Inclusive masculinity theory and the gendered politics of men's rugby

This ethnographic research uses one year of participant observation and 24 interviews to examine the construction of masculinity among teammembers within a highly successful rugby squad, at a high ranked academic university in England. We find that the players and coaches share a sporting field in which variations in their gendered belief systems are sharply contested. Teammates believe their coaches to be exhibiting an out-of-date, orthodox version of masculinity, and instead of adopting their coaches' perspectives on masculinity, players take a more inclusive approach to masculinity making. The players on this team—all of whom identify as heterosexual—contest three fundamental principles of orthodox masculinity: homophobia, misogyny, and excessive risk-taking. These men do not degrade women or gay men in any measureable manner, and they are emotionally supportive of each other when ill or injured. We suggest that these results require a new way for theorizing about masculinity, and we therefore propose inclusive masculinity theory to frame our data and discuss our participants' complicated association with the political project of adopting more inclusive attitudes toward masculinity.

Orthodox masculinity

Although there are various purposes and outcomes of organized sporting participation for men in British culture, a consistent finding is that sport serves as a resilient social institution principally organized around the political project of defining acceptable forms of masculinity (Hargreaves 1986, Crosset 1990, Messner 1992, 2002). Gender-segregated contact sports are recognized as leading markers of a valorized, orthodox form of masculinity, and participation in them is made near-compulsory through masculine peer culture (Messner and Sabo 1990, Pronger 1990, Whitson 1990). While we recognize that describing teamsport athletes as belonging to a normative, Anglo-American version of orthodox masculinity is perhaps overly-simplistic, it nonetheless provides a useful starting point for making sense of masculinities and their social stratification.

Rugby is positioned alongside (or above) football as a leading definer of masculinity among both youth and university-aged English men (Price 2000, Price and Parker 2003, Harris and Clayton 2007). Here, it is part of boys' official public school curriculum. And here, despite the fact that it is largely a game played by middle and upper class men (outside of school age), it is considered to be homophobic and misogynistic (Price 2000). Accordingly, from early youth and throughout young adulthood, English boys are placed into a competitive sporting space that is used to construct their identities and influence their behaviors to align with orthodox perspectives of masculinist embodiment and expression. Rugby therefore exists in English culture as a leading reproducer of gendered myths and prejudices about the variations between men and women, and participation influences men to exhibit, value and reproduce orthodox notions of masculinity.

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This culture of homophobic masculinity is particularly useful to men who seek to prove their heterosexuality (Messner 1992). This is because, unlike in some Latin American cultures (Carillo 2003, Gutman 2003), English (and other Anglo-American societies) maintain that sexuality also constitutes gender. Accordingly, gay men are feminized, so that feminine men are therefore assumed gay. If one therefore desires to escape homosexual stigma, participating in a heteromasculine environment (such as rugby) is an effective avoidance strategy (Pronger 1990).

However, heterosexuality is not proved through homophobia alone. Equally important to the construction of orthodox masculinity is the sexual objectification of women (Hughson 2000). Thus, the sexual degradation of women, and the broadcasting of heterosexual proclivity are behaviors described as being central toward the establishment of oneself as heterosexual, and therefore masculine.

Schacht (1996) shows that both of these socio-negative attitudes dominate within the American university rugby team he studied; something supported by numerous other rugby investigations on both sides of the Atlantic (Dunning and Sheard 1979, Donnelly and Young 1988, Grundlingh 1994, Light and Kirk 2000, Muir and Seitz 2004). Thus, rugby men are normally described as embodying *orthodox masculinity*—a form of masculinity that is predicated on homophobia, misogyny, physicality, and bravado (Pronger 1990).

Important to this research, coaches, administrators and fans lend institutional and cultural support to the promotion of orthodox masculinity. This helps promote rugby players to an exalted peer status (Messner 1992, Light and Kirk 2000, Kreager 2007), so that the playing pitch serves as a figurative "proving ground" (Muir and Seitz 2004, p.

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306) or "training field" (Schacht 1996, p. 562) for the embodiment of socially conservative masculine behaviors and attitudes.

In this article, however, we examine how one group of rugby players construct their masculinity in opposition to many aspects of orthodox masculinity, instead valuing a more inclusive perspective of gendered behaviors and attitudes. While it is not our intent to suggest that our ethnography reflects the whole of rugby culture, the theoretical framework upon which we analyze our results has proven useful for multiple other homosocial settings (Anderson 2009) and we therefore encourage other researchers to use it in investigating sport cultures.

Inclusive masculinity theory

In research on white, middle class, former high school football players, Anderson (2005b) first used the term *inclusive masculinity* to theoretically describe the social process concerning the emergence of an archetype of masculinity that undermines the principles of orthodox (read hegemonic) masculine values—yet one that is also esteemed among male peers. Although this theory is formalized in his (2009) book, *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities,* its tenets, and the empirical motivation for a new theorizing of masculinity, are elucidated here.

In 2005, Anderson described how a reduction of cultural homophobia challenged the dominance that hegemonic masculinity maintained over heterosexual university athletes. He found two esteemed versions of masculinity: One he labeled as orthodox masculinity (which includes extreme homophobia and misogyny) and the other inclusive masculinity (which does not). However, two oppositional masculinities, each with equal

influence, co-existing within one setting is not consistent with Connell's (1987, 1995) theorizing. Connell suggests that multiple masculinities *do* exist within any organization, institution or culture; and she certainly argues that any one hegemonic archetype of masculinity will be challenged and perhaps replaced by another, but she describes hegemonic masculinity as a *hegemonic* process by which only *one* form of institutionalized masculinity is "culturally exalted" above all others (Connell 1995, p. 77). Then, according to Connell, men are compelled to associate with this one dominant form (i.e. men looking up the hierarchy).

One of the many forms of masculinity Connell describes is protest masculinity. This form of masculinity, she argues, contests the current hegemonic form for dominance. However, the resolution of this struggle is simply that a new, singular, version of a (hegemonic) dominating masculinity emerges. Anderson (2009) suggests that, in periods of high homophobia, Connell is correct: Only one dominating, hegemonic version of masculinity will exist (and it will have homophobia at its core). This is because homophobia is fundamental to the production and stratification of men as an ordered system of valued or subjugated individuals in a highly homophobic culture (Ibson 2002).

However, inclusive masculinity theory suggests that something different emerges in a culture of diminishing homophobia. Here, men are permitted increased social freedom in the expression of attitudes and behaviors that were once highly stigmatized. In other words, inclusive masculinity theory maintains that in a culture of extreme homophobia (as was the zeitgeist when Connell developed the theory), one dominating masculinity archetype will exist. In a moment of decreasing cultural homophobia however, such as England today (Anderson 2009), two archetypes will consume most

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men's membership.

Inclusive masculinity theory next maintains that, as cultural homophobia further diminishes, *multiple* forms of masculinity can exist in a horizontal (not stratified) alignment. Here, one or more forms of inclusive masculinity are shown to dominate numerically, but that they are not hegemonically dominating. In other words, when inclusive masculinity (as an archetype) proliferates, it does not seem to also 'dominate.' This is something found in a number of university settings in the previous few years (Anderson 2005b, 2008, 2009). Important, if there is no hegemony, *there can also be no hegemonic masculinity*. Thus, inclusive masculinity theory serves as a social-constructionist theory that simultaneously incorporates and expands upon Connell's (1987) theorizing.

Swain (2006a, 2006b) calls this *personalized masculinities*, describing how men are more free to choose whatever form of masculinity they desire, without undue cultural pull. Ibson (2002) also describes how, in a culture of decreased homophobia, softer and more tactile (homo-socially speaking) forms of masculinity will proliferate. But there are further reasons we call for inclusive masculinity theory, in examining the changing nature of masculinities.

Many feminist scholars have pointed to the need for other heurisms in analyzing men's gendered identities, suggesting that an over reliance on Connell's model leads to selective accounts or diminished lines of research inquiry (Sparkes 1992, Rowe 1998, Pringle 2005). Studies using hegemonic masculinity theory have also been critiqued as unduly examining the negative aspects of sporting culture, perhaps even trivializing the positive (McKay *et al*. 2000, Pringle and Markula 2005). Other researchers have also

problematised Connell's model. For example, Robinson (2008) when talking about a need to avoid a simplistic dichotomy of traditional, team sports being linked with hegemonic masculinity, and newer, more alternative sports such as rock climbing being associated with less hegemonic forms of masculinity, asks whether team sports offer the development of alternative ways of being gendered. Thus, although Connell's application of Gramsci's (1971) hegemony theory to masculinity has served as the most prolific paradigm to analyze the relationship between men and sport (we maintain that it had particular heuristic utility from the mid 80's through the mid 90's), we nonetheless find it theoretically and heuristically limiting in today's culture of decreasing homophobia in England. Accordingly, we turn to inclusive masculinity theory to help make sense of our empirical findings.

Setting and methods

The two authors represent differing standpoints in relation to sport. One is a student-athlete rugby player, and the other a gay sociologist who is quite critical of men's teamsports. Together we adopt a triangulated approach toward understanding the gendered perspectives of the 24 men on this elite rugby team (Emmerson *et al*. 1995). We collect data through McGuire's year-long participant observation, and two sets of semi-structured interviews, conducted by each researcher.

The team is a fairly homogenous group of men, aged 18 to 22. Players come from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. All of the members are students at the university, and most come from middle to upper class backgrounds. All but one of the players is white, and all of the players identify as heterosexual. This, therefore, is a select

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population of privileged heterosexual white men—so generalizations about the findings are limited accordingly.

This research began with McGuire's conducting ten months of participant observation. We did not include Anderson on participant observations, as we felt the presence of an openly gay academic might severely alter the men's behaviors. Thus, Anderson had no contact whatsoever with the men until the interviews began in the final two months of the academic year.

McGuire first ascertained written permission from the coaches and his teammates to collect data. He recorded data on the pitch and in several other social settings, where he was careful not to make field notes in the presence of teammates. Instead, all note-taking was left to immediate recall (Spradley 1970, Emmerson *et al*. 1995). We recognize that McGuire's familiarity with rugby potentially biases him toward promoting the socio-positive aspects of the data. Conversely, Anderson is likely to be biased in the other direction—he is contemptuous of men's teamsports. Thus, we highlight that the notes on these participant observations were coded and categorized thematically by both researchers. Here, Anderson discussed McGuire's field notes and perceptions of the teammembers' behaviors. We each then coded and compared a portion of the field notes, until our coding of categorical behaviors concurred with one another (Emerson *et al*. 1995). We continued with this constant comparative method until the tenth month of the study, when we augmented the research with player interviews.

After obtaining informed consent, interviews came near the end of the academic year (primarily in month eleven). We requested interviews from all of the players, making appointments with and interviewing as many as we could schedule during the

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allotted interviewing time schedule. Time constraints prevented us from scheduling all but four of the players for interview, thus we managed 18 player interviews before having to move to the final stage of the project.

Also, in the final month of data collection, we vetted and selected six women for interview request. We selectively targeted women who were only casual friends with the players. These were not current or former girlfriends. What we intended here is that these informants were social friends without having romantic ties. Although we realize that all informants maintain bias, we desired to interview women who were neither too emotionally close, nor too distant, from the players in the hope that they would represent women's voices that were not overly-aligned to the players, but maintained enough contact with players to provide us with the type of data we sought. After obtaining their consent, we interviewed these women about their understandings and relationships with the men of this team. Thus, we discussed with them how they perceived the rugby men's attitudes toward, women, gay men, risk and violence.

In order help balance potential bias, each researcher conducted half of the semi-structured in-depth interviews (May 2002). And, in order to assure consistency of investigative topics, we used an interview schedule. We did not however direct the informants into an ordered discussion. Instead, each researcher used his interview skills to sway the conversation back to the pre-determined topics. We believe that this approach permitted us to systematically investigate predetermined topics, while also permitting for new themes to emerge. Interviews lasted between 20 and 60 minutes, and most averaged about 40 minutes.

Interviews were transcribed and coded using a constant comparative method, analyzing the data as it emerged (Bakerman and Gottman 1997). Thus, emerging themes were then organized into conceptual and thematic categories (Goetz and LeCompte 1981, Strauss and Corbin 1994) and cross-checked by each researcher.

There are only two coaches on the team. These are professional coaches, drawing a living wage from their occupation. One is in his late 30's and the other his early 40's. Both hail from middle class backgrounds, and both played rugby for a number of years. Accordingly, the coaches match the demographics of the players (class and socialization into the sport) with the notable difference that they are from a different generation. An attempt was made to interview them. However, one refused, citing that he was not interested in a study about masculinity. The other missed repeated interview appointments. After the fourth attempt to interview him failed, we took his pattern as a desire to avoid the interview and ceased trying.

Finally, although our aim in approaching this work is to incorporate what Altheide and Johnson (1994, p. 489) refer to as "validity-as-reflexive-accounting" (through our strict coding procedures), we recognize that multiple meanings, indeed multiple truths, may nevertheless exist. We therefore try to capture the core meanings and contradictions of rugby players' experiences by examining their *actions* alongside and against their *language* (Katz 2004).

Contesting misogyny

Previous research has shown that a necessity of expressing one's masculinity comes through the sexual objectification of women (Curry 1991). Accordingly, rugby players

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have been shown to psychologically and sometimes physically dominate women. For example, Schacht (1996) shows that when sexually attractive women walked by the American rugby team he studied, players were expected to yell sexually harassing comments. Furthermore, he found that during post-competition celebrations, the players fallaciously selected a woman, telling her that she was to be honored as their "queen." The players then sexually degraded and harassed her, until she cried.

Misogynistic behaviors have been shown to occur on the pitch, too. Schacht (1996) found that when rugby players sing traditional rugby songs, the graphic lyrics sometimes concern intercourse with women. And, in attempting to influence their teammates to accept more pain, Schacht found players often call each other "ladies," "sissies," or "girls."

What is interesting about our findings however is that this is *not* happening on this university's rugby team. The men on this team seem to be contesting orthodox requisites of masculinity through their attitudinal expression and behavioral patterns concerning women. For example, Nicky is in her final year of undergraduate work, and she is friends with one of the players through shared coursework. When asked about how these rugby players treat women, she replies:

> Everyone in general thinks that [rugby players] they must be really arrogant womanizers. But these guys are not! Take John for example. He has been with his girlfriend for a few years. And you will never see him even approach a woman in a pub. You will never hear him say anything degrading about women.

Nicky continues, "Some of the guys try to pull [make out with] women, of course, but they don't do it in a way that's any different than the way any other guys do it. And if they get rejected, they don't give her shit for it; they just move on."

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Jemma, who is also a final year student, shared a dorm with one of the players when she was a freshman, and she has retained her (platonic) friendship with him ever since. "I used to think that [rugby players were misogynistic], but not these guys," she says. "These guys are different. Maybe you won't believe me, but they are gentlemen, real top men." Supporting this, when Beth, who is friends with a player through her degree program, is asked about whether players used misogynistic discourse [like "bitch," "slut," or "whore"], she says, "No, you won't hear that. You just won't." These perspectives are confirmed by the other three interviews of female friends of the team.

We recognize that the women we choose to interview might maintain bias because of their familiarity with the players. However, they also represent the best strategic group of women for us to interview. They are neither too close (as girlfriends or mother's might be); nor are they too socially distant from the men (as women who meet them in a pub might be). We confirm these findings through field notes, too. Here, McGuire records that the term "bitch" is occasionally used between men, but other misogynistic discourse is almost never directed at women; nor is it used to discuss specific women.

This finding is also supported with interviews. When Anderson interviews Ben, he says, "I would never call a woman that." And when asked if he hears his teammates doing such, he responds, "No. Absolutely not. And it wouldn't be a good way to make friends, either. There is just no place for that on this team." Oli agrees. "No. Just the opposite. I'd get into someone's face if I heard it. That just does not occur."

While observations mostly support Oli's proclamation however, it is not *always* borne out in practice. There are two recorded moments in which violent discourse was

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used concerning (but not in the presence of) women. In one case, Joe, said, "That chick's a slut." However, his proclamation failed to raise comment, agreement, or any indication that it bonded his teammates. The same was true of the comment in which Dan, a below average second year player, called a woman "a bitch." Here, at least one of the players looked at him discouragingly. Of key importance, is that where these terms were once used frequently and maliciously, they are now *hardly ever* heard, and men who do use them receive no agreement or support from their team mates.

Field notes do however document frequent discussion *about* sex with women and which women the players find sexually attractive. Phrases like, "she's fit" are heard frequently. Thus, it can be argued that while most of these men do not look to directly insult women with violent discourse, they nonetheless continue to sexually objectify them. Empirically speaking, however, what is important is that these findings severely contrast older studies of university rugby players (Schacht 1996, Muir and Seitz 2004). Men in this study do not regularly partake in calling women "bitches," "sluts" or "whores." Furthermore, there is no ritualistic degrading of women in the way rugby 'tradition' dictates.

Contesting homophobia

The literature on rugby (as well as on other groups of male teamsport athletes) shows that players constantly use homophobic discourse in attempt to negatively motivate men to play harder or tougher, and as a way to distance themselves from homosexual suspicion of their (oftentimes) homoerotic behaviors (Pronger 1990). Schacht (1996) shows, for example, that rugby players call each other "poofs" and/or "faggots" with regular

frequency, and only a few years ago Anderson (2005a) found homophobic discourse staple language for teamsport athletes. However, none of the thirty teammates use the words "poof" [the equivalent of 'fag' in America] to provoke players of other teams. And only two players (Joe and Dan) were noted as using this discourse among players of their own teams. Thus, unlike American sports teams (Anderson 2005a) or school yards (Pascoe 2007), the words "fag" or "poof" are nearly-entirely absent from the rest of these men's usage. This is confirmed by both on-the-pitch and off-the-pitch observations, as well as through the interviews of the six women associated with men on the team.

Consistent with other studies of men who exhibit inclusive versions of masculinity, we theorize this to be because men on this team are gay friendly. In fact, contrasting older studies of rugby men (Dunning and Sheard 1979, Donnelly and Young 1988, Grundlingh 1994, Schacht 1996, Light and Kirk 2000, Muir and Seitz 2004), interviews and participant observations show that these rugby players are enthusiastically accepting of gay men. This is something Pringle and Markula have recently noted among Australian rugby players, too (2005). And, while the field notes show that only Joe and Dan use homophobic discourse in traditional, aggressive ways (note that these are the same two who use misogynistic discourse), there were only six recoded instances of this language all season long; and even these men offer their verbal support for gay men.

Graham, who is perceived as the team's leader, says, "I have absolutely no problems with gay men. None at all." When discussing the possibility of having an openly gay player on his team, he says, "Maybe my coach would not want it, but I wouldn't care. I don't think any of the guys would, really." Adrian adds, "I think it would be pretty damn cool." This sentiment reflects the myriad of gay affirmative responses to

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questions designed to probe for homophobia among the players interviewed. "I wouldn't give a shit," one responds. "Not in the slightest," another says. "Seriously what kind of people do you think we are?" Even Joe and Dan (the two men who occasionally use homophobic and misogynistic discourse) say they would not object to having a gay guy on the team. "As long as he doesn't hit on me," Joe (perhaps unsurprisingly) adds.

Other (multiple) players tell us that they have gay friends; that they have gone to gay pubs; and one of the teammates has a gay roommate. None of this is reported as being problematic. In fact, the men are so enthusiastic about showing their support for homosexuality (to whichever researcher conducts the interview), that it perhaps seems compensatory for how others have acted (we later theorize this to be an oppositional response to their coaches' homophobia). Finally, participant observations support this. The men on this team make no direct detectable, disparaging comments about or toward gay men, in any setting observed.

For these men, there is no aggressive calling of opponents as "faggots," "poofs," or "queers," and there is no aggressive defense of oneself as heterosexual, either. They do not incorporate homophobic language into their rugby songs; and they do not use homophobia in attempt to motivate one another. Thus, the findings of these men contrast with other studies of university rugby men (Schacht 1996, Muir and Seitz 2004). This is why we say these men are exhibiting a more inclusive type of masculinity. And this is particularly interesting considering the gendered opposition they face from their coaches.

Supporting orthodox masculinity

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The heuristic utility of inclusive masculinity theory is made salient when comparing these men's attitudes and behaviors to that of their coaches. Here, a distinct variance exists in the masculinity making process. Observations show that the coaches use the terms "poof," "faggot," and "pussy," (along with a number of other misogynistic terms) with *regular* frequency. After a player fails to properly complete a play, a coach yells, "Don't be a fucking poof." And when another player tells his coach that he does not think he should practice because of an ankle injury, the coach says, "For God's sake, what are you, gay?"

Graham says, "He calls players 'poofs' when they are injured all the time, and he frequently says, 'You're fucking gay,' just to put a player down." Interviews with other athletes confirm that they perceive their coaches' homophobic and misogynistic comments as intended to hurt, degrade and objectify, *as well* as to attempt to motivate players. The players, however, insist this does not work.

"I can see why he does it," Graham says, referring to his coaches' homophobic and misogynistic abuse:

> That's his generation. But it doesn't work for us. It doesn't make us jump up and perform better. It doesn't make me think, 'Oh, no. I'm not a real man, I need to play harder.' It just makes me think he's a fucking idiot.

Some athletes shrug the comments off with less concern. Tom says, "It's just their way of doing it. It's not right, but it's them. You can't let it get to you." While others are more offended by it. Mark says, "He should be fired. Period."

Collectively, the athletes despise their coaches' approach to masculinity building, and they are insistent that they are opposed to their coaches' personal behaviors and homophobic beliefs as well. Still, it is interesting to note that they do not actively contest

their coaches. "No. You don't say anything," Graham says. "That would be a sure way to sit on the bench." When asked why that should matter, he says, "You have to remember that most of us are trying to make the next level, or earn more money [players are paid for winning]. You don't prove yourself on the bench."

However, athletes do support and encourage each other to 'shake off' what many call their coaches' 'abuse.' Ollie says, "Yeah, he says those things all the time. And no, I don't like it or appreciate it. But it doesn't, you know, get to me." He adds, "First, I can't be bothered to care too much about what a jerk like him thinks. So you just ignore him." Mark adds, "But the other guys are there for you when the coach screams this shit at you. They give you a hug and say, 'Don't listen to him, he's a jerk.'"

Alex elaborates on their coaches' homophobia. "The head coach talks about gay people in ugly and disparaging ways." Once, when discussing the fact that Mark has a gay roommate, the coach even went off about how "fucking gross" it must be to see the roommate bring a guy home.

This type of debasing discourse is not reserved for the degradation of gay men alone. The coaches also use a good deal of misogynistic talk in their attempt to "relate to" or "motivate" their athletes. David says, "He's always talking about women as bitches, and saying stuff like, 'Hey, did you nail that bitch last night?' He really steps over the line, even about guys' girlfriends." David adds, "I don't think it's a good situation when a coach is giving out harsh girlfriend banter!''

Illustrating this, Tom recalls a time in which one of the coaches questioned his girlfriend's faithfulness in front of the team; describing in detail how he believed that she was being "violated" by a number of men while he was away on holiday. "I just couldn't

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believe it," Tom says. "He was talking about how guys were fucking her raw. This is my girlfriend he's talking about. And this man is our coach? Someone we're supposed to want to respect? I just wanted to fucking kill him." Graham adds, "…they [the coaches] really should just shut the fuck up."

Not only do the players disapprove of their coaches' homophobic and misogynistic statements (and use of this type of discourse), but they also make it clear that they do not value risk and pain as their coaches would like them to. "One time he made a guy play with the flu," Graham says. "He had to be taken off the pitch and to the hospital." Mark adds:

> He is always trying to make us play through injuries and stuff. We know he will try to do it, so we have this system where if you are hurt and shouldn't be playing, you come up with some other excuse for not being at practice.

When asked if this was a common and accepted strategy among his teammates, Mark adds, "Yes, nobody thinks you should play through injury. That's just stupid."

Interviews with these men also indicate that they emotionally bond by valuing the expression of fear and sadness over personal matters. Part of this resolution may stem from their more inclusive masculinity. But part of this emotional support might also come from the collective experience of feeling bullied and victimized by their coaches. "They run us into the ground and berate us," John says, "They have this mantra that one can never be tough enough, and that's just bullshit. So if the coaches have abused someone, we pull him to the side and say, 'Hey, its okay. He's an arse.'" Mark adds, "We are there for each other. That's what friends are supposed to do."

Discussion

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Competitive, organized, institutionalized contact sports (like rugby) have traditionally

served as a vehicle through which a dominant and conservative ethos of orthodox

masculinity is transmitted between generations (Hargreaves 1986, Connell 1995, Messner

2002). Central to this are hegemonic processes of dominance and subordination that

stratify men through the political and frequent use of homophobic and misogynistic

discourse, so that this discourse serves as a tool of social marginalization of gay men,

feminine-acting straight men, and women. For these and other reasons, competitive

teamsports have therefore been resilient in promoting a culture of homophobia,

misogyny, and anti-femininity in Anglo-American cultures (Curry 1991, Messner 2002).

This is something particularly germane to university men's rugby teams (Dunning and

Sheard 1979, Donnelly and Young 1988, Grundlingh 1994, Schacht 1996, Light and Kirk

2000, Muir and Seitz 2004, Pringle and Markula 2005).

However, results from this research show that men of this highly ranked rugby

team construct much of their masculinity in opposition to orthodox masculine

performance. Players on this elite team offer a more inclusive version of masculinity—

one that they maintain is not predicated in opposition to femininity or homosexuality.

Additionally, while these men still partake in the risky sport of rugby, they do not value

excessive risk-taking as a masculinizing endeavor in the way men in previous research

have been shown to do.

Therefore this research not only shows that the form of masculinity these men

desire and construct is fundamentally more inclusive than what the literature says about

rugby players, but it also shows that these players are constructing this inclusive

perspective in opposition to the orthodox masculinity they have modeled to them by their coaches.

This article contributes to Anderson's research agenda in examining inclusive masculinity behaviors among white, middle-class, university men in two ways. First, while the athletes in this study are unusual in rejecting their coaches' orthodox views, they fail to support their gendered perspective by contesting their coaches directly. Similarly, these men fail to formally contest their coaches on grounds of what they perceive as physically and mentally abusive disciplinary procedures. Instead, they bond in *opposition* to the gendered understandings that their coaches maintain; offering each other emotional comfort and shoring up their version of masculinity against their coaches' gendered perspectives.

We suggest that relying upon the orthodox tactics of homophobic intimidation and masculine subordination reflects the coaches' socialization into an orthodox sporting ethos, one that holds increasingly less weight with these younger men. Accordingly, we recognize that these behaviors are at least a starting point for an opposing gender strategy of inclusive masculinity in the sport: As current players matriculate to the ranks of coaches, they may bring these inclusive perspectives with them.

Second, previous investigations of inclusive masculinity have only examined men in arenas where they are influenced to this gendered perspective through the agency of openly gay men. But there are no known gay or bisexual players on this team. Furthermore, in previous investigations of men who are coached by orthodox valuing men, athletes mostly adopted their coach's gendered values (Anderson 2005b). This is a normal operation of gendered transmission in sport because athletes tend to adopt their

coaches gendered attitudes as a strategy to promote their chances of athletic matriculation (Hughes and Coakley 1991). However, unlike these other studies, these players stand in firm (but somewhat limited) opposition to their coaches' orthodox identities.

It is not our intent to suggest that our ethnography reflects the whole of rugby culture in the UK or beyond. A deep heterosexualization of these particular men occurs because of their high masculine capital, and this may facilitate their social ability to perform inclusive masculinity in a way that men on lower achieving rugby teams (or men who come from less privileged racial or classed backgrounds), may not yet be afforded. Nonetheless, this research highlights that when scholars discuss the gendered perspectives and behaviors of men on rugby, or any other teamsport, we need to be measured in our claims.

Finally, this research makes clear that new ways of thinking and theorizing about men's masculinity are required; particularly in cultures in which homophobia is diminishing. Inclusive masculinity theory is a valuable heuristic tool because it adds to and expands upon Connell's theorizing. Inclusive masculinity theory helps capture and explain men's gendered behaviors, attitudes and identities in a culture (or setting) of diminishing homophobia, something Connell's theory was unable to account for. Accordingly, we suggest that, where hegemonic masculinity theory was perhaps the most valuable framework for examining masculinities throughout the late 1980's and 1990's, the declining homophobia of recent years has made it a less effective theoretical tool today. As homophobia continues to decrease, in certain cultures at least, many cultural markers of homosexuality have been eroding, and there is a significant change to what it means to be masculine (Anderson 2009). Accordingly, the men on this team remind us

that identities are always in flux; that even generalizations about well-studied cultures should be made with caution; and that leading gender theories sometimes need re-examining.

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