6G Anne Osbourne, Syracuse University
“Discourse of Difference: Conflicting Media Coverage of Intersex and Transgender Athletes”

This paper examines media discourse regarding transgender and intersex athletes. As one of the few activities that’s still nearly universally separated by sex identification, sport is an important site to consider how media shape assumptions about the essentialism of gender and sex identity. Bruce Jenner became an American idol, having won the decathlon Olympic gold medal. Forty years later, having undergone male-to-female gender reassignment surgery, Jenner was back on the cover of Sports Illustrated now as Caitlyn Jenner. In the article, she explains, “I was female on the inside.” Similarly, Chris Mosier, the first transgender athlete to appear in ESPN Magazine’s Body Issue, talks about “feeling very comfortable in [his] own skin.” These comments reinforce a gender binary, by underscoring the move from checking one box on the census form to checking the other. What then about athletes such as Caster Semenya, Pinki Pramanik, and Dutee Chand, who do not neatly fit into either box? Dutee Chand recently qualified for the Rio Olympics, having fought to compete as a woman because of her naturally high levels of testosterone. This paper seeks to understand how media discourse surrounding these athletes shapes what it means to be a man or a woman.

6G Andrew C. Billings, University of Alabama; Leigh M. Moscowitz, University of South Carolina; Qingru Xu; University of Alabama & Christopher Edmunds, University of Alabama
“Shaping the Stories: Media Outlet Roles and Responsibilities in the Coming Out of Gay Athletes”

While much focus has been placed on the characterizations of GLBTQ athletes in the media, meager focus has been placed on the media professionals and outlets that make decisions in rendering coming out stories of gay athletes. This presentation focuses on interview data collected from a variety of media entities, including Outsports founders Cyd Zeigler and Jim Buzinski, ESPN Vice President for Storytelling Craig Lazarus, and Sports Illustrated columnist Franz Lidz. Decisions on the framing of stories (focusing on what to select, emphasize, and exclude) are examined along with assessing feeling about advocacy for social change and the degree to which these align (or not) with journalistic practices. Ramifications for sociology, media, and theory will be advanced as well.

6G Catherine Phipps, University of Greenwich
“LGBT+ Inclusion in University-Based Sport: Transgender Issues in Sport”

Sport is argued to be a significant part of university life in the UK; it is often a place where students try new sports for the first time, and is a major way in which students engage with their student unions. However, the sporting experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students (as well as students with other non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities) at higher education institutions in the UK are relatively under-explored, as are the perspectives of student union officers, who often play a role in running university-based sport. Drawing on questionnaire, interview and focus group data with student union officers and LGBT+ students, as well as document analysis of student union equality policies, this paper aims to discuss issues in sport for transgender students particularly. Findings suggest there are several barriers and issues for transgender students in university-based sport, including ‘lad culture’, transphobic ‘banter’, policies which exclude transgender students from competitive sport and a lack of inclusive sports facilities.
The NCAA’s stance on transgender athletes is such that universities should adopt new policies and practices to best provide equal opportunities for all transgender students wishing to compete on a collegiate athletic team. However, there is very little research about transgender athletes in college sport. This case study serves as the voice of one collegiate-athlete who is transitioning from female to male while continuing to be a Division I athlete. The limited research on transgender athletes provide some insight into their experiences before, during and after the athlete came out as transgender (e.g., Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2012; Semerjian & Cohen, 2008). However, these accounts were not given as they were happening, they were reported after the fact. This study followed one transgender athlete through his transition, which included social transition and testosterone therapy and treatment. The participant partook in eight semi-structured interviews spread across nine months. This article discusses two overarching themes (college sport and transition) that emerged from our narrative analysis (Smith & Sparkes, 2009) and touches on many smaller subthemes. The implications of this study will be of interest not only to researchers, but also university administrators, coaches, and teammates of individuals who transition during their collegiate career. The participant’s description of his journey throughout the transitioning process will provide important, in-depth narratives for all to consider moving forward.