TRANSSEXUALITY AND SPORT THE BRAZII IAN CASE OF TIFANNY ABREU*

TRANSEXUALIDAD Y DEPORTE: EL CASO BRASILEÑO DE TIFANNY ABREU

TRANSEXUALIDADE E ESPORTE: O CASO BRASIL FIRO DE TIFANNY ABREU

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ABSTRACT

Problem: Transsexuality and/or sport is a combination that has caused fervent debates in society. In the scientific community, this issue, since it is controversial, and still little explored, presents studies in the ascendancy phase. **Objective:** To describe and to analyze the trajectory of the transsexual athlete Tifanny Abreu in high-performance volleyball and her process of resignification in sport. **Methodology:** Descriptive and qualitative, characterizing a case study, through an interview with a semi-structured script and two reports. **Results:** We find resistances in the revelation, formation, and performance of Tifanny due to heteronormative precepts, discriminatory, and excluding, which ignore queer performativity.

KEYWORDS: Gender, transgender persons, sports, queer studies, heteronormativity.

RESUMEN

Problema: transexualidad y/o deporte es una combinación que ha provocado fervientes debates en la sociedad. En la comunidad científica, este tema, ya que es controvertido y aún poco explorado, presenta estudios en la fase de ascendencia. **Objetivo:** describir y analizar la trayectoria de la atleta transexual Tifanny Abreu en el voleibol de alto rendimiento y su proceso de resignificación en el deporte. **Metodología:** descriptiva y cualitativa, caracterizando un estudio de caso, a través de una entrevista con un guion semiestructurado y dos informes. **Resultados:** encontramos resistencias en la revelación, formación y desempeño de Tifanny debido a preceptos heteronormativos, discriminatorios y excluyentes, que ignoran la performatividad *queer*.

PALABRAS CLAVE: género, personas transgénero, deportes, estudios *queer*, heteronormatividad.

RESUMO

Problema: transexualidade e/ou esporte é uma combinação que vem causando debates fervorosos na sociedade. Na comunidade científica, esta questão apresenta estudos em fase de ascensão, por ser um tema controverso e ainda pouco explorado. **Objetivo:** descrever e analisar a trajetória da atleta transexual Tifanny Abreu no voleibol de alto rendimento e seu processo de ressignificação no esporte. **Metodologia:** descritiva e qualitativa, o que caracteriza um estudo de caso, através de uma entrevista com roteiro semiestruturado e duas reportagens. **Resultados:** encontramos resistências na revelação, formação e atuação de Tifanny devido a preceitos

heteronormativos, discriminatórios e excludentes, que não reconhecem a performatividade queer.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: gênero, pessoas transgênero, esportes, estudos *queer*, heteronormatividade.

INTRODUCTION

Transsexuality and/at Sport¹ is a combination that has been causing fervent debates in society. In the scientific community, this issue, as it is a controversial subject and still little explored (Caudwell, 2015). Presents studies in the ascendancy phase, mainly after the new resolution of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) of 2015, that allows the participation of transgender² person in the suit to which they identify as long as certain requirements are met. The theme isn't new, but it sounds revolutionary because any dissonance in gender binarism isn't visible or tends to disappear from official records (Camargo, 2018).

One of the earliest cases at history is Renée Richards', a US tennis player who came to play in the US Open in 1977, thus becoming the first trans woman in the history of that sport (Camargo, 2018). Her participation was of paramount importance in order to stimulate the debates about the theme, thus contributing to spreading the reflections about the subject (Prado & Nogueira, 2018).

However, only in 2003 is that seven experts gather to develop the Stockholm Consensus, a series of rules for the participation of trans people in sport, among them the requirement for sex reassignment and gonadectomy surgery and the legal recognition of the country of origin of the new gender of the athlete. The IOC adopted such rules already in the following year.

In the following years, important researches (Gooren & Bunck, 2004; Gooren, 2008) was carried out to understand the

¹ Sport is characterized as a phenomenological event in contemporary societies, which is why we spelled it uppercase.

² The term *transgender* is broad and encompasses categories of transsexual identity, of transvestites and of people who move between gender identifications without fixing identities (Caudwell, 2015). For better understanding, in this text we use the prefix *trans* to refer specifically to the condition of transsexuality, which, invariably, is covered by transgenderity.

impact of the hormonal transition on the body of trans athletes. Due to this reality, some examples of trans athletes become notorious in the sports field of action, as the case of the Danish golfer Mianne Bagger (2004), the first trans woman in a professional golf tournament; the American Mixed Martial Arts fighter Fallon Fox (2012), the first trans woman athlete in the history of her sport; and the American triathlon athlete, Chris Mosier (2015), the first trans man athlete to be summoned to a selection of USA team in his modality.

In 2015, Harper (2015) published the most detailed research ever done about the impact of hormonal transition on the athletic performance of trans athletes. In that year, the author and 19 experts met, at the request of the IOC, to discuss the legality of trans participation at Sport, given so new scientific horizons to the theme. At the same year, the IOC published its new recommendations, allowing trans athletes to compete without the need for sex reassignment and/or gonadectomy surgery, being only necessary to attend some hormonal requirements (if trans woman, she must prove her blood testosterone level below than 10 nmol per liter of blood at least 12 months before and during the competition; for trans men there are no restrictions; it is obligatory for both to declare themselves in the current gender for at least four years and to maintain this new identification).

The studies were intensified internationally, with publications by Caudwell (2015), Harper, Betancurt and Martínez (2016), Pitsiladis et al. (2016), Jones, Arcelus, Bouman and Haycraft (2017) and Harper et al. (2018). In Brazil, the discussion has recently been explored by authors such as Wagner Camargo, Thiago Iwamoto, Leandro Brito, Ludmila Mourão, Erik Pereira, Rafael Garcia, Vagner Prado, and Allyson Araújo, all in the socioanthropological field.

In view of the new recommendations adopted by the IOC, the volleyball modality also had its first trans participation in the high yield, in 2016: the libero Alessia Ameri, who played in A2 Serie of the Italian Championship by Hermaea Entu. In 2017, the Brazilian volleyball athlete Tifanny Abreu repeated the feat and stood out as the first trans Brazilian athlete to play in the high performance of the sport, defending the women's team of Golem Volley, participant of A2 Serie of the Italian Championship. Currently, Tifanny defends the female team of SESI/Bauru, in the interior of the Brazilian state of São Paulo (Garcia & Pereira, 2018, 2019a). In Spain, we also have the volleyball athlete Omaira Perdomo, defending the CV CCO 7 Palmas team since 2018.

In Brazil, the Tifanny case has ignited coercive discussions that try to suppress a divergent corporality to the binary and heteronormative model in the Sport (Garcia & Pereira, 2018, 2019a,b). Like other cases studying trans athletes, such as Grespan and Goellner (2014), Brito and Pontes (2015), Coelho, Filho, Luz and Junior (2018), Paes and Moas (2018), Prado and Nogueira (2018), Rezende and Passos (2018), Botelho, Aguiar and Quadrado (2019), Garcia and Pereira (2018, 2019a,b), Silva (2019) and Iwamoto (2019), we can perceive the activation of biomedical discourses to justify the biological inequality between male and female athletes in the field of Sport, and how this difference would be detrimental to this social phenomenon.

In face of the above, we will deal specifically with the insertion of trans corporality in Sport through the materialization of its signs, meanings and symbologies in the volleyball athlete Tifanny Abreu, because she is the first Brazilian to act in the high performance of her modality. Specifically, in this text, we aim to describe and analyze the trajectory of this athlete in high-performance volleyball and her process of resignification in Sport. To guide this goal, it is necessary to ask: what confrontations did the athlete encounter along her Sports route?

We conducted this objective through the Queer Studies (QS) perspective. The QS encompasses problematizing discussions about heterosexuality as the only socio-political-cultural regime, using discursive deconstruction that legitimates only this

model as true and/or possible, thus denouncing how gender is socially regulated through hierarchical relations that confer privilege some to the detriment of others (Sedgwick, 1993; Grespan & Goellner, 2014; Spargo, 2017; Brito, 2018, 2019; Garcia and Pereira, 2019b).

The QS are theoretical areas of analysis and reflection category not necessarily in an area of research. For Spargo (2017), the contribution of QS to empirical investigations is based on three aspects: 1) on the new orientations of social theory that deeply modify and critique the sophisticate Social Sciences, Postcolonial Studies, Decolonial, Cultural Studies and the QS themselves; 2) the historical aspect results in the way in which sexuality and desire shape the formation of the State; and 3) the last section concerns how contemporary uses of new technologies create romantic and sexual relationships and transform their horizons of aspirations into contexts, especially social subalternation.

Investigating the trajectory of trans athletes from the QS is a powerful tool to tension the normalizing processes that promote recognition and legitimacy of body and performance in the competitive spaces in question. As stated by Caudwell (2015), critical involvement with ontologies of sexuality problematizes how certain identity terms enable interventions and transformations of cultures and Sport practices, however, although it promotes this destabilization, it reinforces categories already disposed by heteronormativity by revamping the countless sexualities binary model of sports divisions. As stated by Brito (2018), although we already have a production on the theme in Brazil, the dialogue between QS and the field of sports studies is still incipient and relatively recent in this country.

According to Caudwell (2015), the powerful queer moments in Sport remain unknown in the sociology of the area, being this another factor that leads us to the investigation promoted here, since we also aim to amplify the understanding about the areas of occupation about trans athletic bodies on personal, interpersonal and sociocultural levels.

METHOD

The present research³ is characterized as being descriptive and qualitative (Triviños, 2015), configuring itself as a case study. A qualitative research is characterized by favoring a subjective approach to the world, that is, researchers analyze certain facts in their natural environments of occurrence, seeking to understand how these phenomena present themselves to those involved. Therefore, they must be described in detail, as well as the elements that surround it. The testimony of the social body portrayed, its speech and its meaning are of fundamental importance in the qualitative approach. Specifically, in the case study technique, Stake (1998) states that the case must have clearly defined outlines in the development of the study, and may be similar to others, albeit at the same time distinct, because it has its own unique interest.

As a collection tool, we used an interview with a semi-structured script (Triviños, 2015), containing twelve questions that dealt with childhood, body, physical and sports practices, volleyball insertion, relationship with family, clubs, colleagues, friends and with the fans, referring to Tifanny Abreu.

The interview was conducted through Internet, using video connection through Skype software, and recorded through the Free Video Call Recorder for Skype. In time, we used two reports presented by the Rede Globo program Esporte Espeta-

³ Approved by the "Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa do Hospital Universitário Clementino Fraga Filho (HUCFF/UFRJ)", being the opinion number 2.339.451 and the protocol 245-17, group III. It is worth remembering that a first version of this work has already been published by Garcia and Pereira (2018).

cular⁴ (Esporte Espetacular, 2017, 2018), which dealt with the participation of trans athletes in Sport, more specifically about Tifanny's performance in volleyball.

After the recorded interview and the two reports, all recorded material was transcribed into three diaries (interview, reportage A, and reportage B, respectively) to be analyzed through the technique of content analysis proposed by Bardin (2016). This technique, as the author explains, seeks to describe the subject according to its structure: the symbols used in it, the words used, as well as themes, expressions and phrases, in order to verify their tendencies. This process is divided into pre-analysis, analytical description and referential interpretation.

In the pre-analysis, the researcher selects what will be submitted to the analysis and formulates the hypotheses of the objectives as well as the indicators that support their interpretation; in the analytical description, all the material selected in the previous step is studied thoroughly according to the established hypotheses and in accordance with the theoretical framework to promote the codification, categorization and classification of information; in referential interpretation, the researcher deepens his analysis in order to achieve the most relevant results of the research (Bardin, 2016).

So, we applied it technique in our research this way: at first, we transcribed the interview and the two reports in three different field diaries, in a literal and reliable way. Then, we proceeded to carry out the pre-analysis, rereading each of the diaries and highlighting the excerpts that could signal fruitful discussions in the light of our object of study. After this stage, all the excerpts that were written out were selected and organized in a new document, where they were grouped by proximity for themes, that is, by the possible establishment of an analysis category for this.

⁴ Brazilian sports program of open TV, shown on Sundays and with high ratings.

Finally, after these steps, we carry out our interpretations and dialogue the data with the literature according to our selected theoretical contribution.

This way, we ordered our findings in 4 categories: 1) the trajectory in Sport, 2) identity acknowledgments, 3) queerphobia, and 4) return, performance and repercussion in Brazil. The entire speech, originally conducted in Portuguese, has been fully translated into English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The trajectory in sport

Tifanny always practiced a lot of physical activity. As a child, she reveals that she has always played everything, especially in school physical education classes. Accompanied by her sister, she was always present in football, basketball and other school games without any reprisal:

Tifanny (T): Oh, I've always been a normal kid, so I played everything.

Tifanny still claims to possess a good genetics for the sport, after all she has always been a good player of the modalities that she disputed:

T: I've always had a very good family genetics for the sport, you know? So all the sports that I practiced were good, I played well, but when I felt it wasn't for me, I felt that I was very feminine for that sport, so I ended up going to volleyball, which was where they had more players, understood, more people I could trust. That was when I went to volleyball, with 17 years-old.

In Brazil, there is in the social imaginary the idea that the volleyball is a feminine modality in function of the high number of women who, historically, have acted for the same inside

and outside the courts and influenced this sport's fan, where the presence and engagement of the feminine public is relatively greater when compared to other scenarios (Coelho, 2009; Brito & Pontes, 2015; Brito, 2018, 2019).

Still according to the authors, it is in volleyball that women and gays find possibilities to take root due to new sports sociability. Volleyball acts as the primary antagonist of football: in this, it has become common to highlight exclusions and reprisals to all those who don't demonstrate construction, experience and exacerbation of strong masculinities, which justifies the aforementioned assertion.

In addition, Brazilian volleyball has already presented two cases that had much repercussion in the media involving professional athletes who declared themselves as gays. The first of these was Lilico in 1995, who in 2000 gave interviews stating that he wasn't called to the main national team because he was reportedly gay. The second is Michael, who in 2011 was harassed by the opposing fans during the match of the semifinal of the 2010/2011 edition of Brazilian Super League (Brito & Pontes, 2015).

Tifanny, when she entered volleyball, was discredited by the fact that she was very feminine. She constantly heard that she would not evolve because she was very queer and late in the modality:

T: I started very late, so nobody really believed me, I was very feminine first [laughs] the staff said, 'No, first that you don't go ahead because you are very queer', you know what it's like in Brazil, right? 'First of all, is a queer, besides you are beginning very late'.

Such denials, however, provided strength for Tifanny to continue steadily toward her goal, where she reached the level of professionalism. Along the way, she reveals that some of the athletes who were promises did not even get out of the basic categories, and those who succeeded did not reach the same prestigious step as her own.

Constantly main target on the court between men because of her sexuality, Tifanny had to restrain her feminine side during the games. Although always focused, other stakeholders still prevailed, such as her physical shape and her gender performativity, which dissociated the athlete's gender and sex:

T: So at the beginning I was very feminine playing, so I had to fight it first [...] Nobody is going to give anything to a girl like me, skinny and little girl [laughs].

Brito and Pontes (2015) have already problematized Tifanny's performatization when she was acting among men according to the reproduction of a normative model that extols compulsory heterosexuality. For Caudwell (2015), this process occurs due to the mechanism of generation of sports competitions, which forces all bodies to arbitrarily fit into one of the divisions between male or female, having to mold themselves in the light of the performances inherent to these categories.

In addition with these authors, we understand gender performativity through Butler (2015a). For this author, the genders become performative as they repeat in a stylized way acts, gestures, actions, behaviors, corporalities and body movements crossed by regulating and policing human sexuality discourses, with the intention of producing subjects normalized in masculine and feminine according to a naturalizing and coherent matrix between sex/gender/desire. Butler admits that this process enables iteration, that is, the repetition of the norms presents ruptures in different contexts and conditions, allowing the change of signs, displacement of meanings, normalization and the emergence of new performatizing pluralities (Butler, 2015b).

Still, according to Butler, this notion of gender performativity is supported by the theory of speech acts. In this, the social acts that fall on bodies are divided in two, being: 1) referring to constant statements, those that circumscribe a fact, a situation; and 2) referring to the performatives, those who, when they are recited, (re)produce norms and conventions, reiterate what they announce.

In light of Sedgwick (1993), the performative act would by itself a queer category. Thus, Tifanny's corporality produces and displaces effects of reality through performative utterances that subvert the consensus between the sexes/genders and their performances in and out of the courts through an ontological relation of discursive deconstruction: "At the same time, it's worth keeping in mind that even in deconstruction, more can be said of performative speechacts than that they are ontologically dislinked or introversively non-referential" (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 2).

This foundation allows us to unveil a generalized and generalizing discourse that falls on the bodies, adopting necessarily a position of gender, that is, a body is marked and configured by the concept of gender itself through a larger social order, identified as heteronormativity (Caudwell, 2015; Brito, 2018, 2019; Garcia & Pereira, 2018, 2019a,b).

The concept of heteronormativity refers to the normalization of the social set from the understanding and recognition of heterosexuality as a natural and unique model of sexual orientation that aims to control and regulate social biopolitics through the imposition and supervision of acts, gestures and behaviors, interrelated to a supposed sexual binarism in all social spheres and instances (Warner, 1993; Caudwell, 2015; Brito, 2018, 2019).

In this way, we can affirm that Tifanny's performativity, while acting in the masculine suit, admits dislocations in the senses of the Sport, since it disarticulates signs, symbology and meanings that are expected to the masculine athlete (Brito & Pontes, 2015). Acting in a "feminine" way, in that context, seemed to obscure all the talent and potential of the athlete, who needed to prove, albeit not so incisively, a certain degree of masculinity. The absence, or even secondary participation, of the masculine attributes awakened a lack of ascension in the sports career, which occurs, according to Tamagne (2013), because gay athletes are interpreted as endowed with a tiny, faulty, insufficient virility, which would be the minimum requirements for the universe of Sport.

The heteronormativity circumscribed in the sports field silences and does not recognize bodies that materialize in and/ or from incongruent performativities, thus configuring a challenging movement of resistance by the queer public to the normative structures imposed in this space, recognized as a male exclusive reserve area (Grespan & Goellner, 2014; Caudwell, 2015; Brito & Pontes, 2015; Garcia & Pereira, 2019b). Besides, we can perceive cisnormativy precepts in Sport, as pointed out Vergueiro (2015). The author cites three aspects: 1) the prediscursiveness, which circumscribes in the bodies the biological markers, bypassing them with naturalizing and coherent aspects between sex/gender; 2) the binarity, which establishes by the notion of normality only two genders associated with biological sex, also under a binary optics and; and 3) permanence of the genders, which refers to the maintenance of the identification of gender throughout life, as well as the externalization of only identifiers of that gender, in impassable and immutable borders.

In the midst of this coercitive scenario, Tifanny, in the men's suit, played in the years of 2007 and 2008 for Foz do Iguaçu, where she managed to excel in the Brazilian Superliga. In 2008, she started to play in the league of Portugal and from there she did not stop: in 2009 she moved to Spain, then France in 2010, returned to Portugal, went to Indonesia. In the latter country, however, she was already tired of volleyball. Her greatest desire was to become a woman, which according to her, it was past time:

T: I had to decide a course in my life, that only playing volleyball and living what I was living wasn't right, I already missed a relation-

ship, I missed a love, I missed being myself, so I decided, I came to Belgium and by the time, I would start my transformation right here.

Her transfer to Belgium occurred in 2012, where after falling in love with a player, she began her physical changes. Now definitely recognizing her identity as Tifanny, she worked in the Netherlands, returned to Belgium and remained there until 2016 defending a men's team of the third division that gained access to the second in the local competition. At this point in her life, she claims to have done all the hormonal treatment.

In parallel, the athlete also participated in the European gay tournaments, like EuroGames, and Gay Games. She says she is very well known and considered "the queen" by other gays, but according to her this only happens because she plays well:

T: So, the gay tournaments I have here in Europe, I usually take part in the main gay tournaments [...] I'm already very well known in the gay side, so the volleyball gays here already titled me as queen [...] because I play well. Then they end up seeing me as a queen of them.

At the time of the interview, Tifanny still worked in Belgium among men. When questioned about her willingness to play among women, she was emphatic in saying that at first, she never considered this idea because it was forbidden to her, but when an entrepreneur told her that he could help her in this process, the athlete began to reconsider this possibility:

T: It was something that I did not think of because I did not even know that I could play [...] a businessman said 'Of course you can play with women, because if you want I can help you'.

Tifanny still said she did not worry about the criticisms that might arise. According to her, dealing with criticism is commonplace in her life, in addition, she needs to think about her financial side and career opportunities: **T:** If I can play with women, gain my money, have my life again, I will receive criticism, as I have already received in men, there will be people who don't accept [...]. I go where you're paying me. I'm going to do my work where it's being asked.

The transsexuality in Sport materializes something hitherto unimaginable, that transcends the capacity of understanding the strands that sustain this global phenomenon, hence the numerous attempts to curb this participation (Garcia & Pereira, 2018, 2019a). The performativity of the trans athlete allows the emergence of practices and understandings contrary to the norms of gender, explaining the exclusionary character of binary identities and denying the explanatory precedence of the biomedical order (Caudwell, 2015).

All this symbolic redoubling finally feeds back the discussions about the fertile terrain of volleyball that leads to deterritorialization of sports conventions, the experimentation of alternative corporalities, the displacement of previously unquestioned knowledge, and the broadening of horizons of physical and bodily practices, making this, therefore, a queer movement (Brito, 2018, 2019; Garcia & Pereira, 2018, 2019a,b).

Identity acknowledgments

In this category, Tifanny discusses her process of identity recognition and how were the main findings regarding her sexuality. Thus, she reports that as a child, when attending school and interacting with her colleagues, she began to build her image and desires:

T: Oh, I've always been a girl. Oh, I remember going to school there, I was in love with the girls' hair because I wanted to have the same.

Another desire built from a young age was the dream of being self-sufficient financially, having a home of her own and a

job, so she could live her own corporality, externalizing her trans identity without fear of reprisals:

T (looking at the side, sighing and stammering): Oh, to tell you the truth, I used to dream about winning at the lotteria, moving house, having a sex operation, putting on a breast, to operate the face, my vagina, get home already transformed, because if I have lots of money no one would say anything! [Gesture simulating a kiss on the shoulder with looks of 'disdain'].

Researcher (**R**): In which age these desires started on?

T: With 5 [laughs], since when I know myself as a person [more laughter].

Born on October 29, 1984 in Goiânia, she spent part of her childhood in the small town of Conceição do Araguaia, on the border of Tocantins with Pará, and later moved to Goiânia as a teenager. At this first moment, she recognized herself as a gay male subject. Her gender transition, in her personal imagery field, only occurred on the European continent, starting in 2012, while working professionally in Portuguese volleyball.

However, she reports that only after the manipulation and use of hormonal therapy did this process expand into the physical body, thus marking the birth of her new identity, Tifanny. Nowadays, she is recognized by feminine pronouns, identifies herself and wants to be treated as a transsexual woman, meeting what Bento (2014b) states: the claim of trans people is the social recognition of their human condition.

In the previously highlighted passage, we can see that one of her main concerns would be to counter any comments about her actions involving her sex at birth, which would be possible through the accumulation of money. This thinking may be biased by the character of social vulnerability that many trans people find today and which constitutes a state of precarious citizenship (Bento, 2014a). In this scenario, Sport emerged as a powerful space for transformation and reaffirmation of citizenship and identity, because according to Tifanny, throughout her career in the male suit, she had always been labeled with pejorative adjectives such as "faggot", "queer" and "weird", but when she became a good player, her talent condensed these insults and transmuted them to compliments: she was no longer the queer, the deviant, but the good player:

T: So when you're important in society, people no longer label you so much [...] first I had to overcome the prejudice gay barrier, then overcome the barrier of transsexualism, which was bigger.

It is possible to perceive in her speech that her living/survival in the space in question was always curtailed by her performance, as if she had to compensate something for her supposed "sexual deviance" in the courts. Overcoming homophobia was one of the first steps in a struggle that would still be far from over, and a new fight arose, this time against transphobia.

In her most intimate details, Tifanny reveals to us that although Sport played a crucial role in her transition, it wasn't the most important factor. For her, the principal factor was the social lifestyle. By always attracting herself emotionally and sexually by heterosexual men, she was hardly reciprocated for not being recognized as a woman, which, coupled with her body physiognomy and morphology, gave her severe episodes of depression. Her suffering reached such a point that Tifanny wanted to leave the volleyball courts and look for another professional career, as stated in her speech:

T: [...] I've always fallen in love with straight guys [laughs]. I could not take this life of mine any longer [laughs]. I could not take it any more, every team that I went I always fell in love with straight guys.

Her physical change began to take place in Europe, in 2014, a continent that for Tifanny is more respectful to trans people than Brazil. In her origin country, for example, the amount of micronormatizations and the absence of a law that definitively solves the existential precariousness of trans people are frightening (Bento, 2014a). Even in the old continent, she had a certain fear of confronting possibly violent conduct in the streets, but a strategy used to minimize the chances of these occurrences was always to be accompanied by her teammates and rely on their support, which gave her enthusiasm and courage to let the hair grow and put her first hair extension:

R: [...] when did you start playing with hair, with breast...

T: Yeah, it was a very big reaction, because I accepted and did not accept me at the same time, I was afraid of what the people would think. At first I had it, because when you're starting it's going to be 'oh, what the people are going to talk about me in the street, they're going to throw me a stone, they will not accept, they'll spit on me', all those things... 'there in volleyball, what will they say?'. **R:** In Europe?

T: In Europe, this in the Netherlands [...]. So I said it, it was going, it was gradually, it was when I let my hair grow bigger, I put my first extension.

It is noticed that the relationship with the members of the team, as well as the support granted by them, operated as an element of protection and encouragement to Tifanny. Although the interlocution with her co-workers did not change, her physical performance changed radically as a result of hormonal therapy: according to her testimony, she lost lean mass, impulsion, explosive strength and aerobic resistance, also becoming more tired, retaining more liquid and accumulating more fat. These modifications are, in fact, expected in trans athletes, as pointed out in Harper (2015), Harper et al. (2016) and Pitsiladis et al. (2016) studies. Another aspect that altered these variables was, according to Tifanny, her age.

R: Physiologically, can you see change in your strength, in your potency...?

T: Oh, my coach stays all the time: "Tifanny, go to the gym, go to work for you to jump like you jumped before, attack like you attacked before", first that I'm too old [laughs] second that I'm full of hormone for everything that is side of the body, how I'm going to jump? [laughs].

After a breast augmentation surgery, she suffered many aches and had to adjust herself to the new body to remain firm in her personal and sporting trajectory. In this course, she does not recognize yourself as a queer person or a queer athlete, but rather as a transsexual woman. Therefore, in an immediate exercise of understanding, it seems that we would be attributing this identification to our interpretations, but in order to avoid this misunderstanding, we would like to problematize the device of transsexuality, as Bento (2014b) proposes: discussing about these thematic issues. Although Tifanny does not adopt this position or does not know it, her corporality both outside and inside the courts, or even her own personal trajectory of identification, confers statements contrary to the heteronormativity, since transsexuality is doubly contemplated by the queer condition of being expressed.

Therefore, it is our last aspiration to qualify Tifanny as queer, but to amplify the readings and analyzes that can be glimpsed of this des/identity in the sports space. It is in this sense that we postulate our discussions and inferences, using a poststructuralist contribution to understand the countless ways of expressing gender, sexuality and bodies in performance without necessarily limiting them (Butler, 2015a,b).

Queerfobia

In agreement with the QS (Sedgwick, 1993; Spargo, 2017), we prefer to adopt the term "queerphobia" (Garcia & Pereira, 2019a,b) to designate all the recriminatory, discriminatory and

ridiculous actions that are directed to queer people, that is, nonheterosexual, being or not the gay, the lesbian, the bisexual or the trans people, without delimiting or identifying new categories of identification. In this session, all the phobias related to the expression and performativity of the genders and sexualities, such as homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia are included, at the same time not including any of them. This is, finally, a queer methodological decision.

Tifanny claims to have never suffered any aggression of any kind while in Europe. She says people, including children, are super-respectful and always treat her like a woman in and off the court:

T: Is it a children's education that I don't know from where it came from. The children here respect you as you are.

The athlete mentions that after the matches there are always jokes among the athletes of the teams, but none of them are queerphobic. Tifanny still manifests about three cases already mentioned that led headlines about the theme: Lilico, Alessia and Michael.

She is incisive when commenting about the cut of the Brazilian team suffered by Lilico:

T: It was a very sad thing, that the Lilico really was cut of the team for being gay.

For her, the fact that the athlete was declared gay compromised the way he was seen, which would give him the label of

T: The player Lilico, from Brazil, gay... They will always put the part of gay that is to be able to define the person as gay. And I don't think it necessary. So that's why the team cut out.

The same thought extends to the case of the trans woman player Alessia and the complaints that are manifested due to her participation:

T: I see a lot of people talking badly about Alessia because she's playing.

In the Michael's case, Tifanny says that the athlete should not have listened to the fans, because the role of them was to destabilize him. For her, it is common for gays to listen to curses from the bleachers in Brazil, but this is an attempt to destabilize the player:

T: Every game we go we listen jokes, and Michael, while he's playing, the crowd says what she wants... to cheer is one thing and to be professional is another. And being a fan is another. Because this happens all games.

Studies that focus on homophobia in Sport often explore how it is triggered through modalities both within the field/ squad and in the crowd as well as outside. Anderson (2005) affirms that homophobia is institutionalized in Sport because of the discourses that have been established to construct it, that is, based on the strong masculinity model that privileges the participation of "men with a capital H". In this imaginary, masculine homosexuality would direct to the gay athletes physical and emotional disqualifications, culminating in the desertification of remaining and belonging in the temple of sports practices (Tamagne, 2013; Brito, 2018).

In light of Rosa (2010), homophobia in the sports space can be understood as a mechanism triggered by deterritorialization that the presence of non-heteronormative subjects promotes in this institutional environment. It acts as an important policier of the sexuality and corporality of athletes, guaranteeing the maintenance of the classic molds of masculinity and femininity through the activation of fear, repulsion, hatred and hostility, qualifying the other as weird, abnormal, unworthy of belonging.

Grespan and Goellner (2014) bring up another type of phobia arising from the participation of Fallon Fox, a trans Mixed Martial Arts woman fighter: the transphobia, which, in short, maintains the same linearity as the abovementioned: aversion and repulsion to those who subvert gender or sexuality normalizations. Therefore, homophobia and transphobia are easily referred to in situations in which the linearity of body, gender, sex and desire is deconstructed, whether in the field of sport or outside it (Grespan & Goellner, 2014).

Understanding the queerphobic manifestations in Sport is a complex exercise that demands numerous semantic and polysemic factors. We must reflect, therefore, that the institutionalization and naturalization of discriminatory processes in sports spaces are close to other forms of prejudice and moral and physical aggression that erupt in these territories (Garcia & Pereira, 2018), being an extension of social actions where queer co-expressivities are always repelled or silenced by the power games of heteronormativity (Caudwell, 2017).

Return, performance and repercussion in Brazil

When asked about a possible return to Brazil, Tifanny was apprehensive as the country is still not receptive to trans people:

T: Transsexuals in Brazil continue to be seen as marginal, like bad people, and then I get a bit scared.

The athlete's fear is supported by alarming indications of violence against queer subjects in Brazil. According to data from the Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB, 2018), the oldest LGBTI+ (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender persons, intersex and plus) defense association in Brazil, the country is a recordist in crimes against sexual minorities, where more than half of the transsexual homicides in the world occur on green and yellow land. The latest survey, from the year of 2018, shows that 420 LGBTI+ died in Brazil victims of hate crime by gender/sexuality⁵.

Even with the sad scenario, Tifanny has been excited about the possibility of acting on Brazilian soil, and says between laughs:

T: If you pay me I will, gourgeous!

However, she acknowledges that she would only come after her transition and to act professionally:

T: I only intend to return to Brazil when I finish all my transformation or if I have to play.

The athlete still says that it would not be well accepted by the other teams and their fans, but that her concern would be only with the team that pays her at the end of the month:

T: It's going to be the same as ever, people will scream 'it's a male, take him off'... It's going to come in here and leave here [points from one ear to another], do you think I'll care? Who is paying my salary at the end of the month [...] aren't them. I will not mind.

Finally, she claims that the repercussion of her case would be a considerable social paradigm break:

T: Wow, it's going to be such a big thing, I need to be prepared.

In 2017, Tifanny finished her resignation process, receiving authorization from the FIVB to play in women's volleyball. She

⁵ In relative terms, "trans" people represent the sexological category most vulnerable to violent deaths. Under the label "trans", 81 transvestites, 72 transsexual women, 6 trans men, 2 dragqueens, 2 non-binary persons and 1 transforming were included. This total of 164 deaths, if referred to the 1 million trans people in Brazil, estimated by the associations themselves, indicate that the risk of a trans person being murdered is 17 times greater than a gay (GGB, 2018).

was hired by the Italian team Golem Volley, competing in A2 Serie of the Italian League. After finishing the competition, she returned to Brazil and joined the training of Vôlei Bauru team to reestablish and recover physically after a left hand surgery. On December 5, 2017, she was officially hired by this team and her debut took place five days later, on October 10, in a match against São Caetano team, in 2017/2018 edition of the Brazilian Super League. On the occasion, São Caetano won by 3x2.

Like the predecessor cases, much is debated about the legitimacy of its action. The main arguments against this initiative are centered on a supposed biological advantage that would promote unfair parameters in the competition. On these allegations, in the reports of the Esporte Espetacular program (2017-2018) about her case, Tifanny points out that

T: My volleyball fell a lot. I was a team star, but when I started with the hormones, I became the weakest person on the team.

According to her, the critics who see her as masculinized or endowed with bodily attributes far superior than the other players, in a supposed doping,

T: They will only know that this is different when they start a hormonal treatment too, then they will know how different it really is, because if it really wasn't differential, it would not be released, it would not be studied and would not have the use neither by the IOC, nor by the Federations, for nothing.

T: Honestly, if I had the strength I had before, if I had the volleyball I had before, I really did not have the courage to be here [playing for Volleyball Bauru] because I was going to hurt a person, but today I can attack the strongest way that I don't hurt anyone on the other side. Because I have the strength of a strong woman, nothing more than that, nothing more. The rest of mine is just talent.

T: If someday I cannot play volleyball, because if any law changes, I'll accept it. And I hope people accept it as long as the law allows it...

Below, we have organized a table of the works that portray the Tifanny case in Brazil, highlighting its objectives and main results.

Study	Authors	Year	Objective	Results
Tifanny Abreu is still one of the guys: a discussion on transgender people in the space of volleyball	Brito and Pontes	2015	To analyze the interna- tional media treatment given to the Tifanny case in her gender transition period.	The reports announce Ti- fanny's transition process and signal the opinion of competitors and coaches about their participation in the sport.
Atletas transgêne- ros: tabu, repre- sentatividade, minorias e ciências do esporte	Coelho et al.	2018	To analyze the few studies focused on the theme "athletes transgender", clarifying some questions related to trans subjects and reinforcing the impor- tance of sport for this group.	There is no concrete evi- dence that a transgender subject is able to compete in the category with which he or she identifies, but studies indicate that these athletes do not have significant advantages that corroborate their imped- iment.
O masculino, o feminino e o es- porte – o projeto de lei João Nery e um olhar sobre a jogadora de vôlei Tiffany	Paes and Moas	2018	To reflect about the theme "transgender and sport" with scientific and authoritative argu- ments, starting from the analysis of social issues and the João Nery bill, applying the knowledge to the case of Tifanny Abreu.	The issues involved in transgender and sexual diversity are historically linked to male domina- tion, which reinforces prejudices. It highlights the involvement of social movements in favor of public policies that seek gender equity.
Transsexuality and sport: the Tiffany Abreu affair in "game"	Prado and Nogueira	2018	To problematize gender norms in high-perfor- mance competitive sports, focusing on trans performance.	The theme lacks empirical investigations, it is still treated as a novelty in Brazil and the interven- tions that address it do not propose plausible solutions to the situation.

Table 1. Studies about Tifanny and/or trans athletes in Brazil

Study	Authors	Year	Objective	Results
As mentiras que te contaram sobre a presença de Tif- fany na Superliga	Rezende and Passos	2018	To demystify the fal- lacious speeches that suggest Tifanny's over- whelming biological advantage over cisgen- der women through the analysis of her performance in points, sets, fundamentals and matches.	So far, with the current research, no advantages have been identified between transsexual and cisgender athletes and certainly not in the case of Tifanny, supported by the translated statistical figures.
Ressignifications in sports through the performance of Tifanny Abreu	Garcia and Pereira	2018	To analyze the process- es of resignification in sport based on Tifanny's performance.	The athlete's trajectory is involved in arduous obsta- cles, however subverted by her, which disturb the senses and meanings of the sports field, still strengthened by heter- onormative paradigms.
Problematizing gender issues: "The strength of a strong woman"	Botelho, Aguiar and Quadrado	2019	To analyze an online report about Tifanny, problematizing the effect of the media on the production of bodies and genders, understanding that the discourses conveyed by the media trigger real effects and that this discursive proliferation has been acting in the production of the subjects.	Biomedical knowledge stands out as a powerful discourse to distinguish and hierarchize subjects according to the binary norm. Despite the strong foundations of the binary standard that still govern global sports practices, trans participation creates cracks that can shake such structures.
Tifanny Abreu's personal history in high performance sport	Garcia and Pereira	2019a	To understand Tifanny's personal trajectory in high performance sports.	Tifanny faced resistance throughout her personal trajectory, involving her gender transition and maintenance in Sport, the treatment by the media and the fans and the enjoyment of the locker room.

Study	Authors	Year	Objective	Results
A repercussão da inclusão de pesso- as transexuais no esporte: o discurso nas redes sociais sobre o caso da jogadora Tifanny	lwamoto	2019	To analyze comments on a Facebook post, built on transsexuality in the sports context, considering the inclu- sion and permanence of Tifanny.	There is a restriction in accepting differences, especially gender and sexuality diversity, with sport reinforcing gender binarism. At the same time that social networks have enabled greater vis- ibility of certain subjects and/or groups, it has also expanded a space for the exposure of various actors without due technical and scientific knowledge.
The sports division must be separated by sex or gender	Silva	2019	To analyze the legal and gender issues surrounding the Tifanny case through controver- sies related to biology.	The division in sport based on biological sex prevents the recognition of transsexual women within the female catego- ry. If the criteria applied by the management bodies are followed, there is no legal and/or moral impediment that could disallow this participation.

Source: The authors.

About the discussion involving supposed physiological advantages, the trans physician researcher Harper (2017)⁶, dedicates to discuss the impact that the hormonal transition causes in trans athletes and their performance, which gives us support to discuss about presumptive positions that insinuate, initially, a

⁶ In her HuffPost blog, the author claims to be "a medical physicist by profession, an avid distance runner by choice and I am the only person in history to publish a peer-reviewed article on the performance of transgender athletes. I am also the only transgender person ever to be an adviser to the International Olympic Committee on matters of gender and sport".

better condition of trans athletes over cisgender⁷ women athletes, and misrepresent the IOC's real intention to allow such participation in/by the gender in which they identify themselves. It isn't about mixing men and women and making them compete each other in a cold, raw and absolute way. There are rigid rules for this crossing to occur, according to the IOC's own recommendations, which recognizes that stopping this participation is one more of the constant exclusions of this public, contributing to keep it marginalized also in the sports field, which goes against the spirit and sports legacy.

The effects of this hormonal transition directly affect athletes' physical performance, according to Harper's study (2015). The doctor analyzed the long-distance running time of 8 trans athletes before and after the presence of certain testosterone levels, and found that the time reached was lower with the suppression of this hormone, as well as the consequent decrease of hemoglobin in the blood, which would equate the trans athletes to cisgender female athletes in terms of physical endurance.

Pitsiladis et al. (2016) points out that the sample size of Harper's research was very small (n = 8) and that none of the runners were high-yielding, which would leave doubts about the scope of this finding for high-performance athletes and for large populations. However, Harper et al. (2016), on another occasion, present new data ratifying Harper's study (2015) and reaffirming the IOC's decision to legitimize the permission of trans female athletes, once this interaction would not be disharmonious at all.

As points Freitas (2018), there is still a resistance that, coupled with the "testosterone discourse", aims to normalize transsexuality within the categories "man" and "woman" and still

⁷ The term "cisgender" means the person who identifies yourself with the gender assigned at birth (Caudwell, 2015).

persists in the idea that exposure to testosterone automatically confers athletic abilities to the athlete that are considered unfair.

It cannot be said, therefore, that there is, initially, an advantage of trans athletes in competing among cisgender women athletes. Prado and Nogueira (2018) points that we should also consider the bio-physiological variability among the cisgender athletes themselves, asking if in terms of their biological dimensions would all be the same? Would not they have different stature, weight, hormonal production capacity? Would that have advantages between them? Nor would they present biophysiological variability for testosterone production?

Thus, according to Pitsiladis et al. (2016), due to the paucity of relevant research and the likely impact of decisions concerning trans and intersexual athletes, it is urgent to carry out further investigations to determine the physical (dis)advantages after hormone replacement in different modalities. Interventions are necessary to investigate the effect of the transition on workability and performance, as well as the effects of hormonal therapy on the practice of trans or intersexual athletes (Harper, 2015; Harper et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2017; Pitsiladis et al., 2016). Every definitive solutions that are given to the situation at the moment are, therefore, hasty, irresponsible and unethical.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ascendancy of Tifanny as trans athlete in volleyball carries many recriminatory and oppressive processes, but also recognition and legitimacy of her corporality in the space in question. Even though this modality is notably recognized as a greater space of homossociability and better absorption of other manifestations than heteronormativity, it is still immersed in the supreme universe of Sport, which is very resistant to the subversion and reexamination of its classical, longitudinal and temporal values.

What can be perceived, in short, is that in the professional and amateur sphere, the participation of these athletes who defy the binary norms of sport, that present themselves in an eccentric, dubious, provocative, questioning and decentralized way seems to subvert, or still move, the senses that are used in the sportive sphere and that support its premises according to biological determinism and masculine/feminine binarism, which would be fuel to feed types of discourses contrary to trans participation in Sport.

Finally, although Tifanny's case can be identified and considered as suffering, but overcome, we don't deny the multiplicity of entanglements that may develop in the sports trajectory of queer athletes in various scopes and scenarios, glimpsing infinite possibilities of accomplishment beyond beautiful histories of overcome and self-realization.

T: Don't try to knock me down, don't try to pull my rug for nothing, because I'm not here pulling nobody's rug.

Abreu, Tifanny Pereira, 2018.

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