

Twitter Thread by [Emma Hilton](#)



[Emma Hilton](#)

[@FondOfBeetles](#)



A perfect example of the muddled thinking regarding testosterone, advantage and sports categorisation.

‘T means better performance. It’s debatable whether that’s a sports advantage.’



In an interview, Karkazis emphasized many complexities in scientific research of testosterone and athleticism — testosterone alone doesn't build a better athlete, researchers have found — but did not dispute that transgender girls and women who do not suppress testosterone have advantages in sports.

“Yes, on average ... there will be performance differences that will be better,” she said when pressed on this point. “Whether that’s an advantage or not ... I actually think that’s a normative statement that involves a value judgment about what is advantaged.”

From this article: [@TheWillHobson](#)

<https://t.co/UsVxSlwxBV>

There are two concepts of 'advantage' used in the wider discussion. I think of them as Start and Finish Line positions.

The Finish Liners look at results - 'no trans Olympians' - and assert this demonstrates no advantage.

'No trans Olympians' is not simply a function of physical capacity but also participation.

Nobody from Bangladesh has ever won an Olympic medal. Does that mean Bangladeshis have no physical capability for sport, or are there actually societal barriers like money, access, sport as a low priority or non-Olympic sports prioritised?

And very few people are capable of winning Olympic medals anyway. If you subdivide into smaller demographics, it's no surprise that you don't see winners.

My husband has never won an Olympic medal. He should be allowed to compete with females?

On the flip side, the Start Liners consider 'advantage' as a function of the physical body, and results are irrelevant (although they may flag 'acquired unfair advantages').

If you have broadly the same *capacity* as your fellow competitors, it is the essence of sport to then sort you by *ability*.

Capacity may be a feature selected for in sports (like height in basketball) or, more relevant here, a category designed around known physical differences that affect performance, *regardless of ability*.

To evoke a long-standing doping analogy I make:

We recognise doping as unfair because it confers advantage over and above one's innate capacity, and this contravenes the general principles of sport. We fight over SuperShoes for the same reason.

The finish position of the doping athlete is irrelevant. We don't give free passes to dopers if they aren't challenging medals.

We recognise they have physical advantage (unavailable to the field) that makes them a better athlete *in reference to their innate capacity*.

The same logic holds for male/transwomen/female, where 'innate capacity' is a placeholder for 'female version of self'.

First principles - what we know about T and the male body - tell us there is advantage, even if there is no *ability*.

When the Karkazises and Strangios of this world say 'no advantage', they are subsuming a heap of non-sports stuff into that statement, hence they lose clarity when it comes to actual analysis of physical advantage, which is what matters on a start line.

This is a great example of the Finish Line argument.

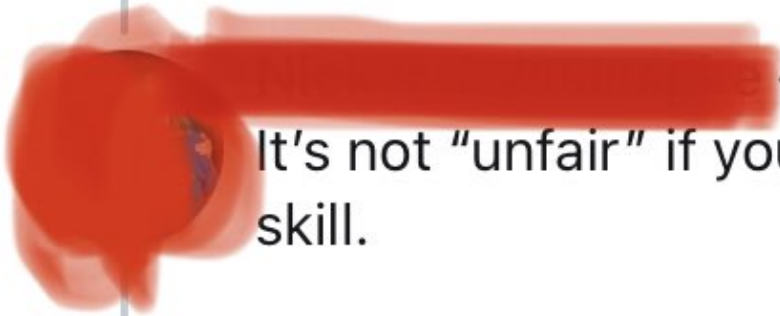
'A peak age female should be allowed to compete against 70 year old females in their age class if the skill level of the peak



Emma Hilton @FondO... · 30/03/2021 ...

Ah but it is. And you know it is. You just don't like what it means.

Do we agree it would be 'unfair' for me, not 70 - although admittedly not still within regular senior competitive age ;) - to compete in a category for 70 year old females?



· 30/03/2021 ...

It's not "unfair" if you're of compatible skill.

But, age and gender are not the same. This is a false comparison. Trans girls are girls.

Please just say you're anti-trans and go.



The Tweeter fails to consider it relevant that a 70 year old female who, despite advanced age and associated health/fitness impact, can manage to run 100m at the same time as a peak age female is actually a better runner than that peak age female, and should be rewarded as such.

But that is the position Finish Liners are forced into, as a logical progression of their arguments - that categorisation by capacity should not happen.

@runthinkwrite may wish to extend here.

And thanks to @boysvswomen for putting the article in front of me!

I'd would be very interested to talk to @Karkazis about this conflation.

Further thoughts from Jon @runthinkwrite <https://t.co/yZor5kNToz>

Thanks Emma. I agree with you and wanted to add another slightly different take on the Karkarzis quote. I think Karkarzis is using \u2018value\u2019 and \u2018normative\u2019 in rather odd ways. Here we go: (thread) 1/
<https://t.co/PEBJ3X1m6j>

— Jon Pike (@runthinkwrite) April 17, 2021