

sport, sexualities and queer/theory

edited by jayne caudwell

Sport, Sexualities and Queer/Theory

Sport, Sexualities and Queer/Theory is an introduction to current debates over gender, sexuality, queer and queer theory as they relate to sport. It is the first book to address this largely silent and often stigmatised aspect of sports culture, providing access to an emergent area of study within the sociology of sport.

With contributions from researchers on three continents, the book documents and explores gay, lesbian, transgender, and transsexual experiences of sport, combining theoretical analysis with recent and original research findings.

Part One introduces the concepts of queer, queer theory and queer approaches to understanding sport.

Part Two presents new research into experiences of sexuality in sports contexts, including amateur team sports and the Gay Games.

Part Three focuses on issues of sexuality, the body and identity in sport.

Sport, Sexualities and Queer/Theory provides a new critical and political perspective on queer and sports studies, setting the agenda for future discussion and research.

Jayne Caudwell is Senior Lecturer in the Sociology of Sport and Leisure Cultures at the Chelsea School, University of Brighton, UK.

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Sport, Sexualities and Queer/Theory

Edited by Jayne Caudwell

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Series Editors' preface

The very personal and highly sensitive issue of sexuality in sport and its link to sexual preference and homophobic discrimination incorporates controversy and complexity in abundance. For that reason, it is a topic that is not easily understood and *Sport, Sexualities and Queer/Theory*, edited by Jayne Caudwell, is breaking new ground towards a better analytic approach. The attempt to investigate sexuality in sport using 'queer' and 'queer theory' is a radical development in sports studies. It is a strong critique of established ideas and stereotypes of gender and sexuality which undermines the hegemony of heteronormativity and encourages us to explore new ways of thinking. This approach reflects an important aim of the Routledge Critical Studies in Sport series: to question assumptions about sport, to critique established ideas, and to explore new ones.

The collection is the result of a co-operative effort between the contributors, who attended a specially convened seminar to discuss the appropriateness and potential of using queer and queer theory as a common theme running throughout the book. As series editors, we were invited to the seminar and were very pleased to have played an active part in the proceedings, the outcome of which was the political decision of the contributors to focus on queer and queer theory so as to move beyond existing analyses of sexualities in sport and make a critical intervention in the field. It is the first sports sociology text with this specific focus and we anticipate that it will encourage further debate among faculty and students who are seeking explanations and understanding about the particular ways in which sexualities are experienced, represented and negotiated in different sporting contexts. Debate should be further stimulated by the different ways in which the contributors approach the use of queer and queer theory.

At the start of the book, the explanatory power of these two terms is explored, setting the scene for the range of sporting examples which provide the specific contexts for the other chapters. There is a strong relationship throughout the text between empirical material and theoretical analysis – a characteristic of other books in the Series. The ethnographic approach is an important methodological device in the book, used by several of the contributors to communicate very personal accounts of sexual discrimination in sport, together with reactions and resistances to it. Jayne Caudwell explains that, 'via a focus on gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual and intersex, as well as heterosexual experi-

ences, queer theory documents complex subjectivities and expands our knowledge of sexuality'. The hope is that the greater the accumulation of knowledge about prejudice, the greater is the potential to change it. The book as a whole, therefore, represents a challenge to sexual prejudice in sport and the relations of power that aid in its reproduction.

Sport, Sexualities and Queer/Theory fits well with the philosophy of the Series. It is interrogative; interventionist; and innovative, exposing the everyday sporting experiences of the sexual minorities who are frequently misunderstood, misrepresented, and maligned, and whose sexual preferences are normally concealed. It is a challenge to complacency and signals the need for further work and greater understanding of the complexities of sexualities in sport.

Jennifer Hargreaves
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University of Brighton
Series Editors

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Finally, I'd like to thank those close to me for all the ways they have quite simply let me get on with it!

Introduction

Jayne Caudwell

Sport, Sexualities and Queer/Theory is the first anthology in the field of sports studies to investigate sexuality and its relation to 'queer' and 'queer theory'. It is the result of much deliberation. In November 2004 several of the contributors, and the series editors, gathered to discuss the content of individual chapters and the overall intent of the collection. During the meeting it soon became evident that contributors understood queer and queer theory differently. This is hardly surprising given that queer eludes easy definition and the idea of queer theory continues to be contested. Despite disagreements, it was felt that queer and queer theory offer valuable ways to analyse and critically discuss sport. The lack of consensus over how queer and queer theory can[not] provide rigorous explanation developed as an issue in naming the book. Initially, it was agreed that it should be entitled *Sport, Sexuality and Queer Theory*. However, after some thought the tensions have been articulated by the denotation *Queer/Theory*. The aim is to denote how queer *and* queer theory are separate and merge, and how contributors deploy and apply the terms in different ways. As the first sociology of sport text to bring together such work, the book captures tensions and processes within scholarship and between scholars in relation to sexuality, queer, theory and sport. In this collection, the debates over queer and queer theory, and their relevance to sport, provoke dismissal, contestation and resolution. Such debates are commonplace in the humanities and social sciences (cf. Beemyn and Eliason, 1996; Blasius, 2001; Corber and Valocchi 2003; Hall, 2003; Jagose, 1996; Morland and Willox, 2005; Seidman, 1996; Sullivan, 2003; Turner, 2000) but have been slow to appear in the study of sport. That said, important contributions appear in key sociology of sport journals (cf. Broad, 2001; Caudwell, 2003; Davidson and Shogan, 1998; Lock, 2003; McDonald, 2001; Sykes, 1998). This edited book, then, might be viewed as overdue; it is a timely contribution to the critical study of sport, sexuality and the body.

As the first anthology of its kind the book has three broad aims, these are:

- (i) to provide an accessible source of literature for those interested in sport and the complexities of sexuality.
- (ii) to provide discussion that blends theoretical ideas with research methodologies and research findings.

- (iii) to contribute to debates surrounding queer and queer theory and provoke further work from within sports studies.

Queer and queer theory

'Queer' is used in numerous ways to describe activism, theory, politics, identity and community. It is widely accepted that 'queer' emerged from activism surrounding HIV/aids and sexual practice. Queer Nation, established in 1990 in the US was closely followed by Outrage in the UK. According to Cherry Smyth:

Queer activists saw Outrage as distinctly anti-assimilationist compared to the parliamentary reform group, Stonewall, which has been established as a response to Clause 28 in 1989 ... Outrage activists are not interested in seeking acceptance within an unchanged social system, but are setting out to 'fuck up the mainstream' as visibly as possible.

(Cherry Smyth, 1992: 19–20)

We can imagine 'the mainstream' as heteronormativity. Berlant and Warner (2000) describe heteronormativity as 'the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is organized as a sexuality – but also privileged' (2000: 312). In this vein queer developed as a response to heteronormativity and presents protest via an incorporation of both activism and theoretical conceptualisation.

Broadly speaking, queer reflects a departure from lesbian and gay politics of identity to politics of difference, resistance and challenge. Its intention is to make [very] visible previously denied and silenced 'identities' and sexualities: 'bodies and sexual desires that do not fit dominant standards of gender and/or sexuality' (Beemyn and Eliason, 1996: 5). Despite departure from identity politics, queer does engage with the idea of identity to achieve its many aims. These aims often include: exposing the constructedness of sexuality; exposing the illusion/fiction of sexual identity; avoiding normative and essentialising identities; resisting regimes of the 'normal'; violating compulsory sex/gender relations; dismantling binary gender relations; and undermining heteronormative hegemonic discourses. Queer has worked as an effective challenge to heteronormativity because of branding and celebrating the marginalised and/or the excluded.

In a very rudimentary way, queer theory is the study of sexuality. It contests earlier explanations of sexuality, namely sexology and some aspects of psychoanalysis, and debates categorisation of sexual identity. From this starting point Jagose (1996) and Turner (2000) show how queer theory emerged as important criticism of how sexuality functions to maintain social relations of power. The imbrications of queer theory and feminism are difficult to ignore given the impossibility of separating out sexuality from gender, and of course from 'race', ethnicity and class. In this way queer theory is more complicated than a straightforward 'theory of sexuality' implies. Some authors continue to reference queer theory (Jagose, 1996; Morland and Willox, 2005; Seidman, 1996, Sullivan,

2003), others refer to queer studies (Beemyn and Eliason, 1996; Corber and Valocchi, 2003), queer politics (Blasius, 2001) and, unsurprisingly, queer theories (Hall, 2003). Queer theory, then, has many dimensions, reaching beyond sexuality but ultimately connected to sexuality and it is this range that attests the potential of queer and queer theory.

For me, queer theory is legitimised through its relation to knowledge production. Queer theory's intention to deconstruct sexuality resonates with post-structuralist critiques of the Enlightenment's reliance on binary opposites (e.g. heterosexual–homosexual) and advocacy of 'scientific' (truth) knowledge (e.g. sexology). In this vein, Seidman's description of queer theory as political theory of *knowledge* of difference can aptly explain queer theory's core. As Seidman suggests, queer theory is concerned with 'institutional practices and discourses producing sexual knowledges and ... ways these knowledges and social practices repress differences' (1996: 13). Clearly, there are links with post-structuralism's quest to expose the regulatory power of institutions, knowledge and discursive practices. Through a mapping or genealogy of existing knowledge claims, queer theory provides a critique of dominant discourses of heteronormativity. In addition, via a focus on gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual and intersex, as well as heterosexual experiences, queer theory documents complex subjectivities and expands our knowledge of sexuality. Within such a project, which is in effect a move to disturb and destabilise the familiar, 'queer' can appear as adjective, noun and/or verb (Hall, 2003) and we witness its varied usages in some chapters in this book.

Sport, sexualities and queer/theory

Part I consists of two chapters that engage with dilemmas surrounding the study of sport and sexuality. Both are explicit in illuminating possibilities that queer theory offers and advocates its value to an analysis of sport. In many ways, these first two chapters provide insight that enables a clearer understanding of debates that arise in the remaining eight chapters. In Chapter 1, Heather Sykes offers a comprehensive mapping of developments in queer theory over the past two decades, and charts the contributions of different queer theorists. She starts by acknowledging the difficulties in establishing a simple version of queer theory and goes on to give a thorough and detailed account of arguments that have shaped the emergence of queer theory, and continue to forge its development. She is keen to rectify some earlier omissions through reference to 'race' and consistently highlights key authors that have, previously, appeared on the margins. The citations of studies of sport are regular and underpin the value of her call for *queering theories of sexuality in sport studies*. We are treated to an accessible discussion of key concepts and a wealth of cited materials. In all, the chapter is an important and convincing precursor to this collection, which grapples with applying queer/theory to sport.

In Chapter 2, Mary McDonald continues the emphasis to move beyond accounts of gender and sexuality that privilege white experience and authorship.

Her critical reflections on existing literature, from North American sport scholars, intend to open our eyes to the operation of whiteness. She challenges theoretical and political practices that help forge 'identity' as fixed, highlighting how whiteness remains unmarked in these processes. In addition, she demonstrates how the notion of a universal 'sexual identity' is in fact a fiction. The criticisms she makes provide an important reminder to not underestimate the powerful functioning of whiteness and to constantly question assumptions of 'queer citizenship'. For her, bodies are given meaning through compounded normalising discourses of whiteness and heteronormativity. She demonstrates how disidentification and José Muñoz's (1999) work, including readings of images of a 'famous negro athlete' and Sugar Ray Robinson, can disrupt these normalising discourses: 'Thus disidentification is a step further than cracking the code of the majority; It proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture' (Muñoz 1999: 31).

Sykes and McDonald provide crucial theoretical interjections that assist in establishing meaningful links between queer literatures generally and specific practices in sport. Both chapters make apparent how queer and queer theory can help develop new ways to study sport.

Part II is concerned with how queer/theory has helped researchers understand their research findings. The four chapters reflect research into specific sport communities, namely, intermediate and elite sport in Norway, men's softball in Canada, men's tennis in England and the Gay Games and Cultural Events. All are the result of PhD work and signal important contributions to the sociology of sport. Individual authors draw on queer/theory, to varying degrees, to explain their findings. Here we are introduced to practices, and communities, that regulate and disrupt the [hetero]normative.

In Chapter 3, Heidi Eng focuses on Norwegian athletes who identify as lesbian and gay. She compares the different conditions men and women experience to do 'sex/uality' in their specific sport setting. Moreover, she looks at a particular sport activity, the social spaces of sport and locker room culture. In her discussions she refuses to name the sport. This is a result of her fidelity to Norwegian athletes who fear the tag will help identify them because athletes' populations, in the country, are small and recognisable. For Eng, sex/uality signifies sexual acts, desire and the erotic as well as sexual identity. She links interview research findings with theoretical concepts; 'queer' and 'queering', referencing Foucault's (1990) work, on "silence itself", as significant to her analysis. She highlights the connections between queer theory and methodology through an emphasis on 'the unseen, the taboo, acts/practices/language that is 'not spoken' – outside known language, or seen as problematic speech acts' (p. 51, this volume). The chapter continues the debate outlined by Sykes and McDonald through the application of queer and queering, and placing experiences of sexual dissidents at the centre.

In Chapter 4, Nigel Jarvis presents findings from his ethnographic research on gay men's sporting masculinities in softball. He is keen to ascertain whether the practices within the team's subculture are queer acts of resistance or if they can

be better understood through the familiar concept of masculine hegemony. To this end his introduction discusses how gay men and/in sport have been theorised to date. The research findings are organised to emphasise the importance of language, demeanour and image in the production of subcultural style. In contrast to experiences in the context of intermediate and elite Norwegian sport, language and demeanour are explicitly gendered and sexualised. The men articulate gay sexuality coherently. Their comments often challenge discursive heteronormative sexing and gendering of competitive sport; through baseball-inflected language players reference gay sexual acts and desires, gay sexual identities, and gender identities. Despite these valuable transgressions, the demeanour of some players reproduces dominant competitive sporting behaviours, namely behaviours that support the means of winning. Jarvis concludes with a discussion about how difficult it is for subordinate groups to challenge obdurate sporting practices that privilege the heterosexual. In the next chapter, Ian Wellard continues with this point in his exploration of the *limits of queer and sport*.

Wellard considers the emergence of a gay tennis club in the south of England. The formation of the club, as with similar sports groups that are created by sexual minorities, intends to provide a safe enclave for respite from the traditions and rituals of heterosexism. Taking up Butler's challenge to reveal 'queer acts', Wellard highlights some of the ways the tennis players have challenged dominant practices in sport. However, as with the previous chapter, the overwhelming realisation is that gay participants might prefer 'straight acts' as is highlighted by the pleasure of one research participant who commented, 'you'd never know it was a gay tennis club'. Again we witness the processes some gay athletes/players go through in order to assimilate: or put another way, the power of heteronormativity, in sport, to influence gay sensibilities.

The chapters by Jarvis and Wellard provide insights into gay men's experiences of sport. Such contributions are sometimes missing from the sports studies literature on sexuality. Both authors engage with seminal work by Brian Pronger, and their discussion demonstrates the importance of Pronger's earlier contributions to understanding gay men's involvement in sport and theoretical tensions surrounding how gay presence in sport might best be theorised.

In Chapter 6, Judy Davidson takes the focus to the Gay Games and the cultural events associated with the Games. Her interest in 'queer shame for gay pride' arose from archival research of the history of the Gay Games and the role of Dr Thomas Waddell (Gay Games founder). After offering a brief account of how the Gay Games emerged, Davidson concentrates on archival discourses of gay pride. She notes: 'The individual and organizational investments in expressing lesbian and gay pride were almost overwhelming, and too insistent to ignore' and sets out to establish the ways pride is 'linked to the original shaming', in other words 'the original refusal of an Olympic designation' (p. 94, this volume). Through in-depth consideration of shame and pride her chapter engages the psychic domain and its relation to the social domain. In this way she demonstrates the value of aspects of psychoanalysis to a detailed understanding of how heteronormativity helps produce gay pride.

Part III looks at how the body is given meaning in particular sport settings. We continue analysis of the Gay Games, in Chapter 7, with Caroline Symons' and Denis Hemphill's critical examination of the treatment of transgendered athletes. This is followed by, in Chapter 8, Gareth Owen's discussion on how gay men experience their bodies in competitive rowing; in Chapter 9, by Jayne Caudwell's concern with how femme-inine women, in football, are understood; and in Chapter 10 by Rebecca Lock's critical analysis of how pain is evoked in the [re]production of heterosexual femininity.

Caroline Symons and Denis Hemphill reflect on the following Gay Games: New York 1994; Amsterdam 1998; and Sydney, 2002. The inclusion of transgender athletes in these games is discussed. The chapter starts by illustrating how the sexed body is 'naturalised' in sport, leaving a legacy of an enduring two-sexed system. Such a foundational approach has huge implications for bodies that do not fall neatly into this absolute binary and the chapter explores how transgender participants have been treated by Gay Games policy. The New York Gay Games appear to be the 'first international sports event to include transgender participants within policy and procedures'. The Amsterdam games, despite having a coherent transgender policy, are criticised for reliance on medical and psychological criteria leaving many dissatisfied with the outcome. Throughout the chapter, the authors argue for an understanding of sex and gender that resists dominant sporting discourse and they highlight ways in which transgender activism has informed non-discriminatory practice. Sydney Gay Games are discussed in relation to improved practice, and the netball competition is cited as a case in hand.

To continue the focus on athletes' bodies, Gareth Owen, reiterating Davidson's emphasis on gay shame and pride, uses reflexive ethnography to show how his body and emotions are inseparable from understanding gender and sexual identities in competitive rowing. As a member of a gay rowing club and men's crew (coxed eight), he uses his 'body as an instrument of data collection' and explores the possibilities of sporting narrative. In her earlier chapter, Eng introduced the methodology of melding together research findings in order to re-tell a 'story' about research participants' experience and she referenced Toni Bruce's (1998) work as influential. Owen continues to galvanise this research methodology with his nerve-racking (for those of us who have raced in such events) narrative of pre-race rituals. It becomes apparent that there are possibilities for how gay masculinity can be materialised. However, Owen concludes that 'hegemonic masculinity is still reproduced by the mandatory performance of *competitive* masculinities in conventional sport'.

The final two chapters, in very different ways, consider femininity. In Chapter 9, Jayne Caudwell aims to explore the nuances of femininity and deploys 'femme' as a way to register potential to queer femininity. Her research with an 'out' lesbian football team from London demonstrates the value of collective 'identity' and the futility of promoting homogeneity. Clearly, the team struggles to establish a safe space to play within football's regime of heteronormativity. However, it is interactions between players, surrounding femme-ininity and response to the materialisation of femme-inine bodies, which reveal the ubiquity and multiplicit-

ity of heteronormativity. Caudwell considers the possibility that lesbian players might reinforce the values, beliefs, and status of normative culture. Discussion highlights how femme-inine bodies are [mis]understood as fragile versions of football players and demands a re-reading of femme-ininity as subversive and having political power to offer potent disruption of the heteronormative.

Finally, in Chapter 10, Rebecca Lock 'considers the relationship between pain and heterosexual femininity in the context of women's ice hockey'. She argues that pain and heterosexuality are socially constructed as 'natural' and warns against viewing experiences of both as universal phenomena. In particular she offers detailed critical analysis of how discourses surrounding rape, birthing and medical treatment of pain for women, produce gendered grammar. From here, she demonstrates how this gendered grammar regulates heterosexual femininity in ice hockey, a sport in which 'some pain is inevitable'. Given the potentiality for pain in ice hockey, Lock illustrates the ways certain kinds of pain are refused via the rules of the game. She explores how pain that undermines the production of heterosexual femininity is countered to: 'allow women to experience pain that least contravenes their heterosexual femininity; prevent females from experiencing pain most associated with heterosexual masculinity; use strategies that heterosexually feminize female athletes'. In addition, she introduces psychic pain and challenges its erasure from analyses of pain. The inclusion of the psychic dimension of pain makes links with Davidson's (Chapter 6) and Owen's (Chapter 8) work on shame and further illustrates the intricacies of heteronormativity.

Concluding thoughts

In all, the book covers a range of issues related to sexuality and sport. It is impossible to ignore the 'Western' contexts being discussed. All the authors are white and the issues being addressed tend to, but do not always, reflect white-Western interests. The experiences documented in this collection are predominantly those of white athletes. In the first part of the book Sykes (Chapter 1) and McDonald (Chapter 2) call for change in relation to this point, this request is reiterated here; there is a need for further work on the intersectionality of sexuality, gender, 'race' and ethnicity, and an acknowledgement that whiteness and heteronormativity are inseparable in Western capitalist sports cultures (McDonald, 2001). Future research and writing determining the connections are essential. Such work appears elsewhere, as many of the authors highlight, and those interested in sport and sexuality must help prevent further lag.

The dominance of competitive sport and its concomitant rituals raises a concern that runs through many chapters. In parts two and three of the book, authors tend to use research findings to illustrate the blatant, and stubborn, [hetero]normative practices of competitive sport. Some suspect that transforming these cultural practices is near impossible while others are keen to identify moments of queer resistance. An ongoing critical analysis of competitive sport is obviously valuable to efforts for change, as is illustrated by Symons' and