, makes it difficult for the organization to gather to make urgent decisions and oversee day-to-day needs of the IAAF and monitor preparations for upcoming events. These responsibilities are performed by the IAAF Council, a group of 27 elected representatives from IAAF-member nations ("Council"). Because the IAAF is recognized as the cornerstone governing institution of professional athletics competitions, it, as well as its component groups such as the Council, are imbued with the cultural capital and power that accompanies the tag of institution. As an institution, then, the IAAF carries more cultural capital and credibility on topics pertinent to athletics than upstart organizations, groups, or individuals without the same extensive background and history the IAAF has in dealing with the production of athletics competitions. The concept of institution is foundational in the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and can help illuminate the power wielded by the IAAF Council. According to Bourdieu, an institution is "any relatively durable set of social relations

which endows individuals with power, status and resources of various kinds” (8). The study of institutions, then, does not simply end with the study of a person or group. Rather, it includes studying the power relationships that create or perpetuate the social power attributed to that person or group (the physical institution).

Understanding the social power the IAAF Council has as the institutional representative in charge of overseeing professional athletics affects how audiences interpret the discourse the organization produces. The power of an institution’s discourse is directly related to the social power of the institution itself (Bourdieu 8-9). The 2009 IAAF Competition Rules handbook, then, is a particularly powerful document. Since the IAAF is in charge of running many of the most important events in professional athletics including the Diamond Series events, World Championships, and Olympics athletics competition, its rulebook carries enormous authority. What is more, the IAAF Competition Rules carry particular authority in the realm of professional track and field because the IAAF Council and Congress create the document as the ultimate text to guide the production and performance of IAAF-sanctioned competitions. It is the cornerstone document for the entire competitive system for contests overseen by the IAAF. A sporting organization’s competition rules are the basic building blocks from which competitions are created. Athletic performances, competitive spaces, and the conditions under which athletes compete are all interpreted from the contents of competition rules. The 2009 IAAF Competition Rules, for example, lay out strict rules on myriad topics ranging from large-scale issues such as blood doping to seemingly small-scale concerns, such as how to keep proper time or what constitutes a walking step as opposed to a jog. The rulebook is designed to be the authoritative guide to a competition and the last word in settling discrepancies that arise during competition.

An equally important, albeit more covert, aspect of the authority of a rulebook is that it greatly shapes and frames the ways in which athletes are received by audiences. This framing is particularly important in aspects of gender. In accepting the challenge to compete, athletes are also forced to take up the burden of performing their gender in accordance with the paradigms



embedded within the Rules. The competition rules dictate that sports are broken down into two sex-based categories: male events and female events. Athletes in these events must perform gender in a manner congruent with competitive category in which they compete. Failure to do so for men can lead to any number of outcomes, including being suspected of using performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) or being teased or harassed by competitors. In his study of male cheerleaders' performances of masculinity in feminized sporting spaces, for example, Eric Anderson notes that "masculinity is based in a disassociation from homosexuality," and men who enter feminized spaces or areas within sport (e.g. cheerleading), or otherwise present non-hegemonically "find their sexuality publicly scrutinized" (338-9). Women, however, bear a much more public and corporeal burden should their gender performance deviate too far from the acceptable norm, as the case of Semenya reveals. If a female athlete's gender performance is viewed as too masculine—if she is too muscular or is too good—she automatically becomes suspect and must undergo testing to ensure she is a "real" woman. Athletes must be framed as one of two essential sexes, in large part, because of the way competition rules lay out—or more accurately, the way competition rules fail to lay out—who can access the competitive space and under what conditions.

As I detailed in Chapter 1, sports institutions (and their rulebooks) accept and encode dominant perceptions of sex as composed of two essential, binary categories: male and female. Sports rely heavily on this binary model of sex and gender that dictates that all males must conform to acceptably masculine gender performances, and all women must appear acceptably feminine. There are important ramifications for the implementation of this model in sports, however. Because those in male categories have typically performed better than those in the female categories, sports have become a venue that privileges masculinity. "Sports," writes Michael Messner, "have come to serve as a primary institutional means for bolstering a challenged and faltering ideology of male superiority" (198). Mary Jo Kane agrees, noting that sport has become an "ideal setting for reinforcing fundamental assumptions underlying biological

reductionism” (191). In athletics, the differences in performances between men and women seemingly validates the obviousness of a two-sex model. This is significant because the more obvious a binary model of sex and gender seems to audiences, the more often these models can be taken for granted and be used enthemematically, thus making the silences and omissions in the rules less noticeable and susceptible to challenge.

Importantly, sports are only one (albeit a critical one) way in which a binary sex ideology is perpetuated. In *The History of Sexuality*, *Discipline & Punish*, and *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault has documented the tremendous influence social institutions such as medicine, psychiatry, criminal justice, and religion have in naturalizing and privileging certain bodies, genders, and sexual orientations. Discourses from these institutions, over the last 300 years, have worked to naturalize a binary sex ideology (*History of Sexuality* 33). In her recent examination of World War II labor rhetoric, Jordynn Jack shows that framing the sexes as diametric opposites was used to both validate women's access to industrial spaces to work during the war efforts and then was used once again to justify their return to the home upon the end of the war and the rise of the need to employ war veterans (“Acts of Institution” 290). Rhetorics of sexual difference are also imposed in medical discourse, which constructs an antithesis that cuts out the overlap between men and women in a given sample (Fahnestock 84).

The essentialized, two-sex model, in reality, may not be as accurate as has been conventionally thought. Instead of two essential binary sexes from which gender roles and expectations are derived, sex may be more accurately thought of as encompassing multiple variables. Anne Fausto-Sterling, for example, suggests that the seeming chasm that exists between males and females may be more accurately thought of as a continuum:

While male and female stand on the extreme ends of a biological continuum, there are many other bodies . . . that evidently mix together anatomical components conventionally attributed to both males and females. (31)

The prevalence and acceptance of a binary sex model makes it an appealing method for medical discourse to distinguish between sexes. However, work such as Fausto-Sterling's suggests that sex cannot accurately be broken down into two essential and distinguishable categories.

The rhetorical power of competition rules comes not only in the language the rules use and the topics they address, as is shown below, but also in the authority of their declarations. Bourdieu refers to these as acts of institution, or acts of social magic whereby an institution produces discourse "that can create difference ex nihilo, or else (as is more often the case) by exploiting as it were pre-existing difference, like the biological differences between the sexes" (119-20). The IAAF rulebook operates as an act of institution, an institutionalized method for creating difference. It articulates who can compete, how those bodies should be defined, and how the competition should look once those bodies are accurately sexed. The rulebook is also the basis through which multiple institutional practices are derived. Event and sex categorization, sex testing procedures, performance-enhancing drug (PED)-testing procedures, and many others are based on the rulebook. These processes standardize institutional practices, which can be used to reinforce a belief system favoring existing, unequal power relations (Fairclough 27). That common sense ideas are honed through practices established by a dominant group or class to sustain power relations is particularly important when applied to the sex binary in athletics. Athletics rely heavily on a binary construction of sex to dictate how competitions must be produced. If sports questioned the binary sex model, athletic competitions might be structured in drastically different ways. As long as a binary view of sex remains unquestioned, though, the format of athletics competitions remains intact. Silences about sex in the Rules offer an interesting approach to the observation and maintenance of a binary sex ideology. By not presenting definitions of sex categories, the IAAF Rules implicitly suggest that such definitions are obvious and, through silence, work to sustain a binary, essentialized view of sex.

The 2009 IAAF Competition Rules handbook is itself an act of institution and a method for facilitating practices and processes that naturalize a binary sexual divide and reinforce that

athletics is first and foremost a masculine endeavor. This message of male superiority in and the masculinization of athletics as well as the reinforcement of a binary sex ideology is perpetuated in the 2009 IAAF Competition Rules through at least two key forms of silences: definitional silences, the failure or refusal to identify and define key sex or gender-related terms to clarify athlete eligibility, and through pronominal silencing, the use of masculine third person pronouns to represent all genders. By employing rhetorical silence and choosing not to overtly, specifically, and thoroughly define how it categorizes athletes, the IAAF Council retains a mystical authority, an institutional magic as Bourdieu would say, that affords it the power to regulate participation in the field of athletics with minimal question by its subjects.

### **DEFINITIONAL SILENCES**

Definitions or explanations of key terms are integral elements of any rulebook because they clarify the myriad concepts, rules, and procedures employed in sporting events. Overtly stated definitions also note any changes or derivations of conventional denotative definitions that have been modified to better serve a specific context. For example, the term attempt has a much more pointed definition in terms of IAAF anti-doping rules than it normally does in general use. Dictionary definitions of the nominal version of attempt state that an attempt is merely an “effort made to accomplish something” (“attempt”). When attempt is used by representatives of the IAAF in cases of potential performance-enhancing drug use, the word takes on a different meaning. More than simply striving to accomplish something, the IAAF’s definition of attempt in the context of anti-doping cases includes intent. Attempt in this context specifies that a person was “purposely engaging” in conduct that would lead to the commission of a violation. Furthermore, though the common definition of attempt defines it as an “effort”, the IAAF defines *attempt* more specifically in terms of the process of committing an anti-doping violation saying that an attempt is not simply an “effort”, rather it is any “substantial step” made within a course of conduct that culminates in the committing of a violation (34). Definitions are commonly viewed as arhetorical because they often seem to be impartial and objective. After all, when

something like attempt is defined in the Rules it applies equally to all parties. However, the differences between the definitions of attempt in the general lexicon and in the IAAF Competition Rules handbook shows that definitions are crafted to suit an intended purpose and to reflect their surrounding context.

Edward Schiappa recognizes the rhetorical nature of definitions, suggesting that definitions can best be thought of as exercises in rhetoric that are based on a group's needs and interests. Because all definitions are human-made, linguistic propositions, they are always historically situated, socially derived, and rhetorically induced (3). Schiappa explains the rhetorical power definitions possess as well as the power associated with the ability to define in this particularly impactful passage:

Definitions matter—there are pragmatic and political results of our choices of definitions . . . Power to define is power to influence behavior. All proposed definitions are devised for specific purposes that can be evaluated according to the interests that they advance. The success of any definition depends on how effectively its advocates persuade (or coerce) members of a given community to conform and use the term 'properly.' (88)

Schiappa suggests that definitions and the power to define are potent aspects of rhetoric because definitions influence how a group or community views or talks about something. Controlling the language used to define a concept and successfully implementing that definition gives institutions power since whoever interacts with that term or concept then does so on the definitional grounds established by those with the power to define.

Understanding the rhetorical value and potency of definition means understanding the significance of the linguistic choices used to define a given concept. Crucially, however, it also means understanding that the power of defining something comes not only in selecting how a concept is defined but also whether to define the concept at all. It is the latter idea of choosing to define or remain silent about a concept that is particularly intriguing when examining the Rules

because, as will be discussed in greater depth later, the composers of the Rules chose to remain silent on a number of key terms including sex, gender, male, female, man, and *woman*, which are foundational components in creating and organizing an athletics competition. In *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca highlight the importance of the rhetorical nature of selecting what information to present and what to omit:

By the very fact of selecting certain elements and presenting them to the audience, their importance and pertinency to the discussion are implied. Indeed, such a choice endows these elements with a presence, which is an essential factor in argumentation. (116)

Alan G. Gross confirms the rhetorical value of presence saying that it is a way for speakers or writers to “focus the attention of their audiences on those aspects of their subject that are most likely to promote the case they want to make” (5). The Rules’ silences, their failure to define measurable variables or methods used to determine an athlete’s sex category, are alarming given the entire purpose of the Rules handbook is to provide the necessary information from which a competition can be produced. This silence regarding what constitutes a member of one of the two competitive sex categories is itself a powerful rhetorical move by the authors of the IAAF Competition Rules, and it gives them distinct advantages in maintaining a high level of institutional power and control. By not defining masculine or feminine, the Rules empower the medical delegate and doping control officials who monitor the athletes’ delivery of urine samples. Further, the failure to define clearly the concepts of male or female permits the IAAF Council to judge an athlete’s eligibility on a case-by-case basis, as it sees fit. Additionally, the silence regarding these key terms and methods prevents athletes from circumventing the rules and gives officials the ability to discourage potentially gender “deviant” athletes from competing.

If one positive aspect came out of Semenya’s ordeal, it is that it heightened awareness to the regulatory authority of the IAAF Council, which heavy-handedly and quite publicly decreed that Semenya would have to undergo further evaluation in order to compete. One would assume,

then, that such decisions would be prompted by a violation of the 2009 IAAF Competition Rules handbook. A review of the Rules, however, reveals that though they dedicate 60 pages to laying out policies and procedures related to blood doping and illegal performance enhancement, they devote no space to defining who is allowed to compete as a man or as a woman and why. Outside of acknowledging that competitions should consist of two divisions, men's and women's, the Rules do little else to clarify or define key sex- and gender-related concepts. In fact, the Rules actually do the opposite, potentially causing confusion rather than clarity by conflating the terms sex and gender, using one where the other might be expected. What is more, the 2009 Rules offer no definition of what constitutes a "male" or "female" athlete, and they offer no indication of how athletes will be tested to determine whether they are eligible to compete in men's or women's events. The Rules include no explanation of who will interpret test results and how they will interpret the results in the sex-assignment process. Because the IAAF Rules do not list the tests or procedures the athletes who are subjected to sex testing will undergo, the IAAF cannot identify or standardize acceptable results. For instance, the 2009 Rules do not define acceptable or unacceptable requirements for genitalia if physical inspections are employed. They do not list acceptable or unacceptable hormone levels in athletes, and they do not include any explanation about acceptable or unacceptable chromosomal structures. Nor do they detail why any unacceptable results that lead to a failed sex test are unacceptable.

To illustrate, the term sex as well as sex categories (i.e. the male sex or female sex) are referred to rarely in the Rules. In fact, the only explicit mention of either the male or female sex comes in Rule 147, a rather brief rule on mixed competition that states the following:

For all competitions held completely in the stadium, mixed events between male and female participants shall not normally be permitted. However, mixed stadium competition in Field Events and in races of 5000m or longer may be permitted in all competitions except those held under Rules 1.1(a) to (h). In the case of competitions held under Rules 1.1(i) and (j) such mixed competition shall be

allowed in a particular competition if specifically permitted by the relevant Area governing body. (133)

To paraphrase, Rule 147 states that mixing male and female competitors is not normally permitted in most events that occur within the stadium. However, an exception can be made for long distance races (races over 5000m) and in field events in smaller competitions or competitions where appearance fees and prizes do not exceed \$15,000 total or \$5,000 for a single event (17). Many sports sociologists and sports medical specialists do not debate that athletics competitions need multiple categories in which athletes can compete. Generally, those competing in the male-designated events consistently perform better than do those in the female-designated events. This can also be gleaned from the 2009 800m women's race where Semenya's winning time, 1 minute 55.45 seconds, was over 7.5 seconds slower than the slowest time in the men's final, 1 minute 47.80 seconds. Rule 147 reinforces the need to delineate categorically between male and female athletes. If two sex-based categories are necessary, though, the definitions for what constitutes each category should also be included in a rulebook that painstakingly details so many aspects of professional athletics competitions and already dedicates a chapter to athlete eligibility. The fact that the rulebook states that competition between males and females should largely be avoided and its failure to define "male" and "female" participants reinforces the IAAF's belief in the naturalness of a binary sex system. Furthermore, by stating that competitions are to be broken into male and female events and choosing not to define male or female, the IAAF Council employs silence rhetorically, leaving itself wiggle room to create and complicate definitions of male and female as situations call for it.

Along similar lines, Rule 113, entitled "Medical Delegate," marks perhaps the best attempt within the Rules to clarify issues of sex and gender. However, even this rule falls short of what is necessary to ensure competitors have the appropriate information regarding sex before they compete. Rule 113 defines the responsibility of the Medical Delegate, stating that he or she "shall have ultimate authority on all medical matters . . . [and] have the authority to arrange for



the determination of the gender of an athlete should he judge that to be desirable” (111). At first glance, Rule 113 seems simple enough. If the medical delegate deems there to be reason for testing an athlete’s gender, then the tests shall be carried out. However, considering that this is the only rule in the handbook that comes close to mentioning gender verification or sex testing, Rule 113 is grossly inadequate. This is due in no small part to its conflation of sex and gender. Failing to delineate between the two has been an issue since sex testing was implemented in the 1960s, where the terms sex and gender are used seemingly interchangeably. For example, the testing processes have been referred to as sex testing, sex verification, gender verification, or gender determination. Though the term gender has often been used in place of sex because, at least in part, of the strong connotations of the latter with sexual intercourse, substituting gender for sex in the rulebook has more serious consequences. The assumption that gender, which is concerned with social differences between the sexes, can be substituted for sex, which is concerned with biological and physiological differences between the sexes, indicates a lack of awareness of the difference between the two terms, which is a major concern for a document such as the Rules handbook. Since the Rules are the foundational document from which competitions are derived, it is imperative that they are as clear as possible, especially when it comes to a topic such as sex testing that impacts athletes’ eligibility. Using gender in place of sex disregards that sex and gender are unique concepts, each with its own distinct meaning (McBride & Austin 114). Perhaps even more importantly, though, it affects the clarity of the Rules themselves. In this case, the use of gender for sex is misleading, as the gender of an athlete should have nothing to do with his or her eligibility. Testing performed should be interested only in biological criteria, a set of measurable variables that would be aligned with sex not gender. The failure to define sex and gender accurately and use them accordingly clouds issues of sex-based eligibility requirements and assessments for athletes and assumes these foundational concepts are self-evident and interchangeable, which they are not.

In addition to conflating foundational concepts such as sex and gender, Rule 113 does not specify causes or grounds for questioning an athlete's sex or initiating sex testing. In the case of athletes such as Caster Semenya and Indian middle distance runner Santhi Soundarajan (whose story is detailed further in Chapter 4), it seems that athletic success and outstanding athletic abilities flagged a need for sex testing. The impetus behind Semenya's testing was the 2009 world-best time she set at the African Junior Championships. Soundarajan was forced to take sex tests following a silver-medal-winning performance in the 800m at the 2006 Asian Games, this in spite of the fact that she took and cleared a sex test at the 2005 Asian Track and Field Championships, where she also won the silver medal ("Asian Games Medalist"). Admittedly, there is a need for a fair playing field in the women's division of athletics, especially considering that the livelihoods of competitors depend, at least in part, on how they place at these competitions. Prolonged success in an event not only means the athlete will win more prize money but also be more marketable and have more promotional opportunities. However, in many instances of sex testing, athletic success becomes a reason to test—that is, athletic success in sports that emphasize conventionally masculine qualities such as strength, speed, or aggression (sports including athletics) connotes masculinity. This harkens back to the concept of the female/athlete paradox, which suggests that a tension exists between the concepts of feminine and athlete. Patricia R. W. Clasen develops the female/athlete paradox in her article on practical dualisms and paradoxes in sports, writing, "'female' is defined as feminine; 'athlete' is defined as masculine; thus, one cannot be both a female and an athlete because being one negates the other" (38). Because sports have long been bastions of hegemonic masculinity those who participate successfully in sporting spaces and activities are masculinized (Trujillo 292). This, of course, is problematic for female athletes who want (or need) to be seen as feminine, as Krane notes, "by emphasizing the fun and camaraderie in female sport [rather than conventionally masculine qualities such as aggression and competitiveness] promoters assure parents, athletes, and fans that sport is appropriate for girls and women. The underlying message is that athleticism and

femininity are contradictory” (116). Semenya’s 800m performance was dominant at the 2009 World Championships, so much so, that she won by an astounding 2.45-second margin. This performance foregrounded Semenya’s athleticism, and, because of the female/athlete paradox, detracted from viewing her as feminine. Multiple media outlets attributed the reasons for Semenya’s sex tests to, at least partially, her athletic performance. In a *New York Times* article, for example, Christopher Clarey quotes IAAF Spokesperson Nick Davies as saying that it was Semenya’s marked improvement in time between 2008 and 2009 that caused the IAAF Council to first question her sex (B13). If, as Krane suggests, female athletes, in general, struggle to retain femininity while competing in sport, then as Semenya physically distanced herself from her competitors, she was also metaphorically distancing herself from conventional femininity, becoming sexually suspect.

In addition to perpetuating the correlation of athletic success and masculinity, Rule 113 also fails to list the types of tests athletes will undergo if subjected to sex testing. Historically, sex testing in sports has been invasive and uncomfortable. In the 1960s, athletes competing in women’s events were forced to take part in “nude parades” in which each athlete had to strip completely and go in front of a panel of medical experts who would examine her genitalia to validate she was indeed a female (Elsas et al. 250). Starting in the late 60s, judges relied on Barr body tests, tests that looked for an inactive X-chromosome only present in cells with at least two X sex chromosomes (female sex cells) (Ritchie, Reynard, and Lewis 397). But sex is not as cut and dry as the Barr body test would suggest. For example, a person may have XY sex chromosomes but may not be sensitive to androgens such as testosterone, as is the case in people who have androgen insensitivity syndrome (AIS). In such a case, the person would have male sex chromosomes that would affect the production of internal testicles, or testosterone-producing masses, but her body would be unable to process the androgens produced by those internal testicles that would cause the development of conventionally masculine features. As a result, the individual would be born with a vagina and develop female secondary sex characteristics at

puberty as a result of insensitivity to the androgens produced by internal testes. But because the Barr body examination tests on a chromosomal level, the athlete would not be able to compete because she has an XY genotype. Shortcomings in other forms of testing (e.g. anatomical, hormonal, and psychological) have also been pointed out and will be discussed later in this dissertation. It is safe to say, though, that because of varying degrees of divergence from the two conventionally defined sexes, whatever tests implemented to categorize an athlete as either male or female will be controversial, and their results will be debatable.

If, as Schiappa suggests, the power to define is tied to the power to establish usage conventions, the silence or absence of a specific, measurable definition for competitors in each sex category also enables the IAAF to retain the ultimate authority in determining who may and may not access competitive spaces. By using conventional gender terms including *masculine*, *feminine*, *male*, and *female* in its rulebook but not defining them, the IAAF implies that such terms are self-evident. Additionally, by including terms in the rules, the IAAF reinforces a binary model of sex and gender. If one does not accept this model, one cannot view the competition as intended by its producers. The IAAF is, in effect, using what Schiappa and David Zarefsky refer to as an argument by definition to suggest that binary terms of sex and gender are obvious and need no further definition:

Rather than explicitly advancing an argument about a definition (X should be defined as Y) or constructing an argument from definition (All X are Z; Y is an X; therefore Y is Z), [in an argument by definition] advocates simply posit that X is Y and move on: “The key definitional move is simply stipulated, as if it were a natural step along the way of justifying some other claim”. . . Arguments by definition “are not claims supported by reasons and intended to justify adherence by critical listeners. Instead they are simply proclaimed as if they were indisputable facts”. (130-1)

Rhetorical silence is key in an argument by definition because such an argument leaves unstated a rationale or justification for the definition. The rhetorical silence surrounding this rationale serves as a barrier and must first be identified before the definition can be called into question. As long as the argument by definition is accepted as fact, it resists thorough examination and criticism. In the case of the Rules, the IAAF makes an argument by definition by implying that sex is always divisible into two obvious, essential categories. By using conventional gender terms that reflect a binary view, the IAAF flouts the need to define how it will employ such terms in practices (e.g. identifying athletes who “need” to have their sex tested and determining whether an athlete is eligible to compete in a certain gender category) that are critical to the production of a competition. In its resistance to clearly define these terms, the IAAF Council also maintains the viability of these categories. If the Council implemented specific definitions of *male* or *female* rooted in conventional binary terms, such definitions may be disproved or at least called into question by an obvious outlier or controversial figure such as Semenya. Instead, the IAAF invokes the “obviousness” associated with conventional sex and gender categories as a way of foregoing the need to clearly define these foundational terms that so heavily shape a competition. The IAAF’s argument by definition is an exploitation of the perceived differences between males and females that stem from a binary sex ideology. This silence affords the IAAF a way of reinforcing a binary sex ideology, employing that binary framework in its competitions and also retaining a great amount of control over the conditions in which an athlete may access the competitive space. By remaining silent and leaving out specific definitions about what constitutes male and female and by leaving key decisions in the process to the medical delegate, the institution retains the right to determine what those definitions are without providing a clear methodology or rationale for doing so. Because the IAAF rulebook does not define terms or outline a transparent process that representatives are required to follow, the IAAF Council retains a mystical authority in determining which athletes can compete as women.

As a result of silences employed in the 2009 IAAF Competition Rules, the IAAF Council reinforces a binary gender categorization that equates athletic acumen with masculinity and allows the Council to retain authority in deciding who can compete in what categories without explaining its decision or making the rationale for its decision visible. The Rules force athletes to compete in one of two categories, but the Rules remain silent on what constitutes these categories, nor do they notate acceptable hormonal, chromosomal, genetic, or anatomical makeup. As a result, member organizations have only a vague idea of what might cause one of their athletes who identifies as a woman to be tested or disqualified.

### **SILENCING WITH PRONOUNS**

Silences regarding specific criteria athletes have to meet in order to participate in the male or female competitive categories ultimately allow the IAAF Council to control who can and cannot compete in these categories without overtly stating why or how it came to this decision. As a result, the IAAF Council employs silence from a position of power, flexing its ability to play gender gatekeeper, deciding which gender performances and sex characteristics are acceptable and which are questionable. It is worth noting that the issues of sex and access enforced by the Council apply only to women's events. Sex policing is never an issue for men's events because no woman, it is argued, would want to cross gendered lines to compete as a man, nor would sex afford her a competitive advantage if she did. Men, it is conventionally thought, would be more likely to try to gain entrance to women's events because they are "easier" to win. In running events such as the 800m, male competitors can run slower times and still place highly in women's events; women's events will be more likely to have an impostor than men's, and, therefore, they must be more strictly regulated (a logic that is difficult to counterargue considering, for example, that the men's 800m world record is nearly 13 seconds faster than the women's). Men would have more of a competitive advantage trying to deceitfully compete in women's events than women would trying to compete with men. However, the silences surrounding the methods and measures of determining sex are not the only way in which the 2009 IAAF Competition Rules

shape gender performances in competition and reinforce the traditional patriarchal gender system. In addition to having a masculine performative tradition, sports also have a masculinist linguistic tradition (Segrave 214). This tradition is fostered through myriad practices, especially in sports media, such as devoting considerably less space to the analysis of women's sports performances, downplaying feminine athleticism, focusing on the physical attractiveness of women athletes, and using ambivalent descriptive and narrative strategies (Hallmark 160-1; Segrave, McDowell, and King III 34; Wachs 45). Additionally, it is also fostered through practices of specifying and not specifying the feminine gender. Many sports have a tendency to use gender markers to note women's events and not men's events (e.g. The Women's College World Series vs. The College World Series) or to mark the feminine in team names that are otherwise gender neutral (e.g. Lady Blue Devils, Lady Volunteers, or Lady Bulldogs). Because sports have naturalized masculine presence, such labeling of women's events and teams implicate and intensify the perceived inferiority of women's sports (Segrave, McDowell, & King III 32).

Though feminine gender marking naturalizes the unmarked masculine gender in sports contexts, the Rules reveal that the lack of gender differentiation can also support a masculine bias and perpetuate a masculine-centric view of athletics. The Competition Rules' failure to acknowledge the presence of female participants (athletes, judges, and delegates, among other roles), that is, its silence on this topic, is evidence of a greater institutional ideology that privileges men over women. One way in which this ideology is expressed linguistically in the Rulebook is through pronoun usage, specifically the practice of using the third person singular masculine pronoun to represent both male and female groups.

Linguists and psychologists have shown that pronoun usage is an important aspect of a linguistic system that "has contributed to the perpetuation of a male-dominated worldview" and that "problems surrounding the interpretation of [generic masculine] pronouns can perpetuate stereotypes and promote continued social inequality" (Miller & James 494). In pronoun use, this is primarily done through the use of the masculine third-person singular pronoun to represent a

non-gender-specific subject. Feminist scholars of the 1970s, however, noted that such a practice was potentially alienating for members of groups not represented by the pronominal selection (Baranowski 378-79). MacKay and Fulkerson found and Miller & James confirmed 30 years later that “when masculine pronouns are used generically, people tend to mistakenly interpret them sex-specifically and to exclude women from their thoughts of the referred antecedent” (Miller and James 492). Todd-Mancillas summarizes the problem succinctly, writing, “Though our present understanding of sexist language dynamics is still limited, there is nonetheless sufficient data-based information to establish the nongeneric nature of traditional masculine generics to discourage their use” (115).

Because of the attention and research that has been done to highlight the detrimental effects of using a masculine generic pronoun, many prestigious organizations have developed policies against such use. The American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), and American Medical Association (AMA) are a few of such academic and professional organizations that instruct writers to avoid masculine generic pronouns (Madson & Shoda). Instead of using a masculine generic pronoun for an antecedent whose gender is not known (e.g. “The athlete must be prepared for *his* event.”), many style guides offered multiple options for avoiding the pronoun, including using paired pronouns (e.g. “The athlete must be prepared for *his or her* event.”), alternating between masculine and feminine pronouns, using the singular “they” (e.g. “The athlete must be prepared for *their* event.”), and changing the sentence construction to pluralize antecedents (e.g. “*Athletes* must be prepared for *their* events.”). Despite having such options available to them, the IAAF employed the masculine generic exclusively. Throughout the Rules, the masculine third person singular pronoun is used to refer to both men and women. This use of gendered language simultaneously invokes, assumes, and privileges the presence of male bodies in the sport and omits female bodies and voices. The text is thus silent on key aspects of female participation, instead folding roles potentially held by women into the masculine pronoun.



This use of the masculine pronoun reinforces sports participation as a masculine endeavor and normalizes of the male athlete. Throughout the document, any pronoun with “athlete” as its antecedent is always masculine. Rule 4, for example, which address the requirements an athlete must meet to compete internationally, states that “No athlete may take part in an International Competition unless he is a member of a Club affiliated to a Member; or is himself affiliated to a Member . . .” (20). Additionally, Rule 32 states that “it is each Athlete’s personal duty to ensure that no Prohibited Substance enters his body” (45). These are two of many examples of the masculine pronoun reinforcing the norm of athlete-as-male. As a result of this stylistic choice, the female athlete is silenced and the man-as-natural-athlete trope is perpetuated.

In addition to the fact that the 2009 IAAF Competitive Rules reinforce masculine-centric linguistic traditions when discussing athletes, it also employs the same practice when referring to officials and others in places of judgment who oversee the event. Though the Rules use gender-neutral terminology in describing the responsibilities for a handful of positions including the Start Coordinator, Chief Photo Finish Judge, Starter’s Assistants, Lap Scorer, Marshal, Announcer, and Advertising Commissioner, the vast majority of the positions documented in the Rules use male third person pronouns in descriptions of the responsibilities for each position. For example, a brief excerpt from description of the Starter official reveals the centrality of the masculine gender in athletics:

Where loudspeakers are not used in races with a staggered start, the Starter shall so place himself that the distance between him and each of the athletes is approximately the same. Where, however, the Starter cannot place himself in such a position, the gun or approved starting apparatus shall be placed there and discharged by electric contact. (120; italics mine)

This excerpt exemplifies the degree to which masculine gender has become the default for talking about officials, delegates, judges, and other positions assigned for every competition. Every pronoun used in this excerpt and in the entire description (six pronouns in the six-sentence

description) is masculine. Similarly, masculine-centric constructions are shown for virtually all of the rest of the official responsibilities for an IAAF-sanctioned event. The descriptions in the Rules for Medical Delegate, Doping-Control Delegate, International Road Course Measurer, Competition Director, Event Presentation Manager, Chief Timekeeper, and many other official positions all employ the masculine third person pronoun as generic in describing the responsibilities of each position. By making a rhetorical choice to frame all the rules and descriptions of officials' responsibilities in masculine terms while remaining largely silent in its use of the feminine gender marker, the creators of the Rules reinforce the idea that athletics is a foundationally masculine endeavor.

The rulebook notes this rhetorical choice early on, explaining, "all references in the rules to the masculine gender shall also include references to the feminine," guiding readers to interpret "he," "his," and "him" as including the subsumed "she," "hers," and "her" (13). However, it is unclear if the composers of the Competition Rules handbook are aware of the significance of this decision. Though composers of the Rules never express their intent in the use of the masculine generic pronoun, the consequences of such a decision, as has been shown above, reinforce the relationship between athletics and masculinity. Anne Pauwels and Joanne Winter agree, noting, "The dual function of the pronoun he as epicene (generic) and masculine-specific pronoun is seen as a major contributor to the gender bias in language" (128). Problems stem from the fact that even though composers may intend for the masculine pronoun to be all-inclusive, audiences do not necessarily interpret it as such, adopting a literal interpretation of the pronoun that reinforces the presence of the masculine gender and the absence or silence of the feminine gender (Stotko & Troyer 263; Todd-Mancillas 109). The use of the masculine pronoun for non-gender-specific roles reveals a key way in which women are silenced in the Rules and reflects a masculine-centric attitude and culture.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter argues that silence and silencing are important rhetorical strategies employed in the 2009 handbook that was in effect during Semenya's performance at the 2009 World Championships. More specifically, silence was a key aspect of the way the rulebook addressed sex and gender. Though the handbook drilled down to minute detail about a number of issues regarding athlete eligibility, illegal performance enhancement, and the proper ways of producing a competition, it omitted any specific definition or explanation of why competitions should be broken down into two categories, why those categories are based on sex, or how the IAAF defines those two sexes. Additionally, it gave readers no idea of who must undergo sex testing and why.

The confusion and ambiguity created by the silences on the topic of sex in the rulebook reinforce the IAAF's institutional power and benefits the organization in a number of ways. Perhaps most notably, the absence of definitions of sexes in a text as foundational and vital to the production of athletics events as the Rules reinforces a binary ideology that posits that the male and female sexes are self-evident. This belief system ignores evidence that finds sex categories to be social constructs that oversimplify a wide array of biological, endocrinological, genetic, chromosomal, and psychological variables at work in a single body. As a result, the larger social implications for the IAAF's silence on sex perpetuates an ideology rooted in an essentialized two-sex system that fails to account for the variability within the sex continuum and simultaneously perpetuates a gendered rhetoric that associates athletic endeavors with masculinity.

From a practical standpoint, the rhetorical silences that emerge from the Rules regarding sex also work to empower the IAAF Council who, using the evaluation of the medical council as a guide, has the final say about the eligibility of an athlete who has to undergo sex testing. The rhetorical act of remaining silent on definitions of an eligible male and female athlete allows the IAAF to retain the unquestionable power and authority to determine which athletes can access the competitive space. The lack of a consistent definition of male or female in the Rules gives the

IAAF Council wiggle room that it uses to handle each case individually as the Council sees fit. Employing an unclear, undefined process to determine a sex-tested athlete's eligibility, the IAAF Council retains ultimate institutional power of defining and classifying problematic athletes while never having to identify or justify its methods, results, or judgments.

The 2009 edition of the Competition Rules empowers the IAAF Council to ensure competitive balance, but it does so at great costs. Because the Rules remain silent about what may cause a female athlete to submit to sex testing, female athletes are in a perilous position where they have to toe a fine line. Because success in athletics requires qualities such as speed, strength, and agility, all of which are conventionally gendered masculine, female athletes are put in an unfair position where their success in the competitive arena can result in a public cry for sex testing. Additionally, the use of a masculine pronoun that subsumes the feminine, which simultaneously silences virtually all references to women, further reinforces a belief in "natural" masculine supremacy in athletics fostered by a binary sex ideology. The fact that Semenya was required to undergo testing after easily qualifying for the final race, and the fact that calls for her testing grew deafening after she annihilated her competition in the final reveals the problem with not spelling out a clear testing policy. The opacity of policies that omit specific definitions or criteria for sex testing reinforce the idea that sports are first and foremost masculine endeavors and subvert female athletes striving to fulfill their potential.

The vagueness with which the Rules treat sex testing, sex categories, and the relationship between sex and gender performance give members of the IAAF Council the power and flexibility to test whichever athlete it sees fit to question. As the next chapter reveals, IAAF Council members in positions of power typically use this power to reinforce conventional heteronormative feminine gender standards, punishing those whose gender delivery separates themselves from conventional norms of femininity. Through her athletic performance at the 2009 IAAF World Championships, Caster Semenya delivered gender in a manner that strayed from conventional athletic femininity in a number of key ways. As a result, members of the IAAF

leveraged vague definitions of protocol to not only test Semenya but embarrass and insult her in a public press conference by questioning her right to compete as a woman.

**CHAPTER III**  
**SPEEDY DELIVERY: A FIELD-SPECIFIC THEORY OF GENDER DELIVERY & THE**  
**FIFTH CANON**

By announcing that it doubted Semenya's self-identified sex, the IAAF Council heightened awareness of Semenya and accentuated the importance of Semenya's gender delivery at the 800m final race in which she would compete in a matter of hours. The Council simultaneously exerted pressure on the athlete to conform to conventional norms of femininity and prove her "true" sex. In this chapter, I develop a theory of *field-specific gender delivery* to analyze Semenya's response to social and institutional pressures regarding her gender. I suggest that Semenya's response, the way she presented her gender in the final race, can be considered a form of delivery, the fifth rhetorical canon. Moreover, I argue that Semenya's delivery was influenced by the social context and institutional rules that shaped the *field* in which the delivery occurred: the track. Building on feminist historiographers Lindal Buchanan and Roxanne Mountford who have argued for the importance of understanding delivery as socially shaped and situated, I argue that deliveries of gender such as Semenya's at the 800m final are also institutionally mediated and field-specific. That is, Semenya's delivery of gender was greatly shaped by the field of the track that was born from social and institutional rules and values. In *Language & Symbolic Power*, Pierre Bourdieu defines a *field* as "an autonomous universe, a kind of arena in which people play a game which has certain rules, rules which are different from those of the game that is played in the adjacent space" (215). Using Bourdieu's concept of *field* as a guide, this field-specific theory of gender delivery suggests that it is critical to recognize that deliveries occur in socially situated and institutionally regulated spaces that shape the means through which rhetors can deliver gendered arguments. Semenya's gender delivery took place in the field of the professional track, a field that shapes and is shaped by social expectations about what a female athlete should look and act like. Additionally, the field is born from multiple

institutional rules and values that shape how this event is consumed. Such rules and values dictate the dimensions of the track, the division of the track into lanes where athletes compete simultaneously, and the assumption that competitors must try their best. Though these rules greatly constrain available means through which athletes deliver gender, athletes still have some variables, including their hairstyles, uniforms, and, to some extent, how they perform athletically that they can control to shape the way their gender is perceived. In this analysis of Semenya's field-specific gender delivery, I examine how social and institutional rules and expectations constrained available means of gender delivery available to Semenya and examine how some of the choices Semenya could make regarding her delivery discouraged an interpretation of her as feminine and, therefore, detracted from her case to be considered a female athlete.

In what follows, I begin by first distinguishing my concept of field-specific gender *delivery* from Judith Butler's gender *performance* by suggesting that the former focuses on agency athlete-rhetors have in deciding how they deliver their respective genders within a binary gender paradigm. Next, I briefly review the development of the fifth rhetorical canon and tie previous definitions of delivery with athletes and their athletic bodies and displays. Then, I examine Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *field* arguing that understanding the constraints a field imposes on an athlete-rhetor's available means of gender delivery is critical to fully understanding the choices the rhetor makes and anticipating or explaining audience reactions based on those choices. Finally, the rest of the chapter uses the theory of field specific gender delivery to analyze Semenya's 2009 World Championships final race, focusing on how the social and institutional rules and values shaped the means available to Semenya to deliver her gender.

### **GENDER PERFORMANCE & GENDER DELIVERY**

Throughout this chapter, I refer to Semenya's display of gender at the 2009 IAAF World Championships as an example of *field-specific gender delivery*. This concept is influenced by Judith Butler's work on gender performativity, but differs from it in significant ways. In her

foundational book *Gender Trouble*, Butler suggests that rather than being an essential, unchangeable aspect of identity, gender is actually performed:

Acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (185)

For Butler, then, gender is not something we *are* but something we *do*, and gender performances are simultaneously performative in that they have created and continue to maintain the notion of gender as essence. Despite the fact that Butler identifies gender as performance-based rather than essential, her theory limits the agency people have in subverting or changing the system in which they perform gender, arguing that the choices one makes in performing one's gender are always born from and interpreted through a naturalized system that essentializes gender norms:

As part of the epistemological inheritance of contemporary political discourses of identity, this binary opposition is a strategic move within a given set of signifying practices, one that established the "I" in and through this opposition and which reifies that opposition as a necessity, concealing the discursive apparatus by which the binary itself is constituted. (197)

Subjects have control over the choices they make to perform their genders, but, at least in Western cultures, any choice one makes regarding one's gender performance is made and read through the lens of a binary gender system that is naturalized through repetition, ritual, and discourse. A rhetor has the ability to adopt performative elements that can support or challenge conventional gender constructs, but this performance is always interpreted through an audience's gender beliefs about gender.



While Butler uses the concept of gender performance as a way to talk about the complex relationship between a subject's display of gender and how that display is born from and interpreted through social factors, this chapter adds another layer to this discussion. I suggest that the case of Caster Semenya reveals that one's display of gender is born not only from a social, discursive context but also from a field-specific context that further limits means available to rhetors to display their genders. Though the field may further limit means available to present a gender, this examination uses a feminist rhetorical lens to foreground Semenya's agency in her presentation of gender. Through this lens, I examine moments when, within the field of the competitive track, she had the opportunity to make choices about how she presented her gendered self, and I trace the impact of the way she presented her gender. More specifically, I use the fifth rhetorical canon of delivery as a way to focus on the means a field affords a rhetor for delivering gender and the choices a rhetor makes in delivering his or her gender in a given field.

This field-specific study of gender delivery acknowledges that the way Semenya delivered her gender at the 2009 World Championships was shaped by social and institutional contexts in which it was presented. The field of her gender delivery, the competitive track, pre-determined much of how she delivered her gender and how her gender was interpreted through its requirement of simultaneous, side-by-side racing and the expectation that all athletes compete to the best of their ability. This field had been shaped by both social expectations of women athletes and institutional rules that regulate the dimensions of the space and the participation of athletes in that space. This field-specific theory of gender delivery is concerned with identifying the affordances and constraints of the track and how they shaped Semenya's options for delivering her gender. Using the concept of *field-specific gender delivery*, I suggest that the track on which Semenya competed restricted the means by which she could deliver her gender. Despite these restrictions, Semenya had the ability to control certain aspects of her gender delivery that were highlighted by the field of the track. These variables included her hair, uniform, and, to some extent, her *athletic performance*, her in-competition actions of speed or strength that contributed

to her finishing time and place in the race. Semenya had the ability to adjust these components of her gender delivery to be perceived as more feminine by the IAAF Council and viewing audiences alike who had very loudly began to question whether she was female.

### **DELIVERY THROUGH THE AGES**

This chapter foregrounds Semenya's body and athletic abilities as means through which she communicated her gender. This emphasis on the body's place in rhetoric (and delivery specifically) has an extensive history and continues to be an important focus in rhetoric today. Though delivery has long concerned itself with bodies and bodily performances in oratory, the bodies and gestures have always come primarily in an ornamental role. That is, in traditional oratory, the body is primarily examined from within the frame of how it can enhance the spoken message or argument. The study of delivery deals little with the idea that the body and its practices can be arguments in and of themselves. In the foundational collection *Rhetorical Bodies*, Jack Selzer calls for a return to the rhetorical study of materials (including the physical body), arguing for the importance of understanding the way these physical materials shape our realities. "Words," Selzer says, "have been mattering more than matter" (4). Additionally, Bryan Crable argues that through understanding the body we can better understand the symbolic:

To be precise, the movement toward the body is not a move away from discussion of the symbolic realm but a new way of approaching its contents . . . If we alter our focus from language to the body, what do we learn about the rhetorical relationship between the social and the 'natural'? (122)

Additionally, many other theorists who have contributed a great deal to the discipline of rhetoric, including Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Debra Hawhee, have recognized the body's importance as a site on which cultural prescriptions can be written or challenged. Though these theories have expanded our knowledge of the complex relationship between the body and society, they have not attempted to trace the intersections of gender, rhetoric, and field. Because these points of view highlight the idea of the body as rhetorical material through which arguments can

be generated, any new theory of delivery must take into account that linguistic arguments need not be present in a rhetorical situation to constitute an analysis rooted in the fifth canon. As will be shown in my examination of the case of Caster Semenya, arguments can be delivered with or without a foregrounded spoken message. Gestures or actions can be just as argumentative as oratory; embodied arguments can speak as loudly as those delivered verbally. To encourage its vitality to rhetorical theory, the canon of delivery must also expand to include both embodied and performed arguments.

The athletic body, in particular, can be a valuable site for understanding the complex role of the body in rhetorics of gender, though it has been underutilized in rhetorical inquiry. Hawhee, for example, argues quite persuasively that rhetoric has been a bodily art just as much, if not more so, than a mental exercise. She justifies this claim by linking athletics and rhetoric, acknowledging the two share many pedagogical techniques and training methods, and both provide a method for shaping mind and body (6). Though Hawhee reveals that ancient rhetors and athletes had much in common, she stops short of examining rhetorical aspects of athletes and athletic performances, choosing instead to focus primarily on the similarities of training and the sharing of space between the two disciplines. The idea of athletes and athletics as rhetorical entities has been picked up with more contemporary arguments that athletic bodies and sports produce powerful statements on how cultures define gender. Because athletes perform in a field where gender is so fundamentally important, those bodily appearances and athletic performances become especially relevant in shaping definitions of gender. Shari Dworkin and Michael Messner note as much, writing, “it is the very centrality of the body in sport practice and ideology that provides an opportunity to examine critically and illuminate the social construction of gender” (qtd. in Sutton 30). Lisa Disch and Mary Jo Kane also note the importance of the body in sports in affirming or challenging gender norms, adding that sports are arguably “the most important public arena for the performance of gender as an asymmetrical, oppositional relation based on natural sex differences” (126). Following her incredible performance at the African Junior

Championships and the opening heats of the World Championships, Semenya's body was at the center of the debate surrounding the social assignment of gender. Issues of gender are never simply issues pertaining to the roles one performs in relation to their perceived sex but are very complicated and messy including the subject's race, musculature, and hair. In this chapter, I suggest that discourses surrounding these aspects of Semenya's body complicated her gender delivery because of masculine or ambiguous gender connotations associated with each. Because these variables could be read ambiguously, spectators were less likely to view Semenya as clearly feminine, especially given the fact that issues of her gender had just been publicly questioned by the IAAF hours earlier.

The study of delivery, as it pertains to oral performances of texts, has survived millennia, and its importance to rhetors from antiquity to present day is difficult to overstate<sup>3</sup>. When asked about the most important aspects of oratory, Demosthenes said that the top three are delivery, delivery, delivery (Quintilian 11.3.6). The oldest extant text that deals overtly with delivery is Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Much like his instructor, Plato, Aristotle did not like the idea that delivery, which he defined as the volume, pitch, and rhythm of the voice, could be powerful. He believed that the bare, unornamented facts of an argument should speak for themselves and thought that any significance delivery garnered was because of "defects in our political institutions" (1).

Despite the fact that Aristotle did not like the idea of delivery being an important part of rhetoric

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<sup>3</sup> Before complicating the definition of oratorical delivery, I first briefly recount some of its standard definitions. Specifically, I focus on classical definitions as well as emergent themes from the 18<sup>th</sup> century elocutionary movement before examining contemporary research on delivery. Before progressing in this undertaking, however, I must address a caveat to this work. Rhetorical delivery has long included two main branches: the first branch, and the focus of this essay, is the delivery of oral discourse. This has largely examined the extra textual aspects of a message delivered orally to a listening (and/or perhaps watching) audience. Focal points of oratorical analysis have long keyed on vocal and gestural ornamentations, though work such as that by Debra Hawhee as well as Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley have affirmed the importance of understanding the rhetorical significance of the body in addition to those vocal and gestural ornaments. The second branch of delivery acknowledges that factors including "medium, design elements, or paratextual features of non-oratorical artifacts" are also key elements of delivery (McCorkle 2). Though I am more concerned here with issues of the body's role in delivery, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and applaud the work of scholars currently contributing to this second branch of delivery, especially those reformulating the fifth canon for applications in the digital age (e.g. Porter), and those discussing empirical research methodologies for the expanding definitions of delivery (e.g. Ridolfo; Rude).

or argumentation, he admitted, “It is those who do bear [volume, pitch, and rhythm] in mind who usually win prizes” (1).

Rather than condemn delivery as Aristotle did, the author of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* both recognized the power of delivery and condoned its study and use in oratory. Moreover, the *Ad Herennium* expands on Aristotle’s definition of delivery. For Aristotle, delivery was primarily the study of persuasion through vocal ornamentation and the manipulation of vocal variables. By defining delivery as voice quality and physical movement, the author of the *Ad Herennium* extends delivery to include bodily comportment (3.11.20). The author of the *Ad Herennium* recognizes the power of delivery, arguing that the other four elements of rhetoric, invention, style, arrangement, and memory have no value if not delivered properly (3.11.19).

*De Oratore* marks Cicero’s attempt to describe the talents possessed by the prototypical orator. In it, Cicero establishes that being able to recognize and implement means of appropriate delivery is an important quality of such an orator. These means for delivery are both vocal and bodily and are critical for engaging an audience:

“And why should I go on to describe the speaker’s delivery? That needs to be controlled by bodily carriage, gesture, play of features and changing intonation of voice; and how important that is wholly by itself, the actor’s trivial art and the stage proclaim; for there, although all are laboring to regulate the expression, the voice, and the movements of the body, everyone knows how few actors there are, or ever have been, whom we could bear to watch!” (1.5.18)

In this passage, Cicero both defines and discusses the importance of delivery. Like the author of the *Ad Herennium*, Cicero situates both vocal and gestural elements in the realm of delivery, and argues that one can look to actors to validate the importance of understanding delivery. Those actors who were in control of these elements of delivery were transcendent while those who did not understand aspects of a good delivery were practically unwatchable.

No classical rhetorician devoted more space to studying delivery, though, than Quintilian. He extols the power of delivery, writing that it “has an extraordinary force and power in oratory. Indeed, it matters less what sorts of things we have composed within ourselves than how we utter them, because people are affected according to what they hear” (11.3.2). Like Cicero, Quintilian exalts the power of delivery by telling the story of Demosthenes assigning delivery first, second, and third place in terms of importance in oratorical study (11.3.6-7). For Quintilian, like Cicero, the study of delivery includes both voice and gesture. Quintilian distinguishes between impulsive delivery and practiced delivery, arguing that the former leads to misunderstandings while the latter is more effective (11.3.10).

Following Quintilian, the next significant theorization of delivery does not occur until the elocutionary movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This movement brought a revival to the close study of oratory in general and delivery in particular. The elocutionists, a group of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century rhetoricians including Thomas Sheridan and Gilbert Austin, continued to theorize the ways in which bodily aspects of delivery could enhance the textual message, authoring numerous treatises attempting to codify a set of best practices for articulation and gesture when addressing an audience (Spoel 56). In *Chironomia*, for example, Gilbert Austin goes into detail to prescribe actions and vocal ornaments to a text and codifies an extensive system of gestures to be used to enhance one’s message. Austin’s contemporary, Thomas Sheridan, encouraged gestures to be natural, but in doing so, Sheridan was clear not to devalue vocal or gestural ornamentations. In fact, quite the opposite, Sheridan said that tone and gesture were particularly powerful because they connected with an audience on a visceral, basic level. Though the words used to articulate an argument were important, they required the audience to be conversant in the language in which the argument was presented and to be learned enough to follow the logic of the argument. Tone and gestures, Sheridan argued, transcended linguistic boundaries and were “universally legible without pains or study” (155).

On the surface, to study the canon of delivery has conventionally meant to study the way orators use voice or gesture to persuade audiences. In focusing on these practical elements of delivery, however, it can be easy to miss the ways in which delivery and gender are closely related. Gender has always been an integral, if understated, element of deciding who can deliver an argument and how they can do so with the most effective results. Learning how to deliver oratory meant more than learning how to use vocal or gestural techniques to ornament an argument. It meant learning how to deliver a certain gender within an oratorical delivery. Specifically, it meant recognizing that audiences expected orators to deliver a specific brand of masculinity to be taken seriously and viewed credibly.

Gender has always served as an important aspect of delivery in myriad ways. There is no more fundamental a way in which gender has influenced delivery than through a gender-based management of access to oratorical spaces. For millennia, oratory has been tied to the public sphere, which has just as long been gendered a masculine domain. As such, women have long faced an uphill battle to be heard. Lindal Buchanan articulately drives this point home in *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors*:

Delivery has not pertained equally to both men and women because, for millennia, women were culturally prohibited from standing and speaking in public, their voices and forms acceptable only in the spectator role (if at all). Thus, women were systematically discouraged from the very actions that constitute delivery, a matter unrecognized in the traditional fifth canon. Because of women's exclusion from the public sphere, the canon only needed to address masculine issues of rhetorical performance. (2)

Roxanne Mountford notes a similar trend in her study of preaching, writing that "Women's bodies are simply not considered in the art of delivery" (69).

As Buchanan and Mountford note, delivery and oratorical training have long histories as masculine endeavors, and this masculinity reveals itself in core instructional works. Works such

as Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, *De Oratore*, and the *Institutio Oratoria* are educational texts meant to teach students the qualities of great orators. Students in these contexts, however, were virtually always a specific type of young man: one who had citizenship, money, and social status (Willis 26). Women were not considered citizens in antiquity, so they did not have the ability to address public audiences and were often denied access to education, especially in oratory. The classic works listed above that mention delivery, then, take on a significant, gendered role geared toward preserving the privilege of those who fulfilled a hegemonic masculine gender delivery while ignoring those groups including all women and foreign or financially disadvantaged men whose births or circumstances denied them the qualities necessary to have access to an oratorical education or the ability to address a public forum.

In addition to assuming a male orator, many classical works spend time describing how rhetors can gain oratorical credibility through the performance of hegemonic masculinity. Cicero outlines the qualities of the ideal orator in *De Oratore*. This orator's success is determined by how well he can perform a masculinity that is "upper-class, ethnically 'superior', dignified, socially savvy, civically influential, conforming to cultural norms of sexuality, and power-possessing through his speaking" (Willis 35). Though these qualities have little to do with masculinity on the surface, they have everything to do with gender roles as women of the time would not have access to citizenship, which would enable them to possess aforementioned qualities such as social savvy or political influence.

Perhaps no one was more overt about the relationship of hegemonic masculinity to delivery as Quintilian. Throughout *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian standardizes the ideal orator as masculine, noting that the ideal orator is "a good man skilled in speaking" (12.1.1). Later in the Book 12, Quintilian narrows his definition of the ideal orator, writing, "I should desire the orator, whom I am trying to form, to be a kind of Roman wise *man* who may prove *himself* a true *statesman*" (12.2.7, emphasis mine). The Roman wise man of which Quintilian speaks demonstrates his character through the way he implements his delivery of an argument. This is



done primarily through developing a sturdy body and an avoidance of effeminate gestures or mannerisms. For example, in Book 11, Quintilian suggests that a rhetor must have "a robust physique, to save the voice from dwindling to the feeble shrillness of eunuchs, women, and invalids" (11.3.19). Later on in the book, Quintilian reaffirms his stance on a specific masculinity as best for delivery when he says that certain gestures including eating and drinking, rocking back and forth, and "effeminate movements" all ultimately detract from an orator's effectiveness (11.3.125-6).

By prizing masculine gender characteristics, classical discourse on rhetorical delivery both reified and reinforced a hegemonic masculinity that was taught to virtually every student of oratory as a part of his education. It also created an audience expectation that these gendered characteristics needed to be present to perceive an orator as great or his argument worthy of consideration. In this sense, then, the foundational connection between one's gender delivery and one's oratorical delivery becomes clear.

An emphasis on masculine gender delivery holds true in the case of the elocutionists as well. Their works came at a time when numerous books on decorum and etiquette, primarily focused toward men, were being released to address concerns of the degradation of morality as many were leaving Western Europe for America. Elocutionists such as Sheridan and Austin argued that delivery was an important aspect of etiquette and needed to be an integral part of education to ensure men would retain social codes of conduct and propriety (Willis 79). Though these manuals eventually began to address women more directly as Western women's social status shifted in the mid 1700s, the vast majority of these books on etiquette and delivery were more concerned with giving men "more specific and elaborate instructions that emphasized the importance of body control. Reflecting the expectation that they would be much in society, the courtesy works gave men advice on gestures of salutation and the proper use of place in encounters that no one bothered to give women" (57). Even nearly two millennia after early classical rhetors, later texts designed to teach oratory encouraged masculine orators to develop

methods for simultaneously performing their genders in ways to which audiences would be receptive.

One's gender delivery has long determined one's access to education about oratory in general and delivery more specifically. In Ancient Greece and Rome, if one was not of the right ethnicity or sex, it was extraordinarily unlikely that one could reap the benefits of an education in oratory and even less likely that one would ever be able to hold enough public or political clout to display those skills. Even during the elocutionary movement, many of the texts created to provide lessons in rhetoric, eloquence, and etiquette largely assumed a masculine readership. Rhetorical education, then, standardized an idealized set of practices that were also based on a hegemonic masculine gender ideology. Whoever had access to a rhetorical education, then, was learning not simply how to be a successful orator. Rather, they were learning how to perform a specific masculine gender delivery as well. A critical part of being a successful orator meant not only being able to develop and articulate a compelling argument but also being able to learn and perform elements of a preferred masculinity in order to be perceived as essentially masculine. Students were taught to perform hegemonic masculinity to gain oratorical credibility and also to recognize and value this masculinity in an orator's performance. This type of oratorical education, then, perpetuated the idea and importance of performing hegemonic masculinity as part of an oratorical delivery.

Feminist rhetoricians including Buchanan and Mountford have called for a renovation of the fifth canon that recognizes this disparity in access to oratorical education and spaces between men and women. Rather than focusing on rhetor-controlled variables such as vocal and gestural ornamentation of an argument, they argue the scope of delivery needs to be broadened to account for the social context in which a delivery occurs. Recognizing that deliveries are socially situated, then, means understanding how beliefs at a given time and in a given place impact the performance and reception of an argument. "Rhetorical delivery," writes Buchanan, "is a socially situated act, and . . . the surrounding context exerts enormous pressure on the speaker, imposing

constraints, affording compensating strategies, and establishing audience expectations” (3).

Roxanne Mountford agrees, noting that cultural discourse shapes importance of a given body in a given space, writing “Character presentations are necessarily bounded by cultural discourse of the body as well as by material space” (70). This chapter complicates the concept of *context* raised by Buchanan and Mountford. Though both Buchanan and Mountford talk about context in terms of a delivery’s sociohistorical location, Semenya’s gender delivery at the 2009 IAAF World Championships suggests that recognizing institutional affordances and constraints within a given sociohistorical context can provide more insight in the obstacles rhetors face and the choices they make when delivering gender in the track field.

With the previous paragraphs in this section, I have argued that the study of delivery needs to attend to the ways in which rhetors deliver gender as much as it attends to vocal or gestural ornamentation of an argument. Furthermore, siding with feminist rhetoricians, I suggest that understanding the context in which deliveries occur is vital. This needs to include not simply understanding the attitudes toward certain rhetors at a certain time or place but can also mean examining the ways institutions shape affordances and constraints available to rhetors in a given field.

### **THE FIELD IN GENDER DELIVERY**

I define the *field* of delivery as the socially constructed, institutionally controlled, physical location where a delivery occurs. Suggested in this concept’s definition is that the field in which a delivery or performance occurs has social, institutional, and physical rules that serve as affordances or constraints to one who wants to deliver an argument. The concept of *field* has been used extensively in sociological studies, but it has been an underutilized method for talking about the constraints that an institutionally managed location and event place on rhetors’ choices for deliveries. Though Bourdieu’s use of *field* has generally revolved around economic and political realms, the use of the concept to study sporting spaces has been popular, particularly over the past decade. For example, Elise Paradis explores the rules for the field of boxing,

arguing that bodies and bodily performances are important factors used to obtain social capital within the field. One's access to capital in the field of boxing, Paradis argues, shapes hierarchies among those in that field (83). Similarly, Carl Stempel argues that sports in general comprise a field that economically dominant classes use to distance themselves from middle and lower classes (411).

The space of the competitive track is also a vital part of a field that is tightly governed by institutional rules and observation and plays a key role in the way competitors within the field deliver their genders. For example, the track does not inherently offer athletes an opportunity to speak a message the same way the pulpit, podium, courtroom, or other traditional rhetorical spaces do. Though some athletes perform well enough to garner interviews following a race, no athlete is guaranteed the opportunity or time to verbally address an audience. Athletes can deliver their gender within the space of this field, but they cannot necessarily discuss, explain, or vocalize information that may sway an audience. Athletic gender deliveries within the track area are much less discursively managed by the athlete and based much more on how the athlete presents herself: how her body looks, how she adorns herself, how she performs competitively, how her delivery compares to her competitors' and iconic articulations of athletic femininity, and how she reacts to her athletic performance. Each of these elements is foregrounded by the track as the field in which the delivery occurs, and each is accompanied by social expectations of athletic femininity.

Because the track as a field foregrounds the importance of race events, athletes' athletic performances in that situation can also play a role in their delivery of gender. Just as each gender has certain social roles that have become associated with it, both the masculine and feminine genders also have expectations within sports fields as well. Barry Brummett acknowledges the rhetorical value of athletic performances, noting, "From the Olympics to pickup basketball to street stickball to chess in the park, sports and games are a place where people perform so that others may see them. These performances are rhetorical in that they influence how people think

about social and political issues” (3). Applying Brummett’s theory to the case of Caster Semenya, then, the exploration of her performance at the 2009 World Championships is valuable rhetorically in that it raises important questions about the line audiences draw between male and female athletes and, by extension, expectations of masculinity and femininity—what women should be able to do and what is seen as beyond their ability. Semenya’s body and dress at the 2009 World Championships differentiated her from conventional articulations of femininity and caused her to be recognized as different from her competitors. Her athletic performance seemingly confirmed this difference, and, importantly, further brought her femininity into question by distancing herself from her peers by performing at such a high athletic level.

The ways in which athletes perform athletically in this field, the ways in which they choose to dress, the ways in which they stylize their body—all of these elements are foregrounded by the track field and shape how athletes’ gender deliveries are received. Athletes must adhere to the physical, social, and institutional rules of the field to deliver a gender that is acceptable to fans, and, perhaps more importantly, IAAF officials who have the power to decide who should and should not receive additional sex testing.

Institutional rules, such as those made by the IAAF, shape and govern the physical space of the track itself. To be a viable venue for the 2009 World Championships, the Olympiastadion in Berlin had to meet physical specifications set forth by the IAAF. These requirements stipulated that the track allow for eight running lanes at a width of 1.22 meters per lane (*Competition Rules* 136). Though a seemingly innocuous detail on the surface, the idea that a track used for international competition should have eight lanes is an important one for athletic gender deliveries because it affords a racing format in which multiple athletes compete simultaneously in a shared space. By having athletes compete simultaneously on the same track, the IAAF affords its representatives and viewing audiences a way to compare potentially significant visual characteristics of athletes’ gender deliveries including their bodies, uniforms, athletic

performances, and margins of victory in a manner not available if the athletes competed on the track individually.

Through their emphasis on the body and on athletic gestures, the sociocultural and institutional rules that govern the track as a rhetorical field put a premium on the appearance of athletes' bodies, their dress, and their athletic performance. The following analysis examines elements of Semenya's delivery that challenged conventional definitions of femininity and feminine athleticism. Though athletes do not have control over some of these visual elements (e.g. their race or musculature) they can control some bodily and uniform variables. Female athletes can manipulate these variables to deliver a feminine gender while competing. For example, U.S. sprinting sensation Florence Griffith Joyner, blended extreme talent and athleticism (Her 100m and 200m world records have stood for 26 years.) with an almost hyper feminine gender delivery that included long, flowing hair; exotic running outfits; and long, meticulously manicured and elaborately painted fingernails.

Unlike Joyner, the choices Semenya made regarding variables that she could control were detrimental to her attempt to perform femininity in an acceptable way in the track field. By departing from norms of feminine athletes, Semenya's gender delivery left her open to painful public critique. In what follows, I suggest that intersectional variables such as Semenya's race and nationality combined with others, including her muscularity, hairstyle, uniform, and athletic performance are all important rhetorical aspects of her gender delivery that were highlighted by the track field. These aspects of Semenya's gender delivery, some of which she had control over, created enough tension with feminine conventions to allow questions of Semenya's sex raised by the IAAF to persist. As a result, she was forced to endure incredible scrutiny by the international sporting press, additional sex testing by the IAAF, and a suspension that took nearly a year off her promising professional career.

## **GENDER DELIVERY IN THE TRACK FIELD: CASTER SEMENYA AT THE 2009 IAAF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS**

To understand the significance of Semenya's gender delivery, I compare it to Western definitions of hegemonic femininity valued by officials who make the determination of who should receive more extensive sex testing. I also compare and contrast Semenya's gender delivery to those deliveries made by her fellow competitors. *Hegemonic femininity* is an idealized form of the gender framed around qualities of white, middle-class, heterosexual women that equates being a woman with "being emotional, passive, dependent, maternal, compassionate, and gentle" (Deliovsky 50; Sanger 277; Krane "We Can Be Athletic" 117). Of course, sports have long been gendered as a masculine endeavor since the majority of sports requires competitors to embody or perform aspects commonly associated with hegemonic masculinity. Because sports emphasize qualities commonly gendered masculine, women athletes are put in a particularly difficult predicament of wanting to compete while still maintaining a feminine gender identity. This is commonly referred to as the "female/athlete paradox" (Clasen 38; Ross and Shinew 40). To overcome being masculinized, women athletes in conventionally masculine sports have employed numerous strategies to portray a preferred heterosexual, feminine standard including using makeup within competition, adopting conventionally feminine colors in team uniforms, and even endorsing beauty products or modeling for magazines geared toward men (Krane "We Can Be Athletic" 115-16).

The track as a field consists of multiple elements that shape the way athletes deliver their genders. Perhaps most importantly, the track field of delivery exists within a sociocultural context that has valued a binary system of sex and gender, often conflating the two terms (Wackwitz 554). This ideology stresses that there are two essential sexes, male and female, that are determined by anatomical differences. Each sex has a corresponding gender, either masculine for males or feminine for females, that serves as a social means for differentiating between the two sexes. Each gender has developed as set of social expectations and roles, and these roles have

typically associated qualities such as competitiveness, aggressiveness, and muscularity fostered by sports as masculine. Athletics along with most other sports has long been gendered masculine in that it rewards conventionally masculine qualities including speed, strength, and explosiveness (Krane et al. 315; Messner 200). Such a reward system is at odds with larger cultural definitions of femininity that question women who perform or embody female muscularity (Steinfeldt et al. 543). Because the track has been gendered masculine and draws out conventionally masculine qualities, it is a tenuous spot from which women athletes must perform their respective genders, especially considering that the space monetarily rewards those exceptional athletic performances. As a result, female athletes, especially those who compete in sports like athletics that tend to reward conventionally masculine qualities, are put in a perilous position in terms of their gender delivery. They are required to take on conventionally masculine qualities of speed and muscularity to do well in their sport while trying to counterbalance that aspect of their gender deliveries with enough characteristics of femininity to ensure audiences recognize them as women.

This analysis of Caster Semenya's gender delivery at the 2009 World Championships serves as a cautionary tale of sorts for what could potentially happen when an athlete is perceived to have flouted the gender rules required of female athletes to project a prototypical femininity while competing in a space that prizes conventionally masculine qualities. Caster Semenya's gender delivery flouted these conventions in multiple ways. However, Semenya was not the first female athlete to deliver a gender that flouted social expectations of athletes in a given field. In his examination of Katie Hnida, a female kicker who alleged that she was raped and sexually molested during her time on the University of Colorado football team, Michael Butterworth suggests that the presence of Hnida's body within the masculine domain of the football field constituted a challenge to the masculine institution of football at the University of Colorado (261). In Hnida's case, the presence of her easily identifiable feminine body in a masculine space functioned subversively, challenging social conventions of the football field that dictated that a



woman's place in football is only on the sidelines or in the stands. Unfortunately, though, the alleged rape and molestation Hnida endured also showed the extreme degree some will go to in order to retain masculine power and domination in masculine spaces. Additionally, John Sloop explores the case of another woman who endured retaliation for entering a masculine sporting space in his examination of female stock car racer Deborah Renshaw. When Renshaw started outperforming men in the masculine space of the racetrack, she "contradicted the cultural understandings of the meaning of *that* [female] body in *that* [driver's] seat" (198). As a result, her fellow competitors pooled money together to pay an inspector to examine her car in an attempt to sabotage her, and, following a serious crash in which Renshaw was injured and another driver, Brian Martin, was killed, media invoked gender stereotypes to explain the crash and attribute blame to Renshaw (202). Also, in *Sportsex*, Toby Miller, shows that French tennis sensation Amélie Mauresmo was slandered for being too masculine and playing too manly following the 1999 Australian Open. This slandering of Mauresmo, Miller argues, was rooted both in her extremely powerful, "masculine" playing style and to the fact that she came out during the open (103).

Semenya's bodily presentation and gender delivery functioned differently than Hnida's and Renshaw's but with similar subversive potential. Rather than using a conventionally feminine gender delivery to subvert a conventionally masculine-gendered space, Semenya's body and performance challenged the masculine-feminine gender paradigm as a whole, forcing audiences to reconsider what constitutes "womanhood" or "femininity" in the context of sports. One aspect of Semenya's body that resonated with viewers was her musculature. Many of the early media reports attribute the questioning of Semenya's gender to her muscular physique (e.g. Smith). However, outside of identifying Semenya as muscular, the reports did little to explain what constituted being too muscular to be feminine.

Despite the fact that women have the ability to cultivate a muscular physique, being muscular or showing off one's muscles has long been gendered masculine. This puts many

female track athletes in a no-win position where they must often pick between developing the musculature necessary to keep one's body healthy and perform at optimum levels in competitions or to fit in with hegemonic femininity that dictates the ideal feminine body as lean and slender (Grogan et al. 49-50; Krane et al. 316; Steinfeldt et al. 543). Female athletes, write Krane et al, "face the contradiction that to be successful in athletics they must develop characteristics associated with masculinity (e.g., strength, assertiveness, independence, competitiveness), which contradict hegemonic femininity" (316).

As a group, then, female athletes in many sports already push the borders of hegemonic femininity, and the runners in the 800m displayed the toned powerful muscles one might expect from professional runners. Semenya was one of the larger, more muscular competitors in the race. She started in the lane next to the diminutively framed British runner Jenny Meadows, who stands 5'1" and 100 pounds, and Semenya's closest competition for much of the race was the lean Kenyan Janeth Jepkosgei, who, at 5' 6", was nearly as tall as Semenya, but still yielded about 30 lbs. to her. At 5' 7" and 140 pounds, Semenya was the tallest of the finalists, and she outweighed the second heaviest competitor in the finals by eight pounds, so her physical presence, being the biggest in this group of athletes already on the fringe of the feminine continuum, connotes masculinity. What is more, she was assigned a lane in between two blonde-haired Caucasian runners who more closely resemble hegemonic feminine norms, the aforementioned Jenny Meadows and Ukrainian Yuliya Krevsun. The dramatic difference shown between Semenya and Meadows was striking and juxtaposed the hegemonically feminine athlete in Meadows, with the larger more muscular, black athlete, Semenya. The fact that Semenya dwarfs Meadows and the rest of her competition is a significant aspect of her gender delivery. Because Semenya's body is muscular and fit, lacking conventional curves associated with hegemonic feminine bodies, audiences cannot use her body as a way to validate her femininity and place in the women's race. In fact, just the opposite occurs. Some media accounts use Semenya's size and muscularity as a motive behind questioning her sex (e.g. Smith; Lewis).

Interestingly, very few entertained the idea that Semenya might simply be a strong, muscular woman, despite the fact that women can be muscular. Endocrinologist Bernard Corenblum notes as much, saying, “Whether bulky muscles are viewed as feminine by society, they are perfectly natural” (Mick L1). Though Semenya was the biggest competitor in the 800m race, which can encourage a masculine interpretation of her gender, she was not by any means a giant. In fact, if Semenya is compared to competitors in the 2009 women’s 400-meter final (the next shortest race in track events), she would rank in the middle of the group in terms of both height and weight. Semenya’s size and musculature, though, were instead read as one of multiple questionable variables that supported a masculine interpretation of her gender delivery, a point that is backgrounded in the search for Semenya’s “true” sex. Furthermore, the IAAF rules for the competitive track space, especially its division into multiple running lanes, make visual comparisons between athletes’ raced bodies and performances much easier than in other events such as the high jump or long jump in which athletes take the competitive space one at a time.

If Semenya’s musculature placed her at a disadvantage, her clearly visible race also worked to her detriment on the track. Though one’s race has conventionally been examined as separate from one’s gender, much research suggests that to compartmentalize race and gender and focus on only one is to oversimplify the subject of analysis (e.g. Anderson and McCormack; Cooky et al. “It’s not about the Game”; Hanis-Martin; and Palmer and Masters). Rather, a runner’s gender cannot be understood without the consideration of his or her race as well. The fact that Semenya is a muscular black athlete means she is read differently than if she were white. Hegemonic femininity has long been instituted from the practices of and reserved for white, middle-class, heterosexual women (Cooky et al. 154; Krane et al. 316). In this way, practices of hegemonic femininity are raced white. In her foundational work on intersectionality entitled “Gender, Black Feminism, and the Black Political Economy,” Patricia Hill Collins recognizes the importance of studying intersectional elements together:

As opposed to examining gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation as separate systems of oppression, the construction of intersectionality references how these systems mutually construct one another. Intersectional paradigms suggest that certain ideas and/or practices surface repeatedly across multiple systems of oppression. Serving as focal points for intersecting systems of oppression, these ideas and practices may be central to how gender sexuality, race, class, and nation mutually construct one another.” (47-8)

According to the theory of intersectionality, any interpretation of Semenya's gender delivery at the 2009 IAAF World Championships would be incomplete without asking questions about how Semenya's race contributed to how others interpreted her gender.

Black female athletes come from a particularly difficult social place. As black athletes, both their skin color as well as the athletic performance sets them outside hegemonic definitions of femininity and beauty. This disadvantage is particularly salient for black women showing any type of strength, as noted by Heywood and Dworkin:

[Black women] have long been constructed as standing outside the norms of white, middle-class ideals. Instead, black women's physical fortitude and strength has been linked not to elegance or beauty, but to a 'different' womanhood frequently presented as a desexualized mammy image . . . a strong woman doing arduous labor or as somehow more athletically inclined. Inherent in this particular image of black womanhood, then, lie a number of tensions around assimilation, difference, eroticization, athleticism, independence, morality, winning, femininity, and race. (154)

Because athletics often reward the strength, speed, and power in competitors, female athletes have long faced difficulty in retaining their femininity while embracing those qualities that are conventionally gendered masculine that lead to sports success. Black female athletes, in particular, have long faced unabashed public scrutiny and continue to do so today. And

masculinity is a trope commonly used to degrade or attack the femininity of black women athletes. In her study of the coverage of two famous black athletes from the 1950s, track star Alice Coachman and tennis phenom Althea Gibson, Jennifer H. Lansbury notes that dominant presses framed the strength of black female athletes in terms of masculinity, contrasting it with "ideal" (white) femininity, which needed to be preserved and separated from the "jarring movements required by track events [that] put too much strain on the female anatomy," a belief perpetuated by physical education leaders of the time (235). Because participation in sport ran contrary to dominant discourses of femininity "White America often neglected [Coachman and Gibson] or, perhaps worse, perpetuated the negative stereotype of the black 'mannish' woman, naturally suited to the role of athlete" (235). More recent studies on athletes including Serena Williams and numerous women's college basketball players still suggest that black women athletes are often subjected to masculinized framings as a way to "Other" them and detract from their athletic accomplishments and their preferred gender designations (Cooky et al.; Schultz "Reading the Catsuit").

In their study of African American female athletes, Patricia Vertinsky and Gwendolyn Captain acknowledge that black female athletes are often masculinized through tropes that focus, in part, on their "supposedly 'natural brute strength and endurance inherited from the African origins" (541). As a black athlete from a remote South African community, Caster Semenya was susceptible to this type of masculinization as well. The historical connection of blackness, sport, and masculinity, then, make it extremely difficult for black female athletes to craft a feminine social identity through competition.

Though some black women have been able to toe the thin line between being an exceptional athlete in a masculine-gendered sport and embodying the qualities of hegemonic femininity (Former WNBA star Lisa Leslie comes immediately to mind and, perhaps, Marion Jones before her admission to using performance-enhancing drugs), the case of Caster Semenya shows how difficult this is. The track, as a visually oriented field, puts Semenya's race clearly on

display. Because hegemonic femininity is also raced white, Semenya's highly visible black race served as a potential detriment to her intended feminine gender delivery. As a black woman, Semenya was susceptible to accusations of masculinity to a greater degree than her white counterparts. Semenya was not the only black athlete in the race—Janeth Jepkosgei and Marilyn Okoro were other black athletes who made the final—however, Semenya's muscularity and, as will be argued later, athletic dominance separated her from her competitors including Okoro, who finished last, and the lithe, more conventionally feminine Jepkosgei.

In addition to her race, Semenya's nationality and class also influenced her gender delivery. Being both black and a member of a nation from the Global South, Semenya was doubly disadvantaged when it came to delivering a feminine gender at the 2009 World Championships. Being from a remote South African province, Semenya would have been raised in traditional gendered practices aligned with the Global South. This is significant considering the disparity in definitions of acceptable femininity between Global North and Global South regions. As was shown in the previous chapter, the IAAF rules barely acknowledged issues of sex and gender at all and had no specific definitions of what constituted masculinity or femininity. Because of this lack of a viable definition of femininity, judgments based on athletes' gender deliveries were largely left up to the interpretation of the medical delegate and the IAAF Council. The majority of these council members tasked with administering and interpreting rules of eligibility were from Global North nations and would have subscribed to tenets of hegemonic femininity that equated the ideal femininity as being thin, white, blonde, and blue-eyed (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 98). And grace, elegance, and fragility commonly associated with hegemonic femininity are dissonant with the goals of sports such as track and field. Definitions of acceptable femininity in sports have long been shaped by nations of the Global North and have alienated athletes and audiences from the Global South. This is particularly salient in the differing attitudes the two regions share on gender testing, as noted by Cheryl Cooky, Ranissa Dycus, and Shari L. Dworkin:

Ostensibly for athletes, spectators, and citizens from the Global North, common sense understandings of gender-verification testing posit testing as an objective, scientific process that ensures a level-playing field and thus, 'fairness' in sport competition. For athletes, spectators, and citizens from the Global South, this common sense understanding of the Global North is problematized, given the history of Western scientific knowledge of racial differences to justify and legitimate colonialism, slavery, and the exploitation of colonized peoples. (33)

Though the IAAF Council, which is tasked with implementing sex-testing guidelines, may have assumed its working definitions of femininity to be objective or scientific, such guidelines are biased to feminize women from Westernized, Global North nations who have been exposed to these definitions their entire lives. In admitting Semenya needed to undergo gender-verification testing, IAAF officials imposed their understanding of the relationship between sex and gender onto Semenya with little evidence to suggest they considered South African gender practices or traditions.

Semenya's delivery, on the other hand, was influenced by a lifetime growing up in a rural South African setting in which she likely had limited access to tenets of femininity normalized by nations in the Global North. Her home province, Limpopo, is a relatively isolated part of northern South Africa described in media accounts as "remote," "impoverished," and "the middle of nowhere" ("Caster Semenya's Coach Resigns;" "Athlete Tries To Gloss;" Levy). She was born in Ga-Masehlong, "a poor . . . village with no running water and dirt roads village," "where houses are of mud or concrete, and roofed with thatch or tin" (Magnay 90; Bryson). And she spent her formative years in Fairlie, a village described similarly to Ga-Masehlong as rural and isolated, "built on a remote African plain and accessed by a single dirt road" ("She Wouldn't Wear Dresses"). Semenya's nationality and upbringing, the fact that she grew up in an isolated South African village, limited her exposure to Westernized definitions of feminine gender delivery. Additionally, her time spent in the remote, primarily black villages of Ga-Masehlong and Fairlie

encouraged her to develop a powerful, perhaps even violent femininity. In her study of an impoverished South African school in a black township, Deevia Bhana notes that bigger girls, whom she terms *gladiator girls*, often use violence as a means for obtaining extra food. If violence works in procuring these girls extra food, the practice is more regularly incorporated in their femininity (109). This dissertation does not contend that Semenya was one of Bhana's *gladiator girls*; it does assert, however, that non-hegemonic feminine practices are evident in poor, black South African townships resembling Ga-Masehlong and Fairlie, and that Semenya was likely exposed to such practices as she developed her own femininity.

In addition to Semenya's race and nationality, her hairstyle for the final race was also an important bodily aspect that set her apart from her competitors and from hegemonic feminine standards. Just as Semenya's race and musculature allowed for the invocation of ambiguous or even masculinized interpretations of her gender, her hairstyle also further complicated her gender delivery. Hair has been an important aspect of a person's body that can signify sociocultural difference (Ding 53). Because hair or hairstyles carry with them cultural connotations and meaning, they can serve as an important element of gender delivery, especially in sports such as track and field where competitors usually wear little or no headgear. Importantly for this chapter, hairstyles can also reinforce racial discourses, which are always tied to issues of gender.

At the 2009 World Championships, Semenya wore her hair in a short cornrow style. This was in contrast to her competitors who all featured at least shoulder-length hair. This is significant because both the length and style in which Semenya wore her hair for this event did not fit with hegemonic feminine ideals and reinforced the foregrounding of her race. In fact, some used Semenya's short hair as a factor for justifying the intense gender debate of which Semenya was at the center. For example, Megan O'Toole notes, "Soon after capturing the gold in the women's 800-metre track and field event, Ms. Semenya—who sports short, tightly braided hair, broad shoulders and masculine facial features—became the target of a fierce gender dispute" (A1). O'Toole's inclusion of a description of Semenya's hair along with masculine body



characteristics suggests that her hair was also an aspect of Semenya's gender delivery that could be interpreted as masculine.

Though it would be inaccurate to say that the short, cornrow hairstyle that Semenya wore was an exclusively masculine hairstyle, it is not a stretch to assign it an ambiguous gender status. Though the cornrow style has a feminine tradition that dates back millennia where the style was worn by African women, more recently, cornrows have become associated with many black masculine institutions (Page 37). Originally, the hairstyle was an African marker of femininity that represented agriculture, order, and civility, but the cornrow hairstyle has become recognizable more recently as a style that was adopted by the Black Pride movement in the 1960s (Sherrow 97). And, though not exclusive to these groups, cornrows have more recently become associated with subversive masculine institutions, including gangs and hip hop culture in the U.S. (Boyd 4). In fact, because of their subversive potential and their opposition to conventional Western definitions of beauty, black hairstyles such as cornrows have also been viewed as a challenge to white, middle-class values from which conventional definitions of feminine beauty have been derived (Byrd & Tharps 178). As was established earlier, an important aspect of white middle-class values has become reinforcing a traditional femininity and "othering" many black female athletes. Semenya's hair length and style, then, ran counter to white, middle-class conventions and further distanced her gender delivery from hegemonic feminine qualities. Though not completely in the realm of the masculine, Semenya's short cornrow hairstyle also does not fit completely within the realm of dominant discourses of femininity. Therefore, spectators could not use Semenya's hairstyle to validate her femininity. Semenya's cornrows, which were clearly visible in the track field, delivered ambiguous or perhaps even masculine gender connotations. Both the length and style of Semenya's hair, then, reinforce racial discourses that further masculinize the black female athlete.

Though bodily elements of one's gender delivery are always key aspects to consider, the study of delivery in the track field would be incomplete if it did not also include an assessment of

clothing. Dress has long been a gendered social signifier. The clothes and accessories one wears always have gendered connotations. It is vital, then, to consider how one's clothing or accessories "speak" to an audience conditioned to see gender as either masculine or feminine. In her study of 19<sup>th</sup> century women rhetors, Carol Mattingly notes that "dress 'precedes verbal communication in establishing an individual's gendered identity as well as expectations for other types of behavior' and transmits information not readily translatable into words" (5). Mattingly's observations are as applicable to contemporary periods as they are to the 19<sup>th</sup> century timeframe she examines, and they are particularly relevant to contemporary sports contexts. Of course, a social and institutional goal that governs the track field is that those athletes that enter it are trying to win the event in which they participate, and are looking for any advantage or edge to do so. Part of entering this field with the intent to win has meant adopting a certain type of dress to enhance athletic performance. Though the attire of athletes must be functional, allowing athletes to move comfortably and perform at their peak, sports clothing is also a key aspect of their gender deliveries. The track field requires its participants to find attire that allows them to perform their best. However, this attire has conventionally marked gender in multiple ways. Because of this, these uniforms become important means through which athletes deliver their genders. Many athletes in races 800m and shorter wear tight, spandex uniforms. There are functional benefits to wearing the tight-fitting uniforms. They streamline a runner's figure, improving aerodynamics and stabilize muscles to allow for a more efficient muscle expansion and contraction. This form-fitting material also serves a socially significant purpose, enabling audiences to more accurately draw conclusions about athletes' sex based on the appearance of athletes' genitals in their uniforms. There is a certain biological honesty in tight-fitting uniforms. Louis J. Elsas et al. admit as much, writing, "Modern day sports attire . . . make it unlikely that a man could successfully pose as a woman in elite competition today" (253). The uniforms suggest that there is an inability to conceal anything from the viewing audience.

Because of the longtime masculine connotations of the sport of track events, and short distance events in particular, one of the main ways in which women could retain femininity was to make themselves heterosexual objects of desire. This meant finding ways to achieve institutionally determined goals of the event, to win the race, with social rules that were a part of that field, that a woman must look and act a certain way to be viewed as feminine in the track space. A major way of accomplishing both of these goals was through the adoption of clothing that was tight, so not to increase drag, and sexually suggestive to encourage a heteronormative narrative and comply with the socially constructed rules of hegemonic femininity. In short-distance races, male sprinters will often wear a spandex singlet that features a tank top or form-fitting spandex t-shirt and long spandex shorts, and female sprinters will often wear a sports bra top and short spandex shorts or running briefs. Semenya's competitors at the 2009 IAAF World Championships final all wore similar, two-piece outfits made of tight-fitting spandex material. The competitors wore sports bra tops, which left their abdominals exposed, and one of two styles of bottoms: a spandex running brief, a form-fitting running short resembling the bottom piece of a bikini, or tight-fitting compression shorts with a small (roughly two- or three-inch) inseam. Interestingly, this seemingly standard uniform for female track athletes, the shorts in particular, have received some push back from some female athletes who question the comfort of these uniforms and argue that they may prevent athletes from performing at their top levels. Heptathlete Jessica Zelinka suggests, for example, that the tight, short shorts worn by sprinters and some middle distance runners may have less to do with comfort and more to do with attention, "I'm lean and muscular . . . but I still have issues with wearing butt huggers [short, form-fitting shorts] . . . They're so short they actually go up your butt. I don't want to go over the finish line with a huge wedgie and be thinking about that" (Mick 1.1). That such uniforms not only exist but have become the standard for female runners highlights the fact that creating a heteronormative sex appeal, an aspect of hegemonic femininity, is still strongly connected to delivering a feminine gender in athletics. Such uniforms fit prescriptions of feminine athletic wear designed to reinforce

a heteronormative gender ideology by emphasizing the reception of female athletes as objects of a sexual gaze. Melissa Camacho agrees, noting that “while [contemporary fitness apparel] is theoretically for comfort, much of the sports apparel available today is designed to make a woman appear more sexually appealing while wearing it. Navel-baring sports bras, thongs, and short spandex shorts are designed to accent and highlight a woman’s physique while they are participating in a sporting event” (147).

Semenya’s competitors’ uniforms highlighted their femininity by playing on conventional heteronormative discourses that conflate the female athlete with sexual object. However, Semenya’s uniform resisted this sexualization, differing from her competitors’ uniforms in subtle yet significant ways. The shorts Semenya wore were an interesting and critical aspect of her gender delivery in the final race. Semenya’s shorts were similar to her competitors’ in fabric and fit. Like her competitors, she wore tight-fitting spandex running shorts that hugged her body outlined her midsection, and showed no sign of a phallic signifier, which validated her femaleness on one of the most fundamental levels. Mark Lawson notes as much in his article defending Semenya, writing “Without being too indelicate about this, spandex running shorts and slow-mo HD television pictures show that if Semenya is a man, she is clearly no [British male sprinter and sex symbol] Linford Christie” (32). Though this is not necessarily a ringing endorsement of Semenya’s femininity, Lawson highlights the importance of the tight fit of Semenya’s shorts. By forming so closely to her body, Semenya’s shorts reaffirmed her female sexual identity. Her anatomical outline, so to speak, seemingly validated her presence in the women’s race. Though the fit of Semenya’s shorts seemingly reaffirmed her sexual identity, the length of her shorts called her gender into question. Semenya’s shorts extended down markedly further than any of her competitors, ending roughly five or six inches above her knee. This length was similar to the shorts worn by most male competitors. Though wearing these shorts may have been more comfortable for Semenya or enabled her to perform better, they also violated an important rule, perhaps the golden rule, of hegemonic femininity that stressed the importance of

fostering heterosexual desire. The length of Semenya's shorts put her at odds with the women she competed against who all wore shorts with little or no inseam. Because Semenya rejected the type of shorts worn by those clearly gendered feminine in the track field, and the type of shorts that represented the feminine ideal in a heteronormative gender system, Semenya's gender was called into question. The fact that Semenya snubbed the conventionally feminine short shorts for longer (and perhaps more comfortable) shorts complicated her gender delivery as longer shorts have conventionally been reserved for men. In fact, multiple print media articles critical of Semenya's female sexual identity site her "long," "boyish" shorts as evidence of her masculinity (e.g. Malone).

Semenya's gender delivery was further complicated by differences between the top she wore at the meet and the tops of her competitors. For the 2009 World Championships final, Semenya wore a two-piece tracksuit, which featured a tight-fitting yellow and green sleeveless top that was cropped at sternum level so that it left her abdominals uncovered. Semenya was the only runner not to wear a top that closely resembled a sports bra or tank top with sports-bra-like straps. Like her competitors, her top was cropped at the sternum allowing her diaphragm less resistance, thereby making it easier for her to breathe. But rather than having the thinner straps of a conventional sports bra, Semenya's top had thicker straps and smaller armholes, resembling a cropped, sleeveless t-shirt rather than a sports bra. This subtle difference masculinized Semenya on two levels. First, it distanced her from the rest of the runners in the field who embraced the sports-bra top. Second, Semenya also resisted the strong cultural marker of femininity the sports bra represents. Jaime Schultz notes that though the invention of the commercial sports bra was liberating in that it allowed women to exercise more comfortably, it has "since been invested with new and varied cultural meanings . . . [that] reflect shifts in ideals of femininity, the increasing acceptance of athletic female bodies, and the subsequent sexualization of those bodies" ("Discipline and Push-Up" 186). Female runners' chests often tend to appear small when they are competing because of the compression of the breasts by the sports bra and the fact that elite

female runners tend to have a low percentage of body fat. However, sports bras serve as a way of gendering and sexualizing the runners, objectifying them and reinforcing a heteronormative gender ideology. Despite the fact that Semenya's top probably contained built-in breast support as many female athletic tops do, the fact that Semenya resists the look of the sports bra top could be read as an element of a masculine performance within this particular field. This resistance again marked Semenya as gender ambiguous and, therefore, in need of investigation in the eyes of track officials. Still, though, her sex was questioned. This questioning simultaneously highlights and validates the importance and significance of other field-specific gender markers at play in Semenya's gender delivery. Even though the expression of Semenya's external genitalia through her tight-fitting running shorts seemingly validated her as female, numerous other aspects of her gender delivery suggested ambiguity or even masculinity. Ultimately, these aspects trumped the display of Semenya's mid-section, and she was forced to undergo sex testing.

In addition to the gendered messages communicated by one's body and attire, a runner's athletic performance may also be read by audiences as either masculine or feminine. Semenya's competition for this race was quite steep. Being one of the most important track meets in non-Olympic years, the World Championships of Athletics draws a very competitive group of athletes, and the 2009 event was no different. The final field included Janeth Jepkosgei, the defending World Championships champion and silver medalist in the Beijing Olympics; Jenny Meadows, who would go on to win silver medals in 2010 World Indoor Championships and European Indoor Championships; and Mariya Savinova, who would earn gold at the 2010 World Indoor Championships and 2010 European Championships and beat Semenya to take the gold medal at the 2011 World Championships as well. Despite the deep field for the race, Semenya bested her nearest competitor by nearly two and a half seconds. Semenya's 2.45-second win was nearly six and half times greater than the average margin of victory over the previous five World Championships finals, .382 seconds. It was also over a second faster than her previous best set only three weeks prior. This large improvement was used against Semenya, and multiple sources

linked this marked improvement with masculinity. For example, David Smith writes, "Semanya, who has a muscular build and deep voice, aroused [gender] suspicions recently with a dramatic improvement in performance" (12). By linking Semanya's "dramatic improvement in performance" with conventionally masculine bodily characteristics (her muscular build and deep voice), Smith linked Semanya's marked improvement with masculinity. Because Semanya was able to improve so quickly, Smith argued, she must be suspected of being a man. Such unfounded accusations are detrimental for Semanya, of course, but also for female athletes and athletics as it discounts the idea that female athletes, with hard work and proper training and preparation are capable of significant improvements in time. Even worse, these statements discourage female athletes from performing their best, especially if their best effort is markedly better than their competitors. The track field invests so much meaning and importance in the times athletes run and their margin of victory, and this time can be a significant part of an athlete's gender delivery, especially if that athlete identifies as a woman. Men who perform markedly better than their competition retain their gender, though they may face suspicion of using performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs). As Semanya shows, however, if there is any other reason to question a female athlete's sex, an outstanding performance in the track field can be used to validate such questioning.

Semanya's athletic performance, her substantial margin of victory, was a key aspect of her gender delivery. Though still nearly eight seconds slower than the slowest time in the men's 800m final, her time in the women's 800m final suggested that she was a different caliber of athlete than those women she competed against, and her performance suggests that she was capable of performing in a class by herself. It separated her from the other world-class female athletes. In this way, Semanya's athletic performance reinforced her ambiguous gender delivery, which dissociated her further from the gender category in which she competed. However, spectators could also attribute such a performance to a fierce competitive nature, which would also masculinize Semanya. MacNeill notes that women's sports are different from men's in that

women's sports come from a tradition where women are expected to play sports as methods to uphold feminine values such as gracefulness and are not expected to be aggressive or competitive (qtd. in Camacho 146). Women who have competed in a powerful or aggressive manner without cordiality have long faced negative gender labels (Lansbury 242). Semenya's victory at the 2009 World Championships is a symbol of competitiveness, relentlessness, and aggression. Oftentimes, professional runners (both men and women) slow down as they approach the finish line if they recognize that they have victory well in hand so as not to exhaust their bodies unnecessarily. They realize that they have bested their competitors, and they relax as they cruise to victory. Semenya, however, grew stronger and faster as she approached the finish line, despite the fact that she had no competitor near her. Her unwillingness to relent at the end of the race and accept her victory suggests that she performed "like a man." Even when she could have finished graciously or more "gracefully," pulling up and enjoying the win, she competed against herself, simultaneously embarrassing her competition but also dissociating herself with them with every stride, as her lead grew to an astounding margin. This disidentification is highlighted by the rules that govern the track as a field of delivery. Because the rules have competitors race side-by-side, Semenya's race time was not only markedly better than her competitors, but her performance was visually powerful because of the physical distance she put between herself and the rest of the field.

In addition to the time Semenya posted and the visible gap she was able to create between herself and her competitors, her running form also separated her from the competition and can be examined as an element of gender delivery in this field. Though Semenya's margin of victory dissociated her from her more conventionally feminine competitors, it is not the only aspect of her performance that created a disconnect. One of the most striking aspects of Semenya's victory was the form with which she ran and what that form signified. Generally, middle- or long-distance runners start with a fundamentally sound form that, as they fatigue, breaks down. The runner's head, once still, is now moving and not in line with the runner's spine. There is obvious



tension in the runner's shoulders, or the runner's pelvis is tilted backward rather than in line with the torso, causing the runner to labor more as she strides. Throughout the entire race, though, Semenya seemed extremely relaxed, her stride length was consistent and efficient: her upper body remained quiet, moving little outside of the rhythmic pumping of her arms. Her shoulders remained relaxed; her chin was up, and her eyes were fixed straight ahead. Even in the last 100 meters, as she broke away from the pack, her form still looked very relaxed, despite the fact that her competitors showed signs of fatigue. As her competitors' form began to break down, Semenya's ability to keep her relaxed form and increase her lead set her apart from her competitors. Semenya's ability to both run quickly and sustain this form, her athletic performance, carried masculine rather than feminine connotations.

Finally, actions and reactions directly following a race may be fruitful to understand gendered interpretations of athletes, as men and women have different post-race behavioral expectations. There is a gendered rhetoric of post-competition celebration. Michael Messner notes that while hypermasculine athletic cultures have encouraged male athletes to celebrate their victories with attention-grabbing displays of muscle flexing or trash talking, such displays are atypical of athletes conventionally identified as feminine, who "often develop an 'apologetic' as a strategy for bridging the gap between cultural expectations of femininity and the very unfeminine requisites for athletic excellence" (203). Women and men are expected to behave differently following the race; women are expected to be more subdued while it is acceptable for male athletes to be more boisterous after they run a winning race. This is also an extension of the prescriptive, limiting, and inaccurate trope that "true" women should use sports to stay fit rather than to exercise and develop a competitive spirit. "True" women would accept victory humbly and graciously, rather than celebrate their victories, bodies, or abilities.

Because athletes are often given a moment or two after the race to catch their breath and clear the track as crews and runners prepare for the next event, the track field also provides victors a stage on which they can celebrate. Semenya's competitiveness also comes through

immediately following the race. As she crosses the finish line and begins to catch her breath, she raises her arms in victory and very deliberately flexes her biceps, a display of pride in her physique, which had just dominated the race. Rather than developing an apologetic for her performance, Semenya immediately acknowledges her dominance in the race with this very public show of power that the field affords her in the brief moments following the race. However, by taking advantage of this opportunity to celebrate that the track field offers, Semenya simultaneously flouts feminine gender prescriptions that encourage women to be more subdued and apologetic. Semenya's celebratory actions following her dominating performance are, logically, understandable. She had just won her first major professional race, blistering even her closest competitors. Rhetorically speaking, however, such a post-race celebration further distanced Semenya from conventional feminine standards.

These dynamic elements of Semenya's athletic performance—her ability to run swiftly, her ability to run using an efficient style, and her actions on the track immediately following the race—all added to Semenya's overall gender delivery. Each rivaled conventions of hegemonic femininity that Semenya needed to adhere to in order to be viewed as a woman. Rather, her flouting of these unwritten gender rules that are dictated, to a great extent, by the track field contributed to an interpretation of Semenya, at best, as ambiguously gendered. Semenya's gender-troubling delivery, reaffirmed for the IAAF, its decision to force Semenya to undergo further sex verification.

#### **THE NEXT STEPS FOR A THEORY OF FIELD-SPECIFIC DELIVERY**

The relationship between gender delivery and rhetorical delivery is unquestionably intimate. In Ancient Greece and Rome orators were expected to build deliveries for their arguments first on a performance of hegemonic masculinity valued by audiences. Importantly, however, gender delivery is not only a form of rhetorical delivery but also a foundational factor in the success of professional athletes, as the case of Caster Semenya reveals.

Semenya's case reveals that when examining delivery, one must also consider the field in which the delivery occurs. The field or space in which the performance is given is structured not simply by social contexts but often by institutional rules that dictate how a space should be used and by whom. As the case of Caster Semenya shows, an athlete's failure to understand or acknowledge these affordances and restrictions can cause audiences to question the athlete's eligibility. Semenya's gender delivery was fundamentally affected by the institutionally defined rhetorical space of the professional running track. This space was governed by institutional rules that determined the dimensions of the space and the number of athletes competing simultaneously, side-by-side as well as by social rules that set what is expected of female athletes in this space.

Caster Semenya's gender delivery at the 2009 World Championships is a cautionary tale of what happens when an athlete deviates too far from dominant norms and expectations in a given field. Importantly, however, it also shows the complexity of assessing gender. That is, intersectional elements always play a role in one's delivery of gender. For Semenya, her race and nationality in addition to other bodily, dress, and performative elements were all threads of a gender delivery that, when braided together, caused many to question whether she was really a woman. Similarly, as a black, South African, woman athlete, Semenya's gender delivery was more susceptible to accusations of masculinization. And, her hair, musculature, dress, and athletic performance all included aspects that went against tenets of hegemonic femininity, which insists that being feminine means being passive, maternal, and gentle. The combination of all the aspects of Semenya's athletic and gender delivery that ran contrary to hegemonic standards was enough to reaffirm the IAAF's decision to have her undergo invasive sex verification tests.

Viewing gender delivery through a lens of field specificity is exciting because it gives rhetoricians a more flexible way for tracing the relationship between rhetoric, gender, and location. By acknowledging gender as a form of delivery, rhetoricians have a foundational metalanguage for exploring and explaining why one's gender was accepted or questioned,

effective or ineffective. Moreover, recognizing that gender deliveries are field-specific encourage scholars of rhetoric to view how social and institutional rules and contexts shape how rhetors deliver gender, rather than focusing on gender delivery as an isolated element of rhetoric. Though a field-specific theory of gender delivery can be useful in any situation in which one's gender delivery is deemed significant, the case of Caster Semenya especially validates a field-specific approach when there is little background on the rhetor. Because little background information about Semenya was known at the IAAF World Championships, the importance of her gender delivery was heightened. It was the primary way in which audience would come to know her and develop an opinion on the issue of gender imposture that Semenya battled. The field in which Semenya's gender delivery occurred, though, was one in which successful competitors are often gendered masculine unless compelling bodily, dress, or athletic evidence said otherwise. Because Semenya's delivery in the field was not deemed feminine enough, she continued to be interpreted by many outside of South Africa as gender deviant. Importantly, these interpretations had major professional, financial, and public consequences, consequences whose rhetorical significance can be effectively fleshed out using Kenneth Burke's concept of the scapegoat, as is shown in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**PUTTING SEXUALLY AMBIGUOUS ATHLETES TO THE TEST: SCAPEGOATING**  
**CASTER SEMENYA**

Caster Semenya's nearly 2.5-second victory at the 2009 World Championships stunned much of the athletics world. It also intensified discussions surrounding Semenya's sex begun in earnest by IAAF Council representatives who announced hours before the race that Semenya would be required to undergo sex-testing procedures. U.S. media outlets ran with this story. Some saw it as an opportunity to educate the public on the complexity of sex. The *New York Times*, for example, ran an essay by bioethics and clinical medical humanities professor Alice Dreger, who articulately detailed the ways in which "sex is messy" (1). Others sympathetic to Semenya were critical of the IAAF Council for the timing of its announcement that Semenya would undergo further medical tests and the Council's violation of Semenya's privacy. Judy Berman, for example, writes the following critique of the IAAF Council:

Why, when those who test positively for drugs are often protected from media attention until months after competitions, did the IAAF opt to reveal the altogether more personal testing undergone by Semenya before the results were even known? And when she still had to walk out at the Olympic stadium and compete in the final?

Berman goes on to question the unclear motivations behind the IAAF Council requiring Semenya to undergo extensive sex testing.

Though the above examples suggest some coverage supported Semenya by coming to her defense or through critiquing practices and policies of the IAAF, this chapter focuses on a large number of accounts that were hurtful and critical of Semenya for being different. These stories often insensitively addressed inquiries about Semenya's sex, blatantly questioning whether she was indeed a woman. Headlines such as "Is She really a He? Gender Test for World Champion"

and “She’s the Man?” are indicative of the numerous stories that bluntly ask the question of whether someone who looked and performed as Semenya did could actually be considered a woman. This frank, insensitive approach to Semenya’s sex, while not the exclusive manner of covering her, is surprisingly common in accounts from U.S. media outlets.

Though this sensationalized approach that portrays Semenya as a radical gender impostor or deviant occurs frequently early on in Semenya’s career, sources who devote space to resolving the case upon her clearance and return to athletics use a much more plain, mundane tone. Many of the headlines focusing on her clearance by the IAAF Council lack the creativity or sensationalism shown in the articles that question her femininity. The articles resolving Semenya’s ordeal opt instead for more straightforward titles such as “IAAF Clears Semenya to Return to Athletics” or “Semenya Cleared to Return to Competition.” The majority of these articles simply offer a brief summary of the 11-month process Semenya endured before she was once again allowed to compete as a woman.

In this chapter, I suggest the sensational, attention-grabbing approach to covering the story of Semenya's sex ambiguity serves as a method for rhetorically scapegoating her, dividing her from the greater social collective and symbolically sacrificing her to resolve tension her gender performance creates with binary conventional paradigms. Through their insensitive and forward approach to questioning Semenya’s sex and covering the debacle surrounding the IAAF’s sex verification processes, U.S. media accounts publicly shame and embarrass Semenya, whose controversy represents a threat to the assumed binary sex paradigm present in sports and society. By taking this sensational approach, media foreground Semenya's difference, separating her from the larger social collective. The scapegoating process is made complete through their shaming of Semenya, defaming her for violating prescribed gender paradigms and simultaneously reinforcing the authority of those paradigms in society. As a result, new, perhaps more accurate ways of viewing sex and gender are never discussed, and anyone who may potentially call the

untouchable binary gender paradigm into question, is further alienated from the larger social collective.

This study explores the ways in which rhetorics of gender, sex, sports, and media overlap. Though all media are subject to rhetorical analyses through the exploration of their choices of what topics to include or exclude as well as their ways of discussing them, sports media accounts have been particularly potent ways for managing gender performances, expectations, and roles thanks in part to the misconstrued view of sports as institutions with little sociopolitical impact (Kraft and Brummett 11). Sports media coverage, like any form of media coverage, is always driven by an agenda, and sports media, whether broadcast, print, or online, provide a connection to and interpretation of sports themselves and ideas on gender and ability that they represent (Boyles and Hanes 11).

By focusing on a pair of athletes embroiled in sex controversies, this chapter furthers previous research that has largely examined issues of sex and gender in sports media but has done so primarily through a binary framework. Many studies have consistently revealed inequalities in both quantitative and qualitative factors when comparing coverage of men's and women's sports (Angelini, Billings, and MacArthur; Angelini, MacArthur, and Billings; Berger; Billings; Billings and Angelini; Billings, Angelini, and Duke; Butterworth 2008; Eastman and Billings; Hallmark; Jones et al; and Novak & Billings). Quantitative studies have regularly shown that Olympic coverage, for example, has been heavily gendered to favor male athletes over female athletes (Angelini et al. "What's the Gendered Story"; Billings, Angelini, and Duke 9). Jim Urquhart and Jane Crossman find in their study of the *Globe and Mail's* coverage of Winter Olympics from 1924-1992 that male athletes are written about four times as much as female athletes and photographed three times as much (193). Angelini, MacArthur, and Billings reveal that this bias continues in more contemporary Olympic games. In their analysis of NBC's coverage of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic telecasts, they found that, excluding mixed-gender pair competitions, men received over 60% of the airtime and 15 out of the 20 most-mentioned athletes of the Games

were men (271). Furthermore, sports news programming such as Entertainment and Sports Programming Network's (ESPN) popular Sportscenter and Cable News Network's (CNN) Sports Tonight have also been shown to dedicate roughly only 5% of airtime on average to women's sports, and the limited airtime that did feature women's sports was usually relegated to the less desirable ending portions of each program (Eastman and Billings 200).

In addition to a quantitative difference in treatment in press coverage of male and female athletes, scholarship has documented qualitative differences as well. Men are often presented using more positive descriptors than women in the context of competition. For example, a male competitor is more likely to be framed as having won a competition where a female athlete is more likely to be described as having lost a competition or "choked" (Bissell 173). Female athletes are also often framed less in terms of the sports they play and more often in terms of their roles outside of sporting contexts. Though male athletes are often described solely based on sporting performance (e.g. a "great goalie" or an "able defender"), female athletes are much more often described in terms of familial responsibilities in addition to their athletic skills. Though a woman who plays hockey might be a "fundamentally sound center," she's also much more likely to be referred to in coverage as a "loving mother" or a "dedicated daughter" (Greer, Hardin, and Homan 176). By framing female athletes in terms of poor performance or familial role, media detract from viewing these women as great athletes.

Though a laundry list of studies on the relationship of athletes' genders and sports media have identified multiple disparities between coverage of men and women, considerably less research has examined media accounts of athletes who trouble conventional sex and gender binaries. One exception is Susan Birrell and Cheryl L. Cole's study of the 1970s professional tennis player Renee Richards. Once a highly-ranked amateur tennis player in the men's 35-and-over division named Richard Raskin, Richards underwent a physical sex change in 1975 and sought to compete professionally on the women's tour. Richards was given her chance after a New York Supreme Court decision ruled that forcing Richards to pass a Barr body test, a



chromosome-based sex test, was unfair and discriminatory (2). Richards went on to have a moderately successful career on the women's tour that included reaching the finals of the women's doubles division at the 1977 U.S. Open, one of tennis's four major tournaments. During Richard's quest to join the women's tour, media framed her trial in terms of Richard's human rights and "fairness clearly was defined in terms of Richards, not in terms of the women players who had to accommodate him/her [sic] as one of them" (7). Additionally, media referred to Richards using feminine third person singular pronouns and commonly employed descriptions of physical appearance most common when discussing women athletes (9). In so doing, media propagated a belief that Richards should be considered a transformed woman rather than a man.

More recent articles have begun to study coverage of Caster Semenya. In "'This is Not Natural:' Caster Semenya's Gender Threats," for example, John Sloop uses Semenya as an entry point to study international media coverage and flesh out contemporary attitudes toward sex assignment. He identifies four emergent themes in international media coverage: external genitalia is the most important factor in defining sex; hormone levels are the most important factor of determining sex; a combination of hormone levels and an analysis of external genitalia are important for determining sex; and finally, self-identification is the primary determinant of sex (81-2). Because the first two themes dominate much of the coverage, it becomes apparent that the majority of the mass media texts resist a gender or sex paradigm outside of the classic binary model, though a small movement stressing the importance of letting sex be a personal identification is present.

Additionally, Cheryl Cooky, Ranissa Dycus, and Shari L. Dworkin further explore coverage of Semenya. In "'What Makes a Woman a Woman?' Versus 'Our First Lady of Sport,'" the writers reveal media biases by comparing print news media accounts from the U.S. and South Africa. Most of the sources from the U.S. framed the controversy as one seeking to identify Semenya's "true" sex, focusing on medical discourse to define this complicated concept. In contrast, reports from South African print news media rarely question Semenya's right to

compete as a female, instead framing the issue in terms of Semenya's human rights. Revealing these differences in coverage that are nationally based, the authors both highlight the importance of international media outlets in defining and shaping conversations around sex as well as highlighting the agendas these media outlets possess.

Consistent across many scholarly articles on Semenya is the tendency to isolate her from other athletes embroiled in sex controversies. Both Cooky et al.'s and Sloop's studies focus on the ways in which media from multiple countries portray Caster Semenya, the former focusing on media from the U.S. and South Africa, the latter taking a more international approach. Neither, however, compares the coverage of Semenya to coverage of other sexually ambiguous athletes. A focus on U.S. media coverage of Caster Semenya only tells part of the story of attitudes toward sex-ambiguous athletes, however. Semenya's is a story of an amazing athlete whose sex is questioned but ultimately vindicated by her reinstatement into professional track and field. But how might that compare to an athlete who was not reinstated? To answer this question, this chapter compares U.S. media accounts of Semenya with those of Indian 800m runner Santhi Soundarajan.

Although Semenya has been examined thoroughly not only in this dissertation but also in a number of academic essays (e.g. Cooky, Dycus, and Dworkin; Schultz; Sloop), Santhi Soundarajan has garnered significantly less scholarly attention. Born in the small, rural village of Kathakurichi in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, Soundarajan grew up in a cement hut with her parents, who worked at a local brick kiln, and four siblings ("Sex-test Failure Attempts Suicide"). As a member of a lower caste in the Indian social strata, Soundarajan's talent for running offered her a way out of a life that would most likely include the same backbreaking labor and poverty that had consumed her parents (Shapiro). As Soundarajan honed her craft of middle-distance running, she began winning, and India began to take notice. She set the Indian national record in the 3000-meter (m) steeplechase, and in 2005 won the 800m, 1500m, and 3000m races at a national meet. She also took silver in the 800m at the 2005 Asian Athletics Championships in

Incheon, South Korea (Bhowmick and Thottam). In 2006, Soundarajan repeated the feat she had accomplished a year earlier in Incheon, taking the silver medal in the 800m at the Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, edging out Kazakhstan's Viktoriya Yalovtseva at the finish line by three hundredths of a second. Soundarajan's celebration of her second-place finish was short-lived, however. After her silver-medal-winning performance at the 2006 Games, she was required to submit a urine sample in the presence of a chaperone provided by the meet's organizing body, the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), so she could be screened for performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs). The chaperone reportedly "noticed something unusual" during the sample delivery (Shapiro). Because the chaperone was observing Soundarajan's delivery of a urine sample, this reference to "something unusual" can reasonably be read as a reference to Soundarajan's genitalia. The chaperone reported Soundarajan to race officials, who then required her to submit to more extensive sex testing. Following the gathering of samples for the sex tests, Soundarajan was immediately sent home where she learned by watching the evening news that she had been disqualified from the Asian Games for failing a chromosome-based sex test (Shapiro). Her name would be struck from the record books, and the silver medal she was awarded would instead be awarded to Yalovtseva. Particularly interesting is that Soundarajan's 2006 failed sex test came after she reportedly passed a sex test a year earlier at the Asian Athletics Championships ("Failed Sex Test"). A week and a half after her second-place finish at the Asian Games, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), the organization that selects and oversees Indian athletes for international competitions, announced that it had received word from the OCA that Soundarajan had committed a "Games rule violation" ("Failed Sex Test"). The IOA suggested this violation stemmed from a failed sex test that concluded Soundarajan possessed "abnormal chromosomes" ("We're Not Making This Up"). By many accounts, Soundarajan was shocked and confused by her suspension, and these feelings eventually gave way to depression and a suicide attempt ("India's Sex Test Failure").

Contextualizing U.S. coverage of Semenya by comparing it to that of Soundarajan makes sense for multiple reasons. First, because the incident involving Soundarajan occurred less than three years before the incident involving Semenya, the two are nearly contemporaries. By occurring so closely together and, at the time of this writing, close to the present day, coverage of both can be expected to follow similar conventions and have similar values and expectations to one another and to current trends in sports journalism. Furthermore, exploring the case of Semenya in relation to Soundarajan reveals the ways in which both sides of the sex-testing coin are covered. Semenya, after an examination lasting months, was eventually ruled eligible to return to competition. Soundarajan, after only two weeks, was suspended and never returned to competition. So while both Semenya and Soundarajan experienced scrutiny because of ambiguities in their gender performances, analyzing coverage of both athletes can reveal important similarities or differences in coverage and treatment of athletes based on the outcomes of sex testing.

This chapter examines U.S. media accounts of both Semenya and Soundarajan and suggests that no matter the outcome of an institutionally-managed sex investigation, U.S. media employ multiple methods to rhetorically scapegoat the athlete in question. Though simply having one's sex questioned is enough to be scapegoated, this research also suggests that the methods employed to scapegoat these athletes differed for reasons that can be attributed to the outcomes of the sex tests they endured. That is, Semenya and Soundarajan both were treated as scapegoats but were scapegoated in different manners by U.S. media.

Although one athlete was cleared and the other was banned, U.S. media scapegoat both, symbolically sacrificing them through degradation and loss of social status. In what follows I examine Kenneth Burke's theory of the rhetorical process of scapegoating and illuminate key rhetorical means by which U.S. media did so. Scapegoating these athletes afforded the sports media a method for maintaining a binary sex framework that they and their readers were comfortable with as well as maintaining the status quo for the division of sports' sex categories

and the production of sporting events that these outlets covered. To support this argument, I employ the rhetorical concepts of *frame*, metaphor, and *psogos* to show how U.S. media orient their readers to identify Semenya and Soundarajan as scapegoats, adapt a medical test metaphor to assign agency to these scapegoated figures, and employ *psogos*, an epideictic rhetoric of blame, to sacrifice the scapegoats, cleanse the larger cultural group of its indiscretions, and reaffirm the supremacy of a binary gender ideology. That is, by scapegoating the bodies and performances of Semenya and Soundarajan, U.S. media reify binary sex and gender paradigms and discourage from coming forward any self-identified female competitor not absolutely sure how her body would be interpreted by competitive or medical officials.

#### **WEEDING OUT DIFFERENCE: THE RHETORIC OF SCAPEGOATING**

The concept of the scapegoat is central to the dramatic theories of Kenneth Burke. In *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke posits that humans have a tendency to impart order and judgment on their surroundings, out of which form hierarchies that weigh characteristics on a type of desirable/undesirable continuum (189). Through the hierarchies, people identify with one another, finding their place in a group, or dissociate from one another. As members of a collective struggle to define their place in a hierarchy of social order, they develop guilt and a need to atone for the guilt they have for questioning the social hierarchy, for as Burke notes, "guilt [is] implicit in the nature of order . . . If order, then guilt; if guilt, then need for redemption" ("Dramatism" 15).

Burke suggests that two fundamental processes exist through which humans can redeem themselves or rid themselves of the guilt or discomfort born out of questioning social hierarchies. One method is through *mortification*, the use of oneself to pay penance for guilt. The other, the method most pertinent to this study, is through *scapegoating* another. In scapegoating, one or more group members identify another figure in the group and assign that figure responsibility for causing the development of guilt or tension and to symbolically sacrifice that scapegoat in order to expunge the collective from that source of guilt or tension (*Permanence* xxxviii). This scapegoat is a "sacrificial vessel" upon which the burdens of the group are placed so that once the

scapegoat is gone, the group returns for a period to a peaceful existence within a given social structure until the process repeats itself.

The process of scapegoating can be broken down into three general steps or phases. First, a scapegoat is identified as a member of a given collective. Next, the scapegoat figure must be divided or alienated from the group through an articulation of his or her difference. That is, after identifying a scapegoat, members of the collective must identify why the person is a worthy scapegoat. Finally, once the figure is validated as a worthy scapegoat, he or she must be sacrificed (*Grammar* 406). Though this can mean the literal killing of a scapegoat such as in the case of criminals who receive the death penalty, other methods exist that symbolically sacrifice the scapegoated figure. These can include the loss of social status or public degradation (Foy 96). By sacrificing the scapegoat, the collective eliminates the face of the difference that threatened the prevailing social order.

Scapegoating has proved to be a useful concept in rhetorical scholarship for identifying the ways in which people are discursively victimized or resist victimization. Michael Butterworth and Anna Kimberley Turnage have shined light on the use of the scapegoat figure in stories surrounding sports. Butterworth explores the way the U.S. government and Major League Baseball used baseball star Rafael Palmeiro as a scapegoat and metaphor for “cleaning up the game” and ridding itself of players who used performance-enhancing drugs. In her examination of three Duke lacrosse players on trial for rape, Turnage suggests that an inability to identify a singular scapegoat ultimately prevents substantive change from being made and prevents a community from healing from members’ past indiscretions (149).

Scholarship that examines the rhetorical methods of scapegoating in cases of sexual ambiguity in sports is virtually non-existent, though, as this chapter shows, much needed. Though not previously discussed in these terms, I suggest that U.S. media coverage performs a similar rite of collective cleansing in the way it treats sexually ambiguous athletes. After identifying the scapegoats and culling them from the collective, many U.S. sports media outlets symbolically

sacrifice these athletes to cleanse the sins of the group and thereby strengthen its values. Analyzing the similarities and differences between the ways in which U.S. media scapegoat Semenya and Soundarajan affords scholars the opportunity to examine critically rhetorical practices U.S. media outlets use to scapegoat sexually ambiguous athletes who are cleared, as evidenced by Semenya, and who are damned, as evidenced by Soundarajan. By recognizing these differences, scholars and activists can raise awareness of the implications of unfair treatment of athletes involved in sex controversies and better understand the impact of unfair or unethical coverage of athletes who do not fit neatly into a prescribed gender paradigm. In what follows, I argue the rhetorical concepts of *frame* and *metaphor* can be used to view how the media use and abuse medical discourse to identify and isolate Semenya and Soundarajan.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To locate texts for analysis, this chapter uses a method of data gathering and analysis in line with similar studies of sex-ambiguous athletes and media (e.g. Cooky et al. 2013; Sloop 2012)<sup>4</sup>. For both Semenya and Soundarajan, articles were gathered that covered a one-year span beginning with the emergence of questions regarding the athletes' sexes. For Semenya, the date range was one year from August 15, 2009, which marks the start of qualifying for the women's 800m at the IAAF World Championships. Search results returned 107 articles written for U.S. audiences. For Soundarajan, I began the yearlong search from December 8, 2006, the opening round of the women's 800m races at the 2006 Asian Games, an Olympics-style event held every four years for Asian countries. The search yielded 16 articles, considerably fewer than the 107

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<sup>4</sup> Articles on both Semenya and Soundarajan were compiled using the LexisNexis Academic database. For Semenya, I queried the term "Caster Semenya" filtered by All News Sources (English) between the dates of August 15, 2009 and August 15, 2010. The initial search returned the 997 articles deemed most relevant by search engine algorithms. Next, I sorted the articles by geographic location in which they appeared, keeping print articles, broadcast media transcripts, and weblog entries appearing in U.S. publications and U.S.-based web sites. This left me with 161 articles from which I identified recurrent themes and methods of framing.

The same process was used to gather results for Soundarajan. The dates of the search run from December 8, 2006 to December 8, 2007. Despite the ample range used to collect articles, the search only retrieved 107 total articles, 16 of which were composed for U.S. audiences.

published for U.S. audiences about Semenya. This disparity could be for multiple reasons. At roughly two weeks, the duration of Soundarajan's ordeal was months shorter than Semenya's. Another potential reason for coverage disparity is the athletics events in which they occurred. The controversy surrounding Semenya stems from the IAAF World Championships, a global event in which the U.S. fielded a team of participants and had much interest. Soundarajan's disqualification came at the Asian Games, an event only open to Asian countries and, therefore, precluded the U.S. from competing. Because there was no U.S. contingent in the games, U.S. sports media may have paid less attention to it than the World Championships. Additionally, unlike the IAAF, whose statement acknowledged that it was unsure about Semenya's sex, the OCA's first statement on Soundarajan came after the governing organization had come to a decision on Soundarajan, disqualifying her from competition. Finally, this disparity in article numbers could also be because of a difference in national support. Though Semenya received ardent support from South African politicians, doctors, and public, Soundarajan received virtually no support from Indian medical or political officials and was unable to appeal the OCA's decision and seek reinstatement. Despite this disparity in the quantity of articles, qualitative analyses of these articles reveal unsettling and significant methods of coverage for both athletes and yield numerous similarities and important differences in the rhetorical methods used to scapegoat and blame both sexually ambiguous athletes.

#### **FRAMING AND MEDICAL RHETORIC AS MEANS FOR DIVISION**

In his *Grammar of Motives*, Burke states that there are three general phases in the process of scapegoating. First, there's an original state in which "iniquities are shared by both the iniquitous and their chosen vessel" (406). Next, a *division* occurs in which the scapegoat figure is identified and isolated or divided from the group. In the final stage, the scapegoat, symbolizing the iniquities of the collective, is sacrificed to appease the collective. In the following sections, I suggest that this metaphor can be applied to the ways in which U.S. media covered Caster Semenya and Santhi Soundarajan. By being allowed to participate in international events, both



athletes can be assumed to be part of the larger collective, initially. Thus, they have the potential to be identified as different, divided from the collective, and symbolically sacrificed to purge the collective of guilt or mental discomfort. In this section, I further explore the ways in which the two athletes were identified as scapegoats and the ways in which media divided them from the larger social collective through the use of the concept of *frame*. In the following analysis, I suggest that U.S. media used both Semenya and Soundarajan as scapegoats to uphold a binary sex ideology that can be oppressive and hurtful. To do so, media outlets frame both Semenya and Soundarajan as medically problematic. By framing the athletes as medical anomalies, media divide both from a greater social collective that is comfortable viewing sex and gender in binary terms. After establishing similar techniques of division employed on both Semenya and Soundarajan in this section, the following section explores techniques used to sacrifice the athletes, using the rhetorical lens of *psogos*, rhetorical blaming, to do so.

Crucial to understanding how the U.S. media identified Semenya and Soundarajan as scapegoats and isolated them from the larger collective is understanding the ways in which the media outlets framed the issues of Semenya's and Soundarajan's sex investigations initially. *Framing* is the process of highlighting certain "aspects of a perceived reality and [making] them more salient in a communicating text; in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman 52). Media producers frame stories for their intended audiences as a way to simplify those stories and make use of the limited space of publication or time of its viewership. By foregrounding certain details of a story and backgrounding others, producers shape the way in which an audience consumes a story. In doing so, media outlets exercise their role as gatekeepers, deciding what information is conveyed to their audiences (Angelini et al. "What's the Gendered Story?" 263). Practically speaking, frames are often established through choices made regarding headlines, descriptive word choice, who is interviewed for the study, and what is reported (Birrell and Cole 6). These elements, among others, are considered in the analysis below, and

representative examples are highlighted to reveal “a) what [a source] believes is important, b) what it believes its target audience wants to consume, or c) both” (Angelini et al. “The Nationalistic Revolution” 195).

In the coverage of both cases, media divide Semenya and Soundarajan from the collective by presenting them as medical anomalies, distinctly different from the rest of the collective. By framing Semenya's and Soundarajan's sexual makeup as medically problematic, U.S. media forgo other possible frames, including, for example, framing the athletes as victims of oppressive gender or sex norms or as positive figures whose presence gives institutions like the IAAF an opportunity to examine and revise its definitions of sex and gender as well as articulate its methods for examining these variables. This medical frame used to divide the two scapegoat figures, Semenya and Soundarajan, from the greater collective emphasizes biological or medical issues in which the bodies of both athletes are foregrounded as controversial, and medical sex testing (also referred to in many accounts as gender testing) as the only “objective” way to make sense of them. The data gathered from these tests, the stories go, will reveal whether the athlete passes or fails the tests and place them into one of the two “true” sex categories. Importantly, though, this view of medical discourse as the ultimate source of authority in these cases carries with it its own set of problems (explored in greater detail later in this chapter).

The importance and centrality of medical aspects, especially medical sex-testing procedures and the framing of Semenya and Soundarajan as medical anomalies, occurs early on in the headlines, opening lines, accounts, and interviews in the stories of each athlete. For Soundarajan, many reports frame her case medically through citing her failed medical test results early on. For example, Associated Press writer Sandeep Nakai dedicates his opening line to say that Soundarajan “failed a gender test and was stripped of the medal” (Nakai). Focusing on Soundarajan’s failure of medical sex-testing procedures, her inability to reconcile her own body with the two-sex model employed by sports and sports medicine, marks her as different and causes her to forfeit her medal, a symbol that marks her ability to excel within a culture rooted in

a binary-sex model. The article continues to frame Soundarajan as a medical anomaly by acknowledging that the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has asked its own medical commission to investigate the Olympic Council of Asia's (OCA's) accusations that Soundarajan possesses abnormal chromosomes, meaning she cannot compete as a woman. It concludes by dedicating a few sentences to the conditions that might warrant a sex test, in which medical personnel investigate an athlete's sex, and an acknowledgement from an anonymous source that the presence of "abnormal chromosomes" in Soundarajan's sample ultimately led to her suspension. Other articles follow a similar format, framing medical sex tests as objective harbingers of truth that can ferret out and expose Soundarajan's nonconforming body. In focusing on her biology, the article divides her from the "non-problematic" bodies of the collective who can fit easily into a binary gender system. Another article, for example, begins almost identically noting that "Asian Games silver medalist Santhi Soundarajan of India has failed a sex test and will be stripped of her medal" ("Asian Games Medalist"). Each of these instances centers on an enthymeme that assumes the centrality, importance, and validity of medical testing and discourse and places Soundarajan centrally within that frame. The major, assumed premise of Soundarajan's sex test enthymeme is that sex tests are valid ways to identify a person's sex; the minor premise of the articles is that Soundarajan failed sex tests to validate her femaleness; the conclusion of the enthymeme is that Soundarajan is, therefore, not female and should not be allowed to compete in women's events. Through their framing of Soundarajan's body as medically problematic, media accounts highlight Soundarajan's "otherness," thus separating her from the collective.

In addition to the authority given to medical tests to disqualify Soundarajan, multiple reports on Soundarajan invoke the power of medical authority to justify a frame of Soundarajan's sex as a medical rather than social issue. Two reports in particular use an appeal to medical ethos as an ultimate method of validating a medical view of Soundarajan. After providing a vague, two-sentence history of sex testing, one article quotes the chief doctor of the IOA, Manmohan Singh,

who concedes, “[Soundarajan’s] gender is not female but male” (Giridharadas 1). Though Singh’s responsibility to maintain Soundarajan’s medical privacy is unclear, his admission is particularly powerful from both medical and national perspectives. As an Indian and representative of the IOA, one would think that Singh would be an ally for Soundarajan. As a doctor, though, Singh also represents the institution of medicine and has an ethos of credibility and authority on medical issues. His statement on Soundarajan’s sex is particularly impactful because it is a definite indictment of Soundarajan’s biological ability to conform to a binary sex system, and it comes from a national medical professional who could otherwise be seen as an ally for Soundarajan, since it was his job to tend to medical needs of any Indian athlete. Similarly, a report on the American Broadcasting Company’s (ABC’s) news program *World News Now* also uses medical authority to problematize Soundarajan. It notes that a “team of [medical] experts concluded that she is not biologically a female” (“Google Top”). The report notes that the medical experts’ conclusions were the primary source for assigning Soundarajan a non-female sex. By putting Soundarajan front and center and using medical authority to reaffirm Soundarajan as a sex impostor, U.S. media accounts frame her as an anomaly. As an anomaly, then, Soundarajan has been divided from the larger collective who values and adheres to binary sex and gender ideologies.

Much like coverage of Soundarajan, the frame of medical anomaly is used to highlight Semenya’s perceived sex and gender differences from convention and separates her from the larger collective. Headlines from accounts of Semenya, such as “Sex Test: Man or Woman,” “Semenya must wait in Gender Test Row,” and “Is She a He?; Runner to be Gender-Tested” encapsulate a common trope of medical problematization used to frame Semenya’s body as anomalous and the ability of sex testing and medical professionals to make sense of it. Though the headline “Sex Test; Man or Woman” is brief, it focuses the attention of the reader centrally on the idea that medical sex testing will determine Semenya’s future. The second half of the headline “Man or Woman” reifies a binary sex model by implying that “man” and “woman” are the only

two possible outcomes for the test. Similarly, the second headline, “Semenya must wait in Gender Test Row,” uses the term “Row” to acknowledge the struggle in which Semenya is engaged. Importantly, it uses “Gender Test” (referring to sex testing) as a modifier of “Row” to ensure that readers understand the struggle concerning Semenya’s sex and how that sex is determined through medical (“gender”) tests. The final example, “Is She a He?; Runner to be Gender-Tested,” though somewhat crude, also supports a medical frame, answering the question “Is She a He?” with the response “Runner to be Gender-Tested,” again suggesting that the only way to determine Semenya’s sex is through tests and that the only options for such tests are either female or male, as represented by the pronouns “she” and “he.” Like headlines surrounding Soundarajan, these headlines about Semenya place her firmly in a frame that emphasizes a medical explanation of her and that such an explanation better fits within a binary sex framework. If these tests came back unclear, Semenya, like Soundarajan, would be divided from the group.

In many articles, the foregrounding of Semenya’s body as anomalous or medically problematic is first established in headlines and then reinforced in the reports. For example, a *New York Times* article notes, “Earlier in the day, I.A.A.F. officials had confirmed that Semenya, a muscular 18-year-old from South Africa . . . was undergoing sex-determination testing to confirm her eligibility to race as a woman” (Clarey 13). Similarly, many other articles note that to determine her sex, Semenya will be investigated by a medical panel that includes a gynecologist, endocrinologist, psychologist, internal medicine specialist, and a gender expert (Clarey & Kolata 9; “Gender Controversy;” Vinton; and Nelson). Highlighting the medical panel that is in charge of examining Semenya reinforces viewing Semenya’s body as an anomaly that can be solved and classified by medical means and personnel. The fact that this frame notes that these measures are necessary reaffirms the difference between Semenya’s body and the prototypical or conventional female form, which would never need examination.

Additionally, many of the early reports on Semenya referred to her as being a part of a gender controversy that would only be resolved once she passed the medical test that would

“determine if she is really a woman.” This is significant because it suggests that medical explanations for Semenya’s biological makeup are the definitive, authoritative statements regarding Semenya’s sex (“Is She a He?; Runner to be Gender-Tested”). The importance of the tests are documented by many including Martha Edwards who writes, “The speedy super athlete has to undergo extensive gender verification tests” to determine whether she is a woman (Edwards). Similarly, in a transcript from World News with Charles Gibson, reporter John McKenzie also frames Semenya as a gender anomaly, noting that the tests will reveal her “true” sex, saying, “As for Semenya, results expected soon should help determine whether she is indeed a woman” (“Sex Test; Man or Woman”). Also, Robert Mackey, of the New York Times, serves as another example for this type of frame, writing, “Questions were raised about Ms. Semenya’s gender after her dominating win at the world championships, and the international athletics association conducted a battery of gender tests” (Mackey). Additionally, a report from Good Morning America notes that “[Semenya] was ordered to undergo tests to see if she really is a woman” (“The Running Controversy”). Each of these examples pathologizes Semenya’s sex, simultaneously transforming her into a medical subject and suggesting that medical testing is the only true way to get answers. This framing problematizes the athlete, dividing her from the collective whose members have no difficulty fitting into a two-sex system. Additionally, it invests medical personnel with ultimate authority and fails to consider alternative approaches to the story, including questioning rules or medical definitions, that might take the focus off of the highly visible and politically charged bodies of Semenya and Soundarajan.

This frame of objective medical truth and the medical problematization of Semenya and Soundarajan employed to scapegoat them is troubling for multiple reasons. First, this frame foregrounds the importance of medical procedures and personnel in assigning Semenya and Soundarajan their "correct" sexes. By foregrounding the authority of the medical panel to assign sex, Semenya and Soundarajan are stripped of agency and denied the authority to self-identify and to have that identification be respected. Implicit in forcing Semenya and Soundarajan to

undergo medical sex testing is an accusation that these athletes are unable or unwilling to identify their “true” sex for athletic competition. Either of these options, unable or unwilling, carry with them powerful, negative connotations. If an athlete is unable to identify her sex, it suggests she is culturally disconnected and out of touch with what constitutes *femaleness*, a concept largely assumed to be self-evident. Perhaps even worse is the idea that these athletes are unwilling to identify their sexes, which suggests they are either in denial or trying to deceive athletics authorities and the viewing public. Additionally, the reification of medical sex testing reinforces a binary sex paradigm in which Semenya’s and Soundarajan’s bodies are anomalous and suggests that medical testing is the best way to find each competitor’s sex.

Framing Semenya and Soundarajan as medical anomalies has social implications as well. It orients the problem of sex identification in terms of athletes’ bodies rather than as an issue of shortcomings in sports and social rules, procedures, and guidelines. Though bodies with unconventional sexual configurations are not common, they are not unprecedented by any means. Issues of how to define sex categories in sport and limit who can compete in those categories have been present in modern competitions for the better part of a century dating back to claims of sex imposture surrounding Stella Walsh and Helen Stephens in the 1930s, yet the governing bodies in the cases of both Semenya and Soundarajan struggle to articulate a valid framework justifying a two-sex system or a testing method for sorting athletes. This point is largely left unexamined in U.S. coverage of Semenya and Soundarajan because the athletes, rather than the lack of acceptable policies and methods, are framed as the problem.

Additionally, medically framed U.S. media accounts simplify two complex cases by appealing to medical authority and mitigate the role potential advocates for Semenya and Soundarajan can play. The vast majority of the articles in both cases devote relatively little time or space to discussing the procedures Semenya and Soundarajan underwent for their sex testing. In one of the more thorough accounts, the story alludes to a multidisciplinary approach to sex testing:

[Sex testing] is so complex that to do proper sex determination testing, you have to take a multi-disciplinary approach, and make use of internal medicine specialists, gynecologists, psychologists, geneticists, and endocrinologists.”  
 (“Coach”)

This description gives the reader an idea of the personnel involved and their medical specialty, but it fails to identify how this panel would work together to assign a sex to someone, a significant omission since athletes’ careers potentially depend on these assignments. By not divulging the sex-assignment process, it cannot be challenged or questioned. Similarly, articles on Soundarajan often reference a “chromosomal abnormality” but do not explain how it fits with other elements that might influence a person’s appearance such as hormone levels, genetics, or anatomical makeup (“India’s Sex Test Failure”). That both Soundarajan’s and Semenya’s cases were framed in ways that problematize the athletes while largely assuming the validity of sex-testing procedures is disconcerting. Perhaps most disconcerting about framing Semenya and Soundarajan as anomalous bodies out of which science can make best sense is that media accounts reinforce a rhetoric of medicine that makes testing seem infallible, as though it is the ultimate authority that can provide a conclusive, objective answer to questions of sex. Popularly speaking, medical discourse and members of this discourse community are invested with an almost mystical authority in which opinions and diagnoses from this discourse community are held in such esteem that they are rarely questioned. This is particularly salient in cases of sex determination, as has been noted by Katrina Karkazis in her study of parent-physician interactions about children who present intersex conditions. Karkazis highlights the perceived authority of medical opinion in an interview with a doctor who admits, “Most families follow your advice. It’s hard to argue with the white coat and the authority of physicians in our society” (129). Kane agrees with the cultural power of medical authority, writing, “any set of beliefs that can claim a biological basis is more readily seen as immutable and therefore impervious to challenge” (192). By referencing the biological factors that can influence sex assignment, media accounts



foreground a frame of the athletes as medical problems, suggesting that Semenya and Soundarajan are anomalies that can be solved through testing. Simultaneously, they strip Semenya and Soundarajan of the agency to self-identify commonly given to the majority of athletes (and, for that matter, humans in general). However, by remaining vague in discussions about sex-testing procedures, accounts invoke the credibility that goes along with the idea of a biological bases, but they also prevent readers from critically examining these processes or definitions that could cause readers to have reservations about scapegoating Semenya and Soundarajan.

### **PSOGOS, METAPHOR, AND SYMBOLIC SACRIFICE**

By framing Semenya and Soundarajan as medical anomalies and highlighting their inability to conform to binary medical standards of sex, U.S. media accounts both identify the athletes as scapegoats and divide them from the larger collective. The final phase of the scapegoat mechanism is the ritual of victimage, which mandates that the scapegoat must be sacrificed for the ultimate group cleansing. The eradication of the scapegoat rectifies and resolves the threat the scapegoat represents (Burke *Permanence* 13). Though both Semenya and Soundarajan were divided from the collective through similar means of being framed as medical anomalies, the two encountered different methods of sacrifice based on the outcomes of the sex tests to which each were asked to submit. Because the chromosome-based tests that Soundarajan was asked to submit to allegedly returned atypical results, Soundarajan was left open to media strategies that assigned her responsibility in failing these tests. This assignment of responsibility came despite the fact that there was nothing she could do to change her chromosomal makeup, and there was no evidence she was intentionally impersonating a woman to garner fame and fortune in professional athletics. Rather than recognize that Soundarajan had no agency in the design of her chromosomes, media instead implemented a medically based test metaphor that shamed Soundarajan by assigning her agency in the outcome of the chromosome tests she underwent.

Because she was eventually cleared of wrongdoing, Semenya was not open to the same forms of sacrifice as Soundarajan. Still, because Semenya had been identified as deviant simply because her gender performance varied extensively from acceptable norms, she too had to be sacrificed to purge the collective of those bodies that by their very existence called into question essentialized conceptions of binary sex and gender paradigms. This was done through attacking Semenya's ethos by describing her as hermaphroditic or as some confusing combination of male and female. This shaming continued after Semenya was reinstated through media's implementation of a metaphor of "clearing."

In these situations, the concept of epideictic rhetoric, specifically *psogos*, can be used to illuminate the rhetorical significance of the way media talk about both Semenya and Soundarajan. One of the three branches of rhetoric, as established by Aristotle, epideictic or ceremonial rhetoric is commonly associated with rhetorical events in which someone or something is lauded. Clarke Rountree, for example, notes that when he asks his colleagues for examples of the genre, they cite Pericles's Funeral Oration or Gorgias's encomium on *Helen* (293). Celeste Condit offers more contemporary examples, suggesting that common epideictic events might include commencement addresses, wedding toasts, eulogies, or campaign speeches (288-90). However, such events background a critical element of epideictic discourse as Aristotle envisioned in the fourth century BCE. For Aristotle, epideictic rhetoric was not only concerned with *ainos*, or language of praise, but also with *psogos*, language of blame, censure, or shame (*Rhetoric* 16). Often, however, scholarship fails to include the latter in its examinations.

To recognize a speech or text as epideictic means more than to simply acknowledge it as a token of praise or blame. Rather, it also means understanding that these texts shape definitions of community members and outsiders and establish a set of cultural values:

Definitions of community are often advanced [in epideictic discourse] by contrast with 'others' . . . In giving a speaker the right to shape the definition of the

community, the audience gives the speaker the right to select certain values, stories, and persons . . . and to promote them over others. (Condit 289)

Epidictic discourse, then, is an important aspect of scapegoating. It is used by speakers to create and develop community, and often does so, as Condit mentions, through creating a group of insiders and one or more outsiders that the insiders can contrast themselves against. In fact, Cynthia Miecznikowski Sheard agrees, noting, “epideictic has been seen as a rhetoric of identification and conformity whose function is to confirm and promote adherence to the commonly held values of a community” (766). Though Sheard focuses on epideictic’s function as praise, the other side of the coin must be considered as well. That is, it’s not only identification with some that can strengthen a community or collective. It is also identifying “Others” or outsiders and using blame to symbolically sacrifice them which simultaneously strengthens the bonds of the insider community. In this way, epideictic discourse is a fruitful approach to study the ways in which U.S. media portray both Semenya and Soundarajan.

Media accounts are integral ways in which these definitions and values are molded (Butterfield 96). In studying the way media discourse is epideictic, the way it praises or, in the cases of Semenya and Soundarajan, blames and shames them, media rhetorically shape cultural values and manage the fine line of scapegoating athletes who have never done anything intentionally wrong but have only been accused of having certain biological characteristics rather than others. After creating scapegoats of these sexually ambiguous athletes, media enact the process of sacrificing and in doing so, unify the collective by leaving their sex and gender performances unmarked while shaming Semenya and Soundarajan.

Though Semenya and Soundarajan, by being perceived as being sexually ambiguous, threaten the two-sex model, Soundarajan’s threat is perhaps even more blatant because the chromosome tests to which she submitted allegedly showed she was not a woman, making her a lightning rod in the cultural management of definitions of sex and gender. The fact that Soundarajan had always identified as a female and had lived nearly three decades as a woman,

only to be told that her chromosomes did not correspond with that belief, could have potentially caused a reexamination of the two-sex model that governs so much of sports and society. To discourage this reexamination and ensure the status quo was maintained, Soundarajan had to be sacrificed, painted as a social deviant, cheater, or rule breaker. She had to be scapegoated, to be made different, to prevent people from questioning the fragility of the boundaries of a two-sex system based on essential differences between males and females. To sacrifice Soundarajan, U.S. sports media adapt the use of the medical test metaphor. This metaphor acts as psogos, assigning blame to Soundarajan, making her seem like a liar and cheater. In developing this trope, U.S. media degrade Soundarajan sacrificing her so that the sex and gender ambiguity she represented could be symbolically killed, and binary systems of sex and gender could be maintained. The study of metaphor is foundational to the discipline of rhetoric and has been a key analytical element for studying medical discourse. In her exploration of the rhetorical figures in science, Jeanne Fahnestock calls metaphor “a fundamental mechanism in language and thinking” (4). Burke also notes the power of metaphor in *Language as Symbolic Action*, writing that the nature of the terms or metaphors we use to communicate shapes our observations and interpretations of an event and that “much that we take as observations about ‘reality’ may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms” (46). George Lakoff and Mark Johnson agree in their foundational work on the study of metaphor, arguing that metaphors represent conscious choices in language, and they subconsciously shape our thought processes and actions (3). The metaphors or the terms used to describe an event or encounter shape, limit, and determine our understanding of that event or encounter.

The study of the relationship between metaphor and medicine is particularly important as “metaphor operates lavishly in health and medicine, but it operates . . . somewhat under cover” (Segal 115). One such metaphor that is used so frequently in medicine that it seems nearly transparent is the metaphor of the *test*. For example, doctors often tell patients that, upon gathering a sample of blood, urine, tissue, or other bodily aspect, the medical staff will “run some

tests" on it to determine the next steps in treatment. Though its usage in medical discourse as in the hypothetical situation outlined above makes it seem rather innocuous or insignificant, no term or word choice is objective, and the test metaphor, as is used in media accounts of Soundarajan, carries with it significant connotations.

Conventionally, medical tests refer to procedures performed on a patient or sample provided by a patient to collect information about a specific biological variable or substance. That is, a medical test is "a method of examination, as to determine the presence or absence of a definite disease or of some substance in any of the fluids, tissues, or excretions of the body" ("Test"). Important, if understated in this rather generic definition, is the idea that in medical discourse *test* is used as shorthand for a method or procedure to learn more about one or more measurable criterion in the body. This becomes more apparent when looking at definitions of specific tests. An alkali denaturation test, for example, is a method for "determining the concentration of fetal hemoglobin" ("Alkali Denaturation Test"). It is a method for measuring a biological criterion, fetal hemoglobin. Similarly, a glucose tolerance test is a method for examining a "body's ability to utilize carbohydrates by measuring the plasma glucose level at stated intervals after ingestion or intravenous injection of a large quantity of glucose" ("Glucose Tolerance Test"). The test is a method to measure a criterion, the body's ability to utilize carbohydrates. In medical discourse, then, the test metaphor is largely *criterion-centered*. That is, it is an abbreviated way to refer to the procedure of examining a specific bodily substance, criterion, or aspect.

In the case of Soundarajan, especially, U.S. media perform *metaphor adaptation*, adopting the test metaphor in their discourse but also adapting its meaning in a very slight but significant manner. Instead of isolating and emphasizing one or two aspects (e.g. hemoglobin levels or white blood cell count) of a medical test subject, as is done in the criterion-centered test metaphor, U.S. media often employ a test metaphor that emphasizes the person as a whole, active agent, a metaphor that I refer to as a person-centered test metaphor. The shift from a criterion-

centered test metaphor to a person-centered test metaphor is particularly important because with this shift, media accounts not only implicate the person being tested, but in many cases they also unfairly shift agency and accountability to the athlete in question, something that cannot be done in a criterion-centered test metaphor. A typical example of the use of the person-centered test metaphor can be found in the Philadelphia Daily News's coverage of Soundarajan. Entitled "We're not Making this Up: Indian Runner Fails Gender Test," the article opens with the line, "An Indian runner who won a silver medal in the women's 800 meters at the Asian Games failed a gender test and was stripped of the medal." Unlike the criterion-specific test metaphor that frames results in terms of the specific substance or sample being tested (e.g. chromosome tests, genetic tests, or hormone tests), the person-centered test metaphor assigns agency to the athlete (in this case Soundarajan) as a generalized, whole, embodied entity. Rather than emphasizing an aspect of a person that is being examined, the person-centered test metaphor uses an active voice construction to make it seem as though Soundarajan is actively engaging in a test when in actuality, she is a medical subject, having procedures performed upon her in which medical personnel isolate very specific internal biological variables to assign her a sex. In this case, the adoption of the person-centered test metaphor makes it seem as though Soundarajan took and failed tests designed to determine her femaleness, rather than focusing on the fact that scientists reportedly examined her chromosomes, which were allegedly found to differ from conventional female arrangements.

Shifting this testing paradigm to a person-centered form allows media outlets to increase the immediacy of the story by assigning action to the person being tested. By attributing agency to a whole person, reports create a recognizable figure who bears the responsibility of the outcome of the case. It is easy for readers to react to the idea that Soundarajan failed a sex test. Soundarajan is a living, breathing, whole person. It is considerably more difficult for readers to have the same reaction to reports using a criterion-centered test metaphor that would foreground

her chromosomal makeup, comparing it to conventional patterns, and resist assigning agency to Soundarajan since she has no control over her chromosomal makeup.

The person-centered test metaphor takes on great rhetorical significance because the athlete is assigned a greater agency in the testing process and is therefore open to attacks on her ethos. In the case of Soundarajan, examples of media assigning her the identity of "failure" abound. By being shamed as one who fails these tests, Soundarajan's ethos is severely damaged. By constructing her as a failure, U.S. media imply Soundarajan either did not understand the difference between being male or female or deliberately tried to dupe the public by knowingly and wrongly trying to compete as a woman. For example, one report on Soundarajan opens, "Asian Games silver medalist Santhi Soundarajan of India has failed a sex test and will be stripped of her medal, officials said Monday" ("Asian Games Medalist"). The statement uses a present perfect verb construction "has failed" to acknowledge that testing has been completed while keeping Soundarajan as an active subject, as the one who has actively failed those tests. An explanation using a symptom-centered test metaphor would have identified the variable being tested for and acknowledged discrepancies by framing it in terms of the tested variable. For example, if a chromosomal analysis had been performed and Soundarajan was found to possess atypical chromosomes, as has been alleged, an account might say that chromosomal tests have yielded atypical results. However, the passage above employs a person-centered test metaphor, attributing responsibility to Soundarajan, asserting that Soundarajan has taken a test and failed it. As a result, Soundarajan is implicated as a sex test "failure," despite the fact that one cannot really fail a sex test. One can only be shown to have different characteristics than expected. The identification of Soundarajan as failure is employed in other stories as well as evidenced by titles including, "India's Sex Test Failure Attempts Suicide," "Failed Sex Test a 'Games Rule Violation': OCA," and "Asian Games Medalist from India Fails Sex Test." By portraying Soundarajan as a "sex test failure," media accounts perform a symbolic sacrifice of her, othering

her from the collective by suggesting that Soundarajan tried and failed to conform to the “correct” and “natural” standards of sex.

Though the portrayal of Soundarajan as a sex test failure is the most abundant trope in her scapegoating, it is not the only way in which outlets attack her ethos. Building off the failure trope, one article used the headline, “Caught Playing Lying Game; Runner Ruled Out of Running,” insinuating that Soundarajan's failed sex tests suggest that she lied about being a woman (Ryan SP2). Additionally, another report accused her of deception, writing, “The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) announced she failed a sex test and implied Santhi had deceived the sporting world by competing as a woman when she was a man, effectively ending her career” (“India's Sex Test Failure”). Despite these accusations that attack Soundarajan's ethos by calling her a liar and a deceiver, there is no evidence to suggest that Soundarajan had ever identified as a man nor that she was raised as a boy. Rather, she has always identified as female, making these accusations of lying or deception unfairly critical of Soundarajan. These unfair and unfounded accusations are integral parts in sacrificing Soundarajan. This sacrifice dissociates the collective with the sex ambiguity represented by Soundarajan and reinforces the socially accepted binary model. It further uses Soundarajan as an example of what happens to those who violate expectations in ways that challenge the perceived “natural” sexual order.

Much like Soundarajan's, Semenya's ethos was attacked relentlessly in media accounts, albeit through different methods. Though Soundarajan's situation did not come to light until after the OCA had disqualified her and the IOA said that she had chromosomal abnormalities, reports surrounding Semenya's sex began surfacing as soon as the IAAF acknowledged they had reason to question whether Semenya should be allowed to compete as a woman, months before any resolution to the situation had been made. The symbolic sacrificing of Semenya started immediately with the IAAF's acknowledgement that Semenya would be required to undergo sex-testing procedures. Numerous U.S. headlines plainly question whether Semenya was a man or woman, and some blatantly accuse her of being a man. Examples of such headlines include,



"She's the Man?", "She's a 'man' . . . maybe," "Is She a He? Runner to be Gender-Tested," and "When is a woman more like a man?" Each of these headlines about Caster Semenya is harmful on numerous counts. Each assumes a binary sex framework in which this case must be resolved, but more than that, each shows an extreme insensitivity or aversion to respect Semenya's ability to self-identify, to her privacy, or to her feelings. In questioning her sex or blatantly referring to Semenya as a man, media undermine Semenya. Additionally, other media outlets refer to her as a hermaphrodite, following unconfirmed reports out of Australia that suggest she had some aspects of both male and female genitalia. Headlines such as, "Runner Lady is a Hermaphrodite!" and "Tests Allegedly Reveal Runner Caster Semenya is a Hermaphrodite," employ the term "hermaphrodite" and are either unaware of or indifferent to the medical inaccuracy of the term or the negative connotations associated with it. By employing this term, media not only misdiagnose Semenya, but they use a sensationalistic term that is offensive to many who have divergences from conventional sexual development, thus increasing the severity of sacrificing Semenya by portraying her as a sexual deviant or mutant. What is more, these accusations further damage Semenya's ethos by implying that by entering women's athletics competitions she was lying about her sex to get a competitive advantage. Semenya then is not only a sexual deviant but also a moral deviant as well.

Of course, Semenya's case differs from Soundarajan's because Semenya was eventually reinstated to compete in women's professional athletics once again. The study of coverage of Soundarajan shows that Soundarajan is often framed as actively taking sex tests that she ultimately fails, leaving her ethos vulnerable to the attack by being called a failure and in some cases a cheat. Because Soundarajan is actively framed as failing sex tests, one might expect the media to present Semenya as an active agent who passes her sex tests. However, an analysis of the U.S. coverage of her reinstatement does not bear this out. After the IAAF Council announced she could again compete as a woman, accounts did not congratulate Semenya on passing her gender tests. Rather, most simply acknowledged that she had *been cleared* to return to

competition. For example, headlines such as “Caster Semenya Cleared to Run Following Gender Test,” “Runner Semenya Cleared after Gender Test,” and “Athlete Semenya Cleared to Compete after Gender Test Controversy” read as though Semenya neither won nor passed anything. Rather than being an active subject as Soundarajan was in headlines reporting her failure, in each of the aforementioned headlines, Semenya is the object that has been cleared by an unidentified subject with the power to do so. This strips Semenya of the agency attributed to Soundarajan. When Soundarajan was suspended, it was because *she* failed the tests. When Semenya was reinstated, it was because *others* cleared her, not because she was reported to have passed anything.

Additionally, the media’s selection of *clearing* as a metaphor to describe the resolution of Semenya’s sex testing is an interesting and significant choice. As alluded to above, it affords media outlets the ability to strip Semenya of agency associated with the tests validating her right to compete as a woman. Semenya did not *pass* sex tests; rather, she *was cleared* to once again compete. More than that, though, there is a salient connection between the metaphor of “being cleared” and crime. That is, clearing is perhaps most often used in legal settings to refer to the accused being suspected of but absolved of a crime. In fact, one of the many definitions of the term *cleared* is “to be free from a legal charge or imputation of guilt” (“cleared”). Though being cleared ultimately means that Semenya was “not guilty,” the fact that charges were brought against her for being a sex impostor will permanently harm her ethos and mark her forever as a sexual suspect. Media coverage of the Soundarajan and Semenya cases reinforce the idea that, in cases of sex testing, there are never successes or winners; there are only failures, cheaters, or acquittals. The best possible outcome includes being recognized as a woman whose performance of femininity was so unconventional that medical tests were required to validate her entry into the space of female athletics. That is, even when an athlete is acquitted, it will be difficult to live down the fact that a sex investigation was deemed necessary for her. The fact that evidence exists of a sex investigation in Semenya’s case and a “failed” sex test in Soundarajan’s ensures a severe and lasting sacrifice of these athletes. Such sacrifices can long be held as examples to other

athletes who would position themselves in social spaces where they would publicly undermine binary sex models.

### **THE IMPACT OF SCAPEGOATING & SACRIFICE IN U.S. MEDIA**

Scholarship has demonstrated that scapegoating can be an effective framework for metaphorically cleansing sports of the problem of performance-enhancing drugs (Butterworth). However, relatively little was known about how this framework could be applied to media covering athletes who violated conventional sex and gender norms in sports. This examination of Caster Semenya and Santhi Soundarajan reveals, however, that scapegoating is a common technique employed by many U.S. media outlets to deal with athletes suspected of having differences in sexual development. Perhaps most importantly, this study shows that an athlete does not have to be guilty of breaking rules of sex established by athletic institutions like the IAAF to be scapegoated. Rather, as coverage of Caster Semenya reveals, simply being a figure whose sex is questioned can be enough to warrant scapegoating for transgressing gender conventions and social norms. Though outcomes of the Caster Semenya and Santhi Soundarajan cases were different with the former being cleared to compete as a woman while the latter was banned, both athletes were scapegoated in U.S. media coverage. By framing Semenya and Soundarajan as anomalies in need of medical examination and clarification, U.S. media oriented their readers to the issue of sex testing and defining by suggesting that Semenya and Soundarajan were the problems, identifying them as scapegoats and dividing them from the rest of the social collective rather than using the athletes as an impetus for examining social and athletic rules for defining male and female. To complete the scapegoat formula, Semenya and Soundarajan had to be symbolically sacrificed so that foundational assumptions of sex and gender held by the larger collective were reinforced. For Semenya, in particular, who performed at a world-wide competition, this meant having her sex questioned by the media around the world. U.S. media sources took a sensational approach to the story, openly questioning whether Semenya was male or female and using sensational, inaccurate, and offensive terms such as "hermaphrodite" to

describe her. Even after Semenya was ruled eligible for competition, the metaphor of clearing used to describe the process by which she was made eligible connoted ideas of criminal justice and tarnished her further.

Soundarajan received an even greater amount of symbolic burdening with the ways in which media covered her case. Because she was banned from track and field for "failing" a sex test, Soundarajan represented an even bigger threat to binary sex and gender systems that suggest men and women are essentially and identifiably different. Soundarajan blurred these distinctions, spending years competing as a woman only for the public to be told that she was actually a man. Because she was such a significant threat to binary sex and gender systems, she had to endure a more painful and degrading sacrifice. Media adapted a medical test metaphor from a criterion-based definition, focused only on one aspect of a body or substance, to one that judged the whole-person. When medical tests allegedly revealed Soundarajan had a "chromosomal abnormality" that would make her ineligible to compete, the person-centered metaphor adopted by the media cast Soundarajan as a failure, cheat, and liar.

Obviously, much about the way Semenya and Soundarajan were scapegoated in the U.S. press is more than a little troubling and suggests the need to reflect on journalistic practices. Media will probably always be driven by the number of readers, viewers, or clicks they can generate. However, coverage of Semenya and Soundarajan indicates that many of the sources covering these athletes do not demonstrate an understanding of or care for how to talk about differences in sexual development in ways that are not offensive or hurtful to those figures in the spotlight. Additionally, media coverage of these two athletes also indicates an inability or unwillingness to re-orient stories in ways that examine the discourse of the institutions in power. Far too few articles acknowledged that the process of identifying someone as male or female, man or woman, revolves around social choices rather than medical choices and that methods used to get information and data from which these decisions are made are far from perfect. Ultimately, however, the scapegoating of Semenya and Soundarajan by U.S. media reveals a longstanding

cultural commitment toward binary ideas of sex and gender. By identifying these athletes, dividing them from the greater collective, and sacrificing them, U.S. media “other” them, setting them apart as scapegoats to uphold dominant constructs of sex and gender.

## CHAPTER V

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CASTER SEMENYA?

Despite the controversy early in her career, Caster Semenya has returned to the track and continued a successful career. On July 15, 2010, only nine days after the IAAF allowed her to compete again, Semenya won her first race back at a minor competition in Finland. After winning a second race in Finland, Semenya returned to the same track in Berlin where her sex first became an international story. In a triumphant comeback following her humiliating ordeal, she competed in and won the 800m at the Internationales Stadionfest (ISTAF) (Moore). Her 2011 season, however, was marred by injury. Despite these struggles, Semenya returned to the 2011 World Championships to defend her 800m title. Like in 2009, Semenya found herself at the head of the pack with only 100 meters left to go. The outcome for this race, though, was different as Mariya Savinova caught Semenya from behind to take gold while Semenya settled for silver. Semenya's 2012 season was highlighted by a silver-medal-winning performance at the London Olympics. Though injury has continued to sideline Semenya from important competitions, such as the 2013 IAAF World Championships, Semenya continues to run competitively when able.

Both the 2009 investigation of Semenya and her continued presence in the field of competitive athletics offer promising grounds for future research in rhetorics of sexual ambiguity in sports. In this work, I have employed rhetorical silence, field-specific delivery, and scapegoating as lenses to investigate the management of dichotomous sex models and sexually ambiguous athletes in professional athletics, focusing specifically on the Semenya controversy. Here, I recap my major findings as they pertain to sports and gender, provide relevant updates on Semenya following her 2010 return to competition, and identify future research opportunities. Finally, I speak more generally about the study of rhetorics of sex and how I see works such as this one informing rhetoric, sports, and society.

The purpose of this project has been to draw attention to the myriad ways in which rhetoric, gender, sex, and sports shape and are shaped by each other. In my selection of events surrounding Caster Semenya at the 2009 World Championships, I have used professional athletics as an example of a cultural institution in which administrators, athletes, and observers employ rhetoric to fashion and refashion meanings and expectations regarding sex and gender. I have highlighted the struggle between prescriptive gender rules and expectations for how athletes should look and perform and how some actually do. As the case of Caster Semenya illuminates, sports embrace a binary sex ideology that posits two essential sexes into which all athletes can be placed without incident. Caster Semenya is one of multiple athletes who challenge sports' underlying assumptions about dichotomous sex and gender systems. The case of Caster Semenya, then, is a microcosm for the ways in which bodies and performances are regulated by sports institutions like the IAAF and sports journalism as well as the way some of these bodies resist that regulation.

Rhetorical methods used for the institutional management of sex in athletics include silence, silencing, and definition. By examining the ways institutions such as the IAAF Council select or impose silence, rhetoricians can better understand power dynamics in play between the institution and other entities including athletes or the public. Additionally, the study of definition in sports discourse is key to identifying what institutions value and how those values impact audiences and larger cultural or societal discussions. In Chapter 2, I explored the 2009 IAAF Competition Rules Handbook, the primary source for stating what was acceptable and unacceptable in international athletics competitions, including the World Championships in which Semenya participated. While the handbook drilled down to very minute detail on a number of topics and contained an extensive chapter on athlete eligibility, it said little about sex and gender, opting instead to remain silent on the issue. This silence, I argue, was an important rhetorical expression that allowed the IAAF Council to retain authority and great flexibility in interpreting the data and suggestions on Semenya's eligibility from a medical panel. By choosing

not to specify how terms such as “male” and “female” were defined, how suspect athletes would be tested, and how the results of those tests would be analyzed or interpreted by council members, the IAAF Council reinforced a binary sex ideology that suggested that two sexes were self-evident and obvious. It also required athletes competing in the women’s category to be responsible for balancing conventionally masculine-gendered qualities valued in sports, such as speed, strength, and power, with hegemonic feminine qualities, including passivity, compassion, and gentleness. Furthermore, the IAAF’s silence on these matters discouraged any athlete who might be worried about violating unwritten rules of sex and gender in athletics from coming forward to compete, thereby further silencing potentially subversive athletes.

In addition to their use of silence regarding definitions and processes used to identify and test gender-ambiguous athletes, the 2009 Rules also silenced and subordinated women through their use of the masculine pronoun as universal. The Rules used many singular nouns to refer to different roles or positions at an IAAF-sanctioned event (e.g. athlete, judge, delegate). Whenever using pronouns to refer to these antecedents, the Rules employed the generic masculine pronouns he, him, and his. This practice of using masculine pronouns for potentially masculine or feminine participants reinforced the “man-as-standard” trope that strengthened viewing athletics as a primarily masculine institution and backgrounded potential roles of women within it.

The 2009 Competition Rules revealed ways in which the IAAF Council retained authority and produced tacit consent to a binary gender ideology through its use of rhetorical silence and silencing in a document critical to the production of athletic competitions. However in a 2011 amendment, the IAAF let go of some of the power implicit in the silences within the 2009 Rules. Following the organization’s mishandling of Semenya’s case and the sharp critiques of its lack of transparency regarding issues of sex verification, the IAAF released “IAAF Regulations Governing Eligibility of Females with Hyperandrogenism to Compete in Women’s Competition,” (hereafter shortened to “the Regulations”) a 2011 supplement to its rules handbook that



specifically addresses female athletes who produce a high amount of androgens, a condition that, it is speculated, Semenya possessed.

A cursory examination of the Regulations reveals some improvements over the policies in place in 2009. This document identifies a clearer, three-level testing process that includes a clinical examination, an endocrine assessment using blood and urine samples, and finally, if necessary, a “full examination” performed at an IAAF-accredited center that includes a physical, genetic testing, imaging, and psychological evaluation (IAAF *IAAF Regulations* 10). Additionally, the Regulations stress confidentiality, which was sorely missing in Semenya's case, but they, unfortunately, stop short of articulating any consequences should IAAF representatives breach confidentiality. The Regulations articulate a specific definition of femaleness, stipulating that an athlete is eligible to compete as a woman if her androgen levels are measured below normal male range ( $\leq 10$  nmol/L of serum), or if she can demonstrate an androgen resistance that affords no competitive advantage from elevated levels (12).

Though this update provides some clarity into testing processes as well as insight into how the IAAF defines femaleness, there is still room for improvement. In fact, an entire issue of *The American Journal of Bioethics* debated whether or not the IAAF's new regulations were ethical. In an exemplary article, Katrina Karkazis et al. question the use of testosterone levels to determine whether a woman can compete in the women's division. "The link between athleticism and androgens in general or testosterone in particular," the group writes, "has not been proven. . . . There is no evidence showing that successful athletes have higher testosterone than less successful athletes" (8). The authors further suggest that capping women's testosterone level may be ineffective because it does not take into account that people react to the same level of testosterone differently (8).

Speaking from a rhetorical perspective, the Regulations are rife with future research possibilities. Chief among them is analysis of the institutional power of the IAAF Council following the release of the Regulations. How has this new transparency impacted the authority

of the IAAF Council? Other interesting questions emerge from the rhetorical composition of the Regulations, particularly the definition of an acceptable female athlete as one who has a level of testosterone that is less than the normal male range. Future analyses might consider the significance, for example, of defining acceptable female athletes in terms of male-based standards, an approach that falls in line with conventional sports rhetorics that have naturalized the male figure in the sports arena to the detriment of the female athlete. Framing female athletes in terms of the "normal male range" once again perpetuates the ever-present male athlete as standard, even in women's athletics. Additionally, by defining women as those whose level of testosterone is under the normal male range, the Regulations oversimplify the bodies of female athletes, boiling them down to one ultimate factor, androgen levels, to make a judgment of eligibility. Though the Regulations do take into account bodies with androgen insensitivity, using this variable to distinguish between men and women oversimplifies what is in fact a complex continuum of sexed bodies and reifies a binary sex model. The Regulations mark a shift in the rhetorical methods of the IAAF from choosing silence to more clearly articulating expectations, a shift that merits further exploration.

Texts such as the competition rules and the regulations governing eligibility of females with hyperandrogenism are salient rhetorical artifacts that present the beliefs of the majority of IAAF members and shape the way athletics competitions are displayed. These rules have a direct impact on athletes' delivery of gender in the track and field arena, the focus of Chapter 3. The way one has delivered his or her gender to an audience has long been a foundational aspect of the canon of delivery, dating back to Ancient Greece where conforming to hegemonic masculine standards was an important aspect of an orator's message. Gender delivery has remained an important aspect of rhetoric ever since, especially with the work of gender scholars such as Judith Butler and rhetoricians such as Jack Selzer, Sharon Crowley, and Debra Hawhee who emphasize the importance of the body in rhetoric.

Gender and delivery are still closely related today. A key way in which this has been foregrounded is the development of the fifth canon as context-sensitive (e.g. Buchanan; Mountford). That is, better understanding the context in which a delivery occurs can lead to more in-depth analyses of the role gender plays in the delivery of a message. In Chapter 3, I complicate the concept of context-sensitive delivery by suggesting that in many cases, and especially athletics, one cannot thoroughly analyze a gender delivery without recognizing that it is field-specific and institutionally guided. That is, the institution managing a field regulates and restricts the available means rhetors can access to deliver gender. This field-specific analysis is especially relevant in sports, where the goals and rules of governing institutions restrict or foreground certain elements athletes can employ in their deliveries of gender.

Since many sports are separated into two gender categories, female athletes' gender deliveries are critical to their ability to compete in the women's division. If the way they deliver gender is not consistent with an acceptable feminine gender norms valued by the sport's governing body, they leave themselves open to intense public scrutiny and potential sex testing. Semenya shows that when gender deliveries are read as too masculine, athletes may have to endure months of invasive sex tests before ultimately being cleared or suspended. As individuals competing in a sport that values conventionally masculine qualities such as speed, strength, and power, female athletes have to be cognizant of the way they perform femininity. They must not only recognize the social context in which their performances occur and what audiences within that context value but also recognize the institutional affordances and constraints placed upon the track by the IAAF and how those affordances and constraints shape their available means for delivering gender. Institutionally determined influences on gender delivery within the track field include the goal of winning the race, which constrains one's choice of competition clothing and encourages the athlete to give maximum effort. Additionally, the track is divided into multiple lanes, affording audiences an easy way to compare gender deliveries of athletes in a race and spot outliers immediately. The physical affordances and constraints of the track field foreground

visual characteristics of the athletes' gender deliveries, including their bodies, dress, and athletic performances, while preventing them from engaging audiences orally. Given a field that foregrounds visual aspects of competitors' gender deliveries, Semenya's raced and muscular body, dress, hair, and athletic performance were all critical aspects of her delivery of gender. Semenya's race and musculature violated conventional definitions of hegemonic femininity that privileged being white and being slight. Rather than try to mitigate these two factors through choices that would reinforce her gender delivery as feminine, her uniform, hairstyle, and athletic performance further distanced her from hegemonic femininity and validated the IAAF's mandate for sex testing.

Examining gender delivery as field-specific is beneficial for multiple reasons. First, a field-specific perspective recognizes that gender deliveries take different forms given different fields and different institutional values. The field in which a delivery occurs has embedded within it social and institutional rules and expectations that shape the gender affordances and constraints of those within it. By recognizing the institutionally established affordances and constraints that fields present to rhetors, scholars can better identify available means, evaluate selected strategies given those institutional affordances, and contextualize why some deliveries in a given field are more or less persuasive than others.

Though the third chapter of this dissertation opened the door to exploring field-specific gender delivery, much more research must be done to fully explore the potential of this method. In future, I would like to further explore its potential by comparing Semenya's strategies of gender delivery at the 2009 World Championships with those following her 2010 reinstatement. A cursory glance at photographs of the runner following her return to competition suggests she is more conscious of her limited options and is negotiating them somewhat differently.

Her hair is often no longer in the extremely short cornrow style it was in Berlin; her top often conforms to the sports bra/tankini look most professional women adopt, and her shorts are often noticeably shorter than they were at the 2009 World Championships. Each of these

decisions demonstrates sensitivity to the importance of delivering gender that is more consistent with others in this field and an awareness of the means by which she can do so. Future research might examine how these strategies have impacted her ethos and public reception. In any case, such analysis of Semenya must acknowledge that her performance on the track is not simply athletic but also gendered and that her delivery is informed not only by her choices but also by the institutional rules and constraints of the field.

Semenya's gender deliveries since the 2009 World Championships have become increasingly influenced by the growing body of knowledge audiences can access about the runner. In addition to the uniform and body variables that Semenya has changed, the public's knowledge of her has also evolved during the last five years she has spent in and out of the public eye. Much more is now known about Semenya than was at the 2009 World Championships when she was still a newcomer to the professional ranks. As a result, the social "baggage" that accompanies her to this field now more greatly influences perceptions of her. In May 2014, multiple reports came out declaring Semenya engaged to fellow South African runner Violet Raseboya ("Athletes Semenya to Marry Girlfriend;" "Caster Takes a Wife") Interestingly, these articles also suggest that Semenya's family offered to pay a *lobola*, a dowry conventionally paid to the family of the bride by her future husband for her hand in marriage. Semenya has denied these marriage rumors, but speculation of her sexuality persists ("Semenya Denies Marriage Rumours"). Future research needs to examine the history of the interconnections of lesbianism and athletics and how viewing Semenya as a lesbian complicates or changes audience perceptions of her gender.

In addition to Semenya's changes in dress and hair and speculation about her sexuality, she has also shown a decrease in her performance since her reinstatement. The fastest time she's run since her return ins 1:56.35, nearly a second slower than her time at the 2009 World Championships. Some have attributed Semenya's inability to return to her 2009 form to negotiations between Semenya's counsel and the IAAF that required her to undergo hormone

therapy to keep her testosterone level within the newly established female range (e.g. Squires). Though specific information about Semenya's test results, including her testosterone levels or any conditions negotiated between Semenya and IAAF to allow her to return, have not been revealed, this speculation surrounding the conditions of Semenya's return raise interesting questions about the role of institutions such as the IAAF to police the sexes of its competitors in and outside of the field of competition.

The final lens that is central to this dissertation draws upon Kenneth Burke's conception of scapegoating, a collective process of blaming an individual in an attempt to solidify imperfect but closely guarded belief systems through identifying, culling, and sacrificing those who call such systems into question. In comparing U.S. media accounts of Caster Semenya, who successfully "passed" her sex test to those of suspended runner and sex-test "failure" Santhi Soundarajan, I suggest that the press scapegoated both athletes. That both were scapegoated and symbolically sacrificed suggests that one need not "fail" sex tests but only perform questionable gender in order to incur harsh attacks on one's character. Even though Semenya never "failed" a sex test, the fact that she was even implicated in a sex controversy prompted the media to employ numerous harmful tactics to discredit her ethos and separate her from the greater collective. Through this culling and sacrificing, U.S. media outlets alleviate collective anxiety stemming from the unsettling of the foundational binary sex paradigm by bodies such as Semenya's and Soundarajan's.

Although Semenya was cleared to compete as a woman in 2010, a cursory glance at more contemporary U.S. media accounts suggest that they continue to highlight the early sex investigation and frame her participation in women's athletics as suspicious. Multiple sources, for example, speculate that she intentionally lost the 2012 Olympic 800m final race to avoid an onslaught of negative press regarding her "true" sex that would surely have followed had she won (e.g. Nell Warren; Spring). The presence of these articles suggests that an athlete involved in a sex controversy can never move on. Semenya will likely continue to be framed as a scapegoat in

U.S. accounts for years if not for the rest of her life as a public figure. This continuing suspicion reflects strong cultural anxiety about gender and illustrates the ongoing rhetorical process for sustaining a dichotomous gender paradigm. Semenya has become both a sacrificial victim and a cautionary tale for those in competitive sports, revealing the steep consequences of ambiguous gender delivery. Interestingly, media scapegoating of the athlete is not as apparent in some other countries. In her native South Africa, for example, Semenya is heralded as a national heroine and has been awarded a number of honors. She was chosen as the flag bearer for the 2012 South African Olympic team, a team that also included other inspirational figures such as Oscar Pistorius, the first double amputee to win a medal in an able-bodied competition (“Semenya Named Team SA Flag Bearer”). Tasked with leading a nation’s Olympic contingent during the opening ceremony, the flag bearer is chosen by the Olympic team’s national Olympic committee, often with a vote or input from the athletes on that team. To be voted flag bearer means that those with a say not only recognize the bearer’s athletic potential but also his or her character (“Closing Ceremony”). Additionally, Semenya’s achievements have been recognized in the political sphere as well. In April 2014, she received the Bronze Order of Ikhamanga, awarded by the President of South Africa to South African citizens who make significant contributions in the fields of arts, culture, literature, music, journalism, or sport (“The Order of Ikhamanga”). Despite the international controversy that surrounded Semenya in 2009, these honors suggest that, at least in South Africa, the strength and character displayed by the runner has been publicly recognized and validated. These differing treatments of Semenya in South Africa and the U.S. bring the importance of social context to public perceptions of sex and gender to the fore. Cheryl Cooky, Ranissa Dycus, and Shari L. Dworkin have started to investigate the impact of context and media coverage on accounts of Semenya's sex testing, but opportunity exists to add to this conversation with comparisons of international responses to Semenya after the resolution of her sex tests.

Another exciting prospect for future research in this area would be to consider, in addition to mainstream media, new social technologies and web communication media to

investigate popular attitudes toward sexually ambiguous athletes. In Chapter 4, I use mainstream broadcast, print, and online sources to examine how the U.S. media discussed the cases of Semenya and Soundarajan. As wide-reaching platforms that anyone with internet access can use, social media applications including Facebook and Twitter offer potentially valuable and groundbreaking sites for tracing how the performances of sexually ambiguous athletes impact a public and how members of that public employ rhetorical methods either to scapegoat/sacrifice them or, alternately, question binary paradigms of sex and gender.

In *Disciplining Gender*, John Sloop notes that ideological transition, particularly when it comes to identifying and moving away from the shortcomings of a binary gender ideology, can only occur through non-normative representations of gender and individuals' struggles to interpret them (*Disciplining* 1). Furthermore, Michael Butterworth encourages critique of "the common sense logic that restricts the possibility for rhetorical bodies to escape essentialized conceptions of gender" (270). My rhetorically grounded examination of the 2009 sex interrogation of Caster Semenya answers both Sloop's and Butterworth's calls, focusing closely on an individual who performed gender nonnormatively and in a very public space. In doing so, it has given readers the opportunity to examine binary definitions of sex and gender, the troubling treatment of those who problematize such definitions, and how those definitions need to be altered. Semenya's ambiguous gender delivery represented a controversial alternative to dichotomous standards, and by participating in an international event like the World Championships, she publicly articulated difference I envision this project contributing to discussions in multiple disciplines germane to goals of English studies and beyond. By focusing on the ways in which sports institutions marginalized and othered Semenya, this project shines light on social issues surrounding gender in sports. As was alluded to earlier, though, Semenya has not been the only athlete to have to endure public and hurtful speculation about whether she was male or female. Going forward, I would like to continue in this vein of research, examining rules, deliveries, and interpretations of other sexually ambiguous or suspicious athletes from



different eras. Athletes such as Stella Walsh, Helen Stephens, Heinrich (Dora) Ratjen, Tamara and Irina Press, Ewa Kłobukowska, María José Martínez Patiño, and Pinki Pramanik have interesting stories that, I am confident, could enrich how we understand the history of rhetorical sex and gender management in sport and make us more cognizant of unfair or unethical treatment to which these athletes are subjected.

Additionally, by focusing on the communicative aspects of the ways in which gender is regulated and delivered in sports, this dissertation further validates sports figures, governing bodies, and texts as valuable subjects of research in the discipline of rhetoric. That is, this project has shown that foundational concepts of rhetorical theory including silence, delivery, and scapegoating can be used to illuminate methods in which sports' governing bodies and athletes reinforce or challenge hegemonic gender expectations. Additionally, as my theory of field-specific gender delivery shows, sports texts and athletic performances also have the potential to enable rhetoricians to rethink, problematize, complicate or otherwise develop rhetorical concepts and theories. Such development is an integral part of sustaining a vibrant, healthy, and relevant discipline capable of providing useful analysis of contemporary social issues.

In *English Studies: An Introduction to the Discipline(s)*, Bruce McComiskey calls for a redefinition of the purpose of English studies, defining its goal as the “analysis, critique, and production of discourse in social context” (43). In defining the goals of English studies thusly, McComiskey encourages a model of an English studies department in which sub-disciplines such as linguistics, literary criticism, rhetoric, composition, critical theory, cultural studies, creative writing, and English education “contribute equally important functions toward accomplishing this goal: (43). As a project that integrates elements of linguistics, cultural studies, and rhetoric under a single title, this dissertation serves as support for a future of English studies that prizes multidisciplinary approaches and better enables the sharing of information across the various sub-disciplines housed under the English studies umbrella.

Finally, I would like to conclude with a challenge to other scholars to join me in investigating the connections among sports, rhetoric, and gender. The groundwork for such study is firm, and the topic is bursting with opportunities. I hope that other scholars will be inspired to employ, develop, or challenge ideas asserted here, to enrich our understanding of how definitions of sex and gender are rhetorically created and managed, and to trace the effects of such terms on stakeholders. By identifying the ways in which binary constructs of sex and gender are reinforced in sports, the importance of sports institutions in the rhetorical management of sex and gender becomes evident. Recognizing and illuminating how sports and other cultural institutions propagate a binary sex paradigm in ways that are hurtful, exclusive, and inaccurate is the initial step toward change. More knowledge of the rhetorical constructs that solidify dichotomous sex and gender ideologies and analysis of individuals who break or challenge such systems is needed. Such research has the potential to unsettle established constructs of sex and gender that are too often adopted without question and to transform them into more realistic and inclusive paradigms of difference.

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