Inclusive Masculinity and Soccer at a Catholic University in the American Midwest

Male teamsport athletes have traditionally been described as some of the most homophobic and femphobic men in North American culture. However, in this ethnographic research of an education-based soccer team at a small Catholic university in a rural part of Middle America, I use inclusive masculinity theory to highlight that a softer version of masculinity is in operation. I use participant observation and 22 in-depth interviews to show that these men are gay friendly, that they avoid fights, and that they use reciprocal disclosure and homosocial tactility to emotionally bond. Although the type of masculinity the men on this team exhibit retains some orthodox behaviours, it is nonetheless far removed from the traditional model of hegemonic masculinity commonly attributed to teamsport athletes found in American institutes of sport and education.

Keywords: hegemonic, inclusive, masculinity, soccer, teamsports, men

Introduction

Achieving a socially valued form of masculinity in American culture traditionally requires the attitudinal position of "antifemininity." This is something that masculinity scholars have been discussing for over thirty years (Brannon 1976). As Kimmel (2004: 97) writes, 'While different groups of men may disagree about other traits and their significance in gender definitions, the antifemininity component of masculinity is perhaps the single dominant and universal characteristic'.

In investigating antifemininity among men, however, it is also necessary to investigate homophobia. This is because there is a cultural conflation of femininity with homosexuality in western cultures (Pronger 1990). This has traditionally resulted in heterosexual men distancing themselves from homosexual suspicion through avoidance of feminised behaviours and/or terrains (Kimmel 1994; Plummer 2001; Pollack 1998); and this is particularly true of competitive teamsport culture, where gay men (and men who express femininity) are normally relegated to the margins of masculinity (Messner 1992).

In this ethnographic inquiry however, I investigate the current relationship between antifemininity, homophobia, and the construction of masculinity through the examination of a group of men demographically 'expected' to embody homophobia, misogyny and aggression: teamsport athletes, at a small Catholic university located in a rural part of Middle America. Thus, I not only sampled men thought to be socially conservative due to their teamsport participation, but these participants are also likely to be socially

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conservative because of their geographical location, religious affiliation, and because of the conservative ethos of their formal Catholic education (Maret 1984).

The purpose of this study was therefore to examine attitudes and behaviours concerning characteristics associated with orthodox forms of masculinity among teamsport athletes, gauging them against the body of literature. Framing the work with a new social-feminist theory of masculinity (inclusive masculinity theory), I find a culture of acceptance toward homosexuality among the men on this team. This challenges the reductionist idea of a single orthodox form of masculinity operating throughout all men's teamsports and fills a gap in the otherwise monolithic view that all sportsmen are homophobic and femphobic.

Masculinity in Competitive Teamsports

In the development of contemporary gender and sexuality politics, the institution of sport has played a central role in promoting a conservative form of masculinity—this is particularly true of men's teamsports (Messner 1992). In addition to promoting patriarchy (Bryson 1987), throughout much of the 20th Century, organised competitive teamsports were thought capable of producing (while simultaneously promoting) heterosexuality among American male youth (Author 2009). Accordingly, in a culture that feared boys were becoming, weak, soft and homosexual, sports alongside public education (Savage 2007), were considered a valuable tool in heterosexualising male youth. Messner (2002) theorises this to be one reason for the esteem in which teamsports are still held in American culture today.

Organised, competitive teamsports are almost universally described as locations where heterosexual men battle for masculine dominance in western cultures (Brackenridge et al. 2007). In order to achieve the most socially valued form of masculinity, men in sport learn to repress fear and deny pain (Messner 1992). Violence in sport is common, and attributed to being just "part of the game" (Giulianotti 1999); but it extends into youth culture away from the sporting pitches as well (Field 1999; Stoudt 2006).

Participation and success in this socially esteemed institute of sport, particularly contact sports, has served as an important mechanism in forming the attitudinal components and behavioural processes necessary in maintaining or improving one's social stratification in a masculine hierarchy (cf. Connell 1995). This is particularly true of sports that are intertwined with school-systems (Gerdy 2002). Failure to live up to the esteemed cultural construction of masculinity traditionally results in males being subject to physical and discursive methods of subordination, not only on the field, but among peers in school as well (Nayak and Kehily 1996; Pascoe 2005).

More recently, however, some researchers (Adams, Anderson & McCormack 2010; Author 2005, 2008a, 2009; Harris and Clayton 2007; Price and Parker 2003; Pringle and Markula 2005; Southall *et al*. 2009) have found that despite decades of overt homophobia and femphobia in sport, more progressive attitudes are being esteemed among the men in the teams they studied. For example, Southall et al. (2009) survey competitive teamsport athletes in the deep American South, finding that only 22% express any reservation about having a gay male sharing sporting spaces with them; and when men are examined alone, that number dropped to just 14%. Thus, the purpose of

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this research is to select a group of males who are at a conservative institution of education in a conservative state in America, in order to examine their masculinity for aggression, homophobia, femphobia, as well as their processes of emotional and physical bonding. To do this, I use a new, feminist, social-constructionist theory of masculinity, which has been useful in both sport (Author 2009) and educational (McCormack 2010) settings.

Inclusive Masculinity Theory

The most prominent theory for understanding the social stratification of masculinities has been Connell's (1987, 1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity. From a social constructionist perspective, hegemonic masculinity theory articulates the social processes by which a masculine hierarchy is created and legitimised. Here, one archetype of masculinity is esteemed above all others, so that boys and men who most closely embody this standard are accorded the most social capital. Conversely, those who behave in ways that conflict with this valorised masculinity are normally marginalised, while those at the bottom of the hierarchy are often publicly homosexualised for failing to adhere to rigid heteromasculine boundaries. Accordingly, in this model homophobia is used as a weapon to stratify men in deference to a hegemonic mode of heteromasculine dominance (Connell 1987).

There have, however, been a number of critiques of hegemonic masculinity theory over the years (cf. Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Wetherell and Edley 1995). One critique is that, even among masculinity scholars, there is a great deal of discussion about what this theory is intended to imply, what is commonly used properly/improperly

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with it, and what it means to be 'hegemonically' masculine in the first place. Another difficulty with this theory is that, if one writes from a social constructionist perspective, hegemonic masculinity theory maintains near-hegemonic rule over masculinities studies.

Moller (2007: 265) writes, 'Connell's theoretical apparatus seduces the way we, as scholars in masculinity studies, think about our object/s of study. The concept of hegemonic masculinity invites readers to look "out there" for particularly nefarious instances of masculinist abuses of power'. This may lead to scholars over emphasising socio-negative aspects of competitive sport, and to under examine ways in which men express other, perhaps more mundane (or even feminist-oriented), types of masculinities. This is precisely the reason why inclusive masculinity theory was developed (see Author 2009): scholars were increasingly finding little heuristic utility in the emphasis on homophobia, domination and marginalisation that exists with hegemonic masculinity theory (Anderson 2009; McCormack 2010; Swain 2006).

Inclusive masculinity theory highlights that, while homophobia and antifemininity have traditionally proven to be effective policing mechanisms of masculinity, they no longer maintain the same currency in regulating many groups of undergraduate men today. Inclusive masculinity theory contributes to hegemonic masculinity theory by conceptualising this process through the notion of 'homohysteria', which is defined as heterosexual men's fear of being publicly homosexualised through violating the rigid boundaries of heteromasculinity. Homohysteria is linked to homophobia, but it is also independent of it. One might, for example, be gay friendly but still homohysteric.

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Accordingly, the cultural level of homohysteria is affected by the expression of men's cultural homophobia *and* femphobia in Western cultures.

Inclusive masculinity theory adopts hegemonic masculinity theory in times of high homohysteria. Here, boys and men are compelled to express homophobic and femphobic attitudes. Accordingly, most homosocial tactility or expression of emotional intimacy with another male is stigmatised—otherwise men are homosexualised for their behaviours. Thus, as multiple masculinity scholars have shown (cf. Plummer 2001), in times of high homohysteria boys and men are compelled to express homophobic and sexist attitudes, to raise their masculine capital through sport and muscularity, and to raise their heterosexual capital through sexually objectifying women.

In such a culture, inclusive masculinity theory and hegemonic masculinity theory both maintain that heterosexual men must also keep emotional and physical distance from one another (Field 1999; cf. Ibson 2002). In a period of high homohysteria, physical demonstrations of intimacy are generally relegated to violence (such as playing teamsports); conversely, acts of soft tactility (such as holding hands, softly hugging, caressing, or non-sexual kissing) are prohibited (Pollack 1998). In such cultural moments, their peers socially homosexualise boys and men who do display physical or emotional intimacy: consequently they are stripped of their publicly perceived heteromasculinity (Kaplan 2005). It is in this institutional context that Kimmel suggests homophobia *is* masculinity (1994).

However, Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory fails to accurately account for what occurs in a culture of *decreasing* cultural homophobia and homohysteria. Perhaps this is because the theory originated in the early 1980's, a time characterised by

hypermasculinity and homophobia (Author 2009; Loftus 2001). Hegemonic masculinity theory is incapable of capturing multiple masculinities of equal cultural value, simply because it is predicated upon *one* dominating (hegemonic) archetype, which is replaced by yet another hegemonic archetype. Hegemonic masculinity theory does not account for the varying masculinities that are found to flourish, without stratification, in the absence of cultural homophobia (cf. Author 2005b; Author et al. forthcoming; McCormack 2010). While hegemonic masculinity theory describes one hegemonic version as being contested by and replaced with another hegemonic version (protest masculinity), inclusive masculinity theory maintains that as homohysteria declines, the archetype of conservative masculinity *loses* its dominance, and less oppressive masculinities proliferate without holding hegemonic sway. This is an important theoretical difference. With hegemonic masculinity theory there is always hegemony, with inclusive masculinity theory there is sometimes hegemony.

Inclusive masculinity theory further augments hegemonic masculinity theory by showing that, in a culture free (or nearly free) of publicly expressed homophobia, men's homohysteria is greatly reduced. Here, heterosexual boys and men are permitted to engage in an increasing range of behaviours that once led to homosexual suspicion, all without threat to their publicly perceived heterosexual identities. For example, I previously showed that fraternity men (2008a), rugby men (forthcoming), and heterosexual male cheerleaders (2008b) maintain close physical and emotional relationships with each other in multiple settings. I more recently (2009) found heterosexual men in England kissing one another as an expression of homosocial endearment. McCormack (2010) shows that among English sixth form students, young

men express physical tactility, and that homophobia (including homophobic discourse) is stigmatised. Finally, Taulke-Johnson (2008) highlights the relative homophobia free lives of university students in Wales, where boys are permitted much greater expression of gender. In other words, a variety of once-stigmatised gendered behaviours will proliferate when there is a lack of homophobic policing. In such a culture, multiple masculinities will proliferate *without* hierarchy or hegemony. Multiple masculinities will co-exist, and the gendered behaviours of boys and men will be less differentiated from girls.

Methods

Participants and Setting

In the early part of 2008, I was contacted by a student who was using my academic work in a university course. During our emails, I learned that he was a university soccer player and informed him that I was looking for American teams to conduct my funded research with. After gaining institutional approval, I flew to the US for this research. Thus, the research location was selected largely by chance.

The 22 heterosexual players represent a homogenous group of middle class, white men aged between 18 and 22. Most maintained some Catholic views through their upbringing, but only four players strongly identified as Catholic, one of whom was Hispanic. There were also three black players. Most of the participants were raised in rural areas, although a few came from the suburbs of a major city. The players and their coach all describe their university as a highly conservative institution. Players are required to attend religious classes, and to attend Catholic Church services.

The location of the university is in a rural part of Midwest America. The neighbourhoods surrounding the university (of 1500 students) are quintessential small town America: four bedroom homes, with two large vehicles in the driveway, American flags adorning their porches, and a basketball hoop in the driveway. The ethnic makeup is almost exclusively white, and football and soccer are highly esteemed. This is also a town with a number of small churches.

Procedures

After securing signed consent of players and coaches (where players were told that I would be collecting data on them in all social situations), I used an entrenched form of short-term ethnography. I trained and socialised with the players for a period of ten days. My goal was to immerse myself into their social world, maintaining that my identity as 'researcher' would be partially shed after building my social and athletic capital with the men. Accordingly, I ran with them in training, socialised with them while partying, and ended up on their couches after nights out clubbing. Thus, data concerning homophobia and masculinities was first obtained through extensive participant observation before interviews.

Getting to know players in their own social worlds, permitted me to relate to the players lived experiences, their interactions with non-athletes (who did not know I was conducting a study), and to have more open and meaningful discussions than interviews alone can provide. This approach improves research validity (Davies 1999).

Although this is not covert research, in order to minimise researcher effect, all note-taking was conducted by recall immediately after casual conversations (Spradley 1970).

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Thus, participants were not aware of note-taking. I perceive that this enabled the players to quickly forget, at least at times, that I was conducting research; I was therefore able to informally examine their attitudes concerning homosexuality and masculinity in multiple social settings.

After an initial phase of building rapport with the players, semi-structured, individual interviews took place. These interviews provided men the opportunity to intellectualise and articulate their thoughts on masculinities and sexualities. All players were interviewed, with 40 minutes being the average. Basic themes included their views on masculinity (behaviours and attitudes), their views on homosexuality among men, their emotional and bonding experiences with other men, their social experiences with gay men, and what (if any) difficulties they may have with gay men.

The order of discussion in these interviews varied, as did the exact wording of questions used. Furthermore, the amount of time allotted to each question varied depending upon the flow of conversation with each informant. Thus, not all questions were asked of each informant. These interviews were conducted in private, all participants signed a consent sheet, and none refused participation. The players were informed of their right to examine notes and/or earlier drafts of the paper, and they were told that their names would be changed in order to protect their anonymity. All other ethical procedures required by both universities were strictly adhered to.

Finally, I conducted follow up interviews with three players six months after completion of this study. This was to determine if researcher effect had substantial bearing on the data obtained. Interviewing players explicitly about the topic one is studying can influence them to give answers that they determine to be 'politically

correct', so interview responses were not only checked against participant observations, but against the follow up interviews six months later (Goetz and LeCompte 1984).

Measures

Notes from observations and interviews were coded on the basis of their revealing an insight into the players' views and behaviours concerning masculinities and homophobia (Clayton & Humberstone 2006). Transcriptions were coded and ten percent of the transcriptions were cross-verified using inter-rater reliability sampling with another academic. Finally, I employ thick descriptions in the body of results. This is in order to explain not just the men's behaviours, but also the context and practice of those behaviours (Geertz 1973).

Researcher Reflexivity

I perceive that my ability to engage in their specialised athletic dialogue, and my relatively youthful looks, helped me develop rapport with players, who granted me intimate access to social spaces that might otherwise be closed to non-students. The team captain, who introduced me to players and invited me to team events, further facilitated my social acceptance.

It should also be noted that I have extensive experience collecting data in this manner (Author 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, forthcoming) and, that as an ethnographic researcher, I endeavour to put students at ease. Highlighting this, I spent considerable emotional energy managing my identity to align more with that of being a university student than an academic. However, I am under no illusion that I became one of them

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(Wax 1971). Just because I am relatively accepted as a short-term honorary insider, does not mean that I lose my critical perspective. I was not in the field long enough (ten days) to internalize their belief systems (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 1995: Goetz and LeCompte 1984). I also recognise that this is a short period for ethnographic research, but I believe that the significant amount of time I spent talking to and formally interviewing students permitted me to uncover their stated belief systems. One can never know, however, whether these athletes altered their perspectives on the account of being studied.

RESULTS

Supporting Homosexuality

Although teamsports are traditionally described as highly homophobic organisations (cf. Pronger 1990), there is little evidence to suggest that the men on this team either intellectualised homophobia, or behaved in homophobic ways; although a few of the men expressed some reservations with homosexuality. For example, Ryan, who strongly identified as Catholic, maintained that homosexuality was a sin but that he nonetheless believed that gay men should be out with their sexuality. 'I'm not one to judge. Sin is sin', he said. 'We all sin…it's no different than me lusting after a girl, it's still sin…but I'm not against gays'. Ryan (who believes in domestic partnership but not gay marriage) was the most homo-negative of the men on this team. The other three Catholic men seemed less convinced that homosexuality is sinful. Carlos said, 'God made people gay. That's that. I'm not going to question what God does' and all but two others supported gay marriage.

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For the rest of the men, casual and formal conversation revealed no avoidance of gay men, dislike of gay men, or ostracization of gay men in their social lives. Instead, these young men expressed outright acceptance of gay men. For example, when I asked Josh what his teammates thought concerning homosexuality, he said:

> I think everyone is cool with it. I don't hear homophobia on this team. And if anyone was homophobic, I think they'd either have to change their views, or risk being excluded…Even if someone were homophobic, I think they would be too ashamed to admit it.

Mike added, 'I've got gay friends. I think it's cool having them around. I don't think anybody cares, frankly'. This attitude extends to the possibility of having gay teammates, too.

The results I found concerning homophobia indicated that while heteronormativity persists, there was no tangible, measureable, expressed degree of homophobia among these 22 men (with the exception of Ryan, who maintained some personal homophobia). Highlighting sentiment opposite to that of Ryan's, I asked Kris if he might be inclined to accept a gay teammate, by posing hypothetical questions: one in which the gay player was quite good, and the other in which he was rather poor. 'Are you kidding me'? he asked. 'You think I'd treat a guy differently because he was good? Like I'd be more homophobic if he wasn't?' Kris seemed genuinely insulted by the question. 'Please tell me none of the other guys on the team said that they wouldn't accept a gay player'? None did.

Kris credits his parents for teaching him his inclusive perspective on homosexuality. After telling me about a homophobe that he used to know, he asked,

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'What goes on in someone's life that makes them so unaccepting'? This was the general attitude of the men on this team. They could not understand why someone would be homophobic, even if religious. Most reported having come to this gay-positive standpoint in their youth. Tom, for example, who is in his fifth year of study (university degrees take four to five years in America), represented the majority of athletes' attitudinal positions:

> I never had a problem with gays and I don't think homophobia is much of an issue any more for our generation. I think things get better every ten years. And this is our turn. Our parents accepted blacks, and we accept gays. It's only the older generation who really has a problem with it.

Other players concur, suggesting that they grew up with tolerant and accepting views of homosexuality. Most have gay friends or relatives, and all have grown up seeing a number of gay characters on television. These men also grew up with extreme gay visibility on the Internet. For example, MySpace and Facebook both ask for one's sexuality, so that it is publicly stated on one's profile page.

However, not all of Tom's teammates are raised with an inclusive perspective; others learned it later in life. Three men suggested that they had to undo their homophobia. 'I used to hate gays', Ben said. 'But now I don't care. I've gotten over it'. When asked how he got over it, he responded. 'I don't know, really. There was a gay club in my high school, and there were some pretty popular guys in the club. I think I just learned that it was no big deal'. Conversely, Nick maintained homophobia throughout high school, not changing his mind until university. 'Yeah, I hated gays. I don't know why, but I did'. Nick attempted to understand the origins of his old feelings. 'But then I came from a really small, conservative town'. He recalled that during his freshman year

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he was talking to one of his teammates about a guy he suspected was gay. 'I remember saying to him that I thought that guy was a fag. But he shut me down. I forget what he said exactly, but he was like, 'yeah, so what's your problem with that"? Nick added:

> When this guy questioned me on why I was so homophobic, I was just embarrassed. It's not like I had any reason to hate gays. So I would start to catch myself before spouting shit like that…. And then I gradually grew cool with it. I've got a gay friend now, too. And he's all good…I am ashamed of how I used to think.

Tim was less homophobic:

> I just didn't like the idea of gay sex. I think that led me to not like gays. But hey, as one of the gay guys in my halls said to me: 'I don't like the idea of vaginal sex but I don't hate you for it'. I learned to disassociate an act that I think is gross, to those who engage in it. So no, I don't really have a problem with it today.

It is important to recognise, however, that these three men are exception in this research. The vast majority of social mechanisms that lead these men to affirm gay men occurred *before* entering university. Thus, this research is mostly about reporting findings after the fact.

Eschewing Violence

Research shows that athletes maintain more tolerance for sporting violence than their non-athletic peers. For example, when presenting athletes and non-athletes with fictional accounts of sporting violence, athletes are over-represented in reasoning that violence is an acceptable part of the game (Bredemeier and Shields 1984). Accordingly, individual

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and team fights are a semi-regular occurrence in teamsports. Other research suggests

sport teaches men to be violent outside of sport, too. For example, Crosset and his

colleagues (1995) found that while student-athletes make up only 3.7 percent of the men

at Division 1 universities, they are responsible for 19 percent of sexual assault reports to

campus Judicial Affairs offices. Bloom and Smith (1996) explain an over-representation

of athlete violence through 'cultural spill over theory', maintaining that the more

widespread social approval there is for violence in sport, the greater the likelihood of

illegitimate violence occurring outside sport. However, my research indicates that men on

this team eschew such violence.

Examining violence among these 22 players on and off the pitch, only three

reported having fought in high school (all occurred on the soccer field), and only one

player has been in a fight since coming to university. Conversely, most of the men

suggested that they have never been in a fight. When we asked Tom about his fighting

history, he said, 'No. I have never been in a fight. Why would I'? John said, 'Fighting is

just stupid, it accomplishes nothing. It's not like after [the fight] two guys fight one goes,

'Oh, I see things your way now'.

However, I was particularly struck by Clint's attitude toward fighting. While

spitting tobacco into a cup, and with his baseball cap twisted backward, he told me of his

abusive upbringing. 'Until I was a junior in high school, my dad beat me', he said. But

'outside of my dad, no. I've never been in a fight. There's just no reason to fight'. Clint

then said that rather than learning to solve problems through violence, being beaten

actually taught him that violence was useless in solving problems.

All but one of the men agreed with Clint's attitudinal position. Collectively, these

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men suggested that fighting is a useless activity without purpose or place in their lives. Steve, the dissenting voice, thought that fighting was sometimes necessary. 'If a guy's being a real dickhead', he said, 'Sometimes he just needs a beating to put him in place'. Still, Steve said that he has never been in a fight himself.

This philosophy of pacificism extends to defending one's ground, as well. For example, I hypothetically asked a number of the players if they would get violent with a guy who had sex with their girlfriends. None did. 'I might like to pound him', Derren said, 'but the reality is that if my girlfriend cheated with someone, it's her I should be mad at. Not him. I'm not going to be friends with him. And I'd certainly tell him how I felt, but I'd have to have more of a talk with my girlfriend than him'.

These attitudinal positions were confirmed by my observations. I saw no instances of men enacting violence, or even posturing as being capable of such. For example, a spilled drink in a bar brought two men together in apologizing, instead of confrontation. I noted that the one who bumped the other, not only offered to buy him a new drink, but that the incident started a conversation that left the men talking for fifteen minutes. This highlights another significant finding with the research, men in this study were eager to emotionally bond with other men.

Emotional Bonding

Boys and men have been socially compelled to hide emotions of pain, fear or loss in American culture. Even from an early age boys learn not to show fear, incompetence, or emotional distress (Pollack 1998). Messner (1992) suggest that this is a hallmark of

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teamsport masculinity. The ability to remain stoic, tough, and unemotional are traditionally characteristics valued by men. However, this is not the case with these men.

A senior on the team, Joe hosts a weekly 'games night'. Players, girlfriends, and friends are invited. One night, we were drinking beer, eating pizza and building a jigsaw puzzle with eight players, three girls (none were girlfriends) and one male who was not part of the soccer team. There was one giant table dominating the room, and we all scrunched around it to construct the 500-piece puzzle. As the puzzle began to take shape, Kris received a text and announced that he had to leave. There was visible tension in the room. Kris got up, said his goodbyes and then left the room. After the door closed, Dan hugged Mark, wrapping both arms around him. 'Come on. Let's talk', he said. Dan directed Mark to the other room to console him.

One of the players explained to me that Kris is Mark's best friend. Lately, however, Kris was spending so much time with his new girlfriend that Mark felt abandoned. I looked to see how they would respond to this (feminine) emotion of loneliness and longing. Perhaps Dan was simply removing Mark away from the others by taking him out of the room, in order to isolate him from being further emasculated, I thought. With plenty of beer in the fridge, I wondered if one of the players would take one to Mark, perhaps telling him to, 'Suck it up', or to 'forget about it'. But they did not. With three women in the room, I also wondered if the men would let them do the emotional care-work. Again they did not. Instead, players intermittently got up to check on Mark, each expressing concern for his emotional state.

The conversation around the table was not about what a wuss Mark was being, but about how painful it must be for him to feel that he was losing his best friend.

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Nobody said, 'he'll be fine' (which could minimise his emotional state and help maintain his masculinity); or, 'he's being a pussy' (which could build one's masculine capital at Mark's expense). This was a case of homosocial, socio-emotional support, without fear of feminisation or homosexualisation. Instead of men being tough, this was a case in which men were free to express their emotions, and have them validated by their peers. When I asked Mark about his relationship with Kris the next day, he said:

> We have been friends for three years. I just wanted this last year together to be special. I know it's not right to ask him not to have a girlfriend, but because she goes to this university she just takes up all his time…I've got my friends on the team, yes. But I miss him.

I asked Mark if he had let Kris know about how he felt. 'Of course', he said, 'I even cried a bit in front of him'. This declaration of crying as a form of expressing and expecting emotional intimacy influenced me to ask about crying in other interviews.

Turner said that although the last time he cried was a year ago (when he broke up with his girlfriend); he thinks guys should cry more often. Mark said, 'I cried with one of my best friends a few months ago. I was going to university and I was sad because I wouldn't see him until Christmas'. Josh added that not only does he cry but that, 'I could cry in front of anyone on the team, too'. Meanwhile Clint (the player beaten by his father) said, 'I learned not to cry when I was young. When I did my dad just beat me more. But I wish I could cry'.

The desire, but inability to cry, and the occasional defensiveness about crying, highlights that these men do not live within a gender utopia. They have not completely shaken off the conscripts of orthodox notions of masculinity; residue of older attitudes of

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masculinity influence some of their behaviours. For example, while these men thought that it would be acceptable to cry after an emotionally painful defeat, they did not think that it would be okay to cry because of a physically painful injury. Still, they express more homosocial emotion than previous literature suggests men do (Thompson 2006).

Thus, in many emotional capacities, these men seem to be in the residual of orthodox masculinity. They do not retain the same emotional rights as women, but have significantly improved their freedom of expression from where the literature says men are concerning emotionality. Highlighting this, Sean said, 'Sometimes I feel like I want to talk about something but I don't know how… I either don't feel like I can open up about things or I don't know what to say'. Frank agreed, 'I don't really talk to people about emotional stuff. Maybe if you are going through something I will…so I'll tell my buddies some stuff…but not the whole story'.

Thus, I found multiple levels of emotional bonding, ranging from men who have a harder time expressing themselves, to men who cry and talk emotionally with their friends. However, and important to inclusive masculinity theory, I found no judgement for those who related to each other in ways that the gender literature associates more with the social mechanisms through which women bond (Lorber 1994; Reis 1998; Diamond 2002; Griffin 2002; Salas and Ketzenberger 2004; Thompson 2006). Even among men who were unable to cry, or unwilling to open up emotionally, none stigmatised, homosexualised, or in any other way look despairingly upon those who did.

Homosocial Tactility

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's social and emotional distance has been requisite for heteromasculine behaviours among American boys and men (Ibson 2002), as extensive contact (of any nature) has been thought to imply homosexual desire. Accordingly, American boys have only been able to physically relate to one another though gestures of mock violence, such as a punch, a brief wrestle, or through playing sport. Even when men have hugged, they have pounded each other with two sharp thuds to the back rather than embracing each other (Author 2009). This, however, is not the way the men on this team physically or emotionally relate to each other.

The tactile support these men provided for each other was ever-present, and (to them) un-noteworthy. Men on this team patted each other on the back in traditional ways sometimes, but other times they wrapped their arms around each other's necks and heads, holding each other. They occasionally placed an arm around another man's waist or rested against a friend while standing. Men laid their heads on each other's laps while watching television, slept in the same beds after nights out, and adjusted each other's clothing and commented on each other's hair before going out. This tactility, emotional expressionism, and tenderness were central components of their homosocial bonding, and all of this happened with surprising frequency: there was far too much physical tactility to quantify.

When I interviewed men about these behaviours they were somewhat surprised. For example, I asked Eugene about the tactility I observed. He responded, 'Of course. What are we not supposed to touch each other'? Seth said, 'Yeah, you got to show a brother you love him. It's about respect'. Frank added, 'Man, you should watch Steve and

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Dave, their all over each other. I know there just good mates, but sometimes you'd sware they were boyfriends.' Although this behaviour contrasts what older literature says about heterosexual men (Plummer 1999; Field 1999; Epstein et al. 2001), it aligns with a pattern of the type of inclusive masculinity I find among other groups of university men, including fraternity members (2008c), rugby players (forthcoming), cheerleaders (2005), other soccer teams (forthcoming), and sixth form students (Author et. al. forthcoming). It appears that, homosocial tactility and emotional intimacy are increasingly important to the lives of these particular young men. I even saw one of the players, Jesse, kiss his teammate on the cheek. When I asked him if this (the kiss) was a regular occurrence, he said, 'Oh yeah, a million times. I kiss guys all the time'. He added, 'It's a way of saying 'You're my brother''.

Discussion

Research traditionally portrays men's teamsport as a highly homophobic institution (c.f. Pronger 1990). Accordingly, attitudes and behaviours regarding homosexuality have been marginalised. This combination, of homophobia and femphobia has been shown to severely police men's attitudinal beliefs and their gendered behaviours. Here, men who fail to approximate heteromasculine perspectives normally find themselves subject to institutional and cultural punishment. This not only produces a culture in which homosexuality is highly stigmatised, but it also reproduces a homohysteric culture that severely limits the emotional and physical intimacy between heterosexual men (Ibson 2002). Thus, the literature shows that physical contact has been relegated to acts of on the field aggression, or momentary slaps in hugging. And, rather than being encouraged to

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emote and be tender with each other, masculine culture has instead valorised fighting and stoicism among teamsport athletes.

However, in this research on heterosexual male soccer players, I found evidence of much more inclusive forms of masculinity. In this culture of low homophobia, there was increased emotionality and physical tactility. These men engaged in a wider display of once-taboo gendered behaviours, without being homosexualised for them. Heterosexual men in this research demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of homosexuality; they value emotional intimacy; and they engage in acts of physical tactility with other men in order to shore-up homosocial bonds. Thus, men in this research value a broader range of gendered behaviours than traditionally accorded to teamsport athletes.

These behaviours occurred in all social contexts they were observed: classroom settings, intimate gatherings, team practises and competitions, parties, and bars. These attitudes were expressed, and behaviours observed, while drinking or not. And while I did not follow teammates in their social lives outside of the university setting, these men express that the behaviours and attitudes I account for in this research are consistent with all arenas of their social lives.

The near-total absence of overt homophobia among these men is similar to research I conducted on an English sixth form (Author et al. forthcoming). Here, six months of participant observations supported the attitudinal positions of students, who maintained pro-gay views similar to those described here. While heterosexuality continued to be privileged through its presumption, the pro-gay attitudes were born out through the social inclusion of gay students and the critical interrogation of homophobic

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practices of previous generations. Accordingly, while it is possible that the demonstration of homosocial behaviours co-exists alongside overt expressions of homophobia in other contexts, the findings of my sixth form study suggest that this is unlikely. Certain individuals (like Ryan) may maintain personal homophobia, but the expression of it is stigmatised among his peer group.

While I describe this team as representing inclusive masculinity, I note that they still engage in certain behaviours associated with older notions of masculinity. These include valuing athleticism, using athletic ability in constructing masculine stratifications, binge drinking, and hyper-heterosexuality. Furthermore, while these men are more emotionally expressive, many still find it difficult to open up and/or cry. Nonetheless, there exists no hegemonic influence in this setting for men to act in orthodox ways. Those who do not cry, for example, express interest in doing so, but not the other way around

These findings have implications not only for what researchers interested in this field think about the way teamsport athletes behave, but they have implications for those interested in masculinities in educational settings as well. There is a growing counter-narrative to decades of research in this field: studies showing that the dominant conception of hegemonic masculinity in education (McCormack 2010; Taulke Johnson 2008) or education-based sports (Anderson 2009, 2008b, 2005b; Harris and Clayton 2007; Price and Parker 2003; Pringle and Markula 2005; Southall *et al.* 2009) is no longer accurate. Thus, this research not only contributes to a growing body of research that provides evidence to inclusive masculinities within sporting culture (Author 2009) but because the behaviours of these athletes were not measurably different from the non-athletes also observed in these settings (class, parties, intimate gatherings) it suggest that

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there is a shifting gendered narrative among white, middle class, youth culture more widely. Indeed, a June 4, 2010 Gallup poll (Gallup.com) shows that young American men (18-49) are the fastest rising demographic in accepting homophobia, having gained 20% in the previous four years. In fact, they are shown to be less homophobic than women of the same age when asked if homosexuality was 'morally acceptable', with 62% responding that it is (and I suspect that 18 year old men are more inclined to answer yes than the 49 year old men).

While generalisations are limited—for example there is no guarantee that these results would be replicated among the men of this university's American football team—they nonetheless suggest that we should be careful about generalising about sporting men maintaining socially conservative views and behaviours. We should not assume the presence of hegemonic masculinity among sport teams anymore, as multiple recent studies of university athletes shows otherwise (Author 2009).

It is an open discussion as to why these men exhibit these types of behaviours. However, I note that the institution of competitive sport, the rules governing it, the sex-segregation which defines it, and the near-total absence of bisexual and gay men in it, has not changed in the previous decade (Author 2009). Similarly, the Catholic Church lags behind cultural progress on same-sex inclusion, still defining homosexual sex as immoral. Accordingly, generative mechanisms for this change appears not to come through the institutions these men belong to.

Instead, all but one of the men on this team seems to have come to this setting with their inclusive perspective in place. Accordingly, much of the socio-positive influence I find in this setting seems to be attributable to larger youth culture, and not to

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organisational or institutional changes—something the Gallup poll confirms. Interview data establishes that the majority of these men have been influenced by their culture to be gay friendly, and to value homosocial physical and emotional intimacy before coming to this team/university. This is consistent with contemporary research on youth attitudes which suggests that tolerance to controversial social issues, such as homosexuality, is at its most liberal in younger cohorts (c.f. Andersen and Fetner 2008). Furthermore, most of the men have had positive relationships with gay men prior to joining this team. Thus, even though they entered a university that they consider to be homophobic (because of its regional and religious demographics), and even though most have been raised in a religious faith that condemns homosexuality, they have not (as a collective) had to undo a great deal of homophobia.

Men on this team resist many of the tenets of hegemonic masculinity and instead construct a normative (non-hegemonic) form of masculinity based on inclusiveness rather than marginalisation. Men on this team feel safe to express inclusive notions of masculinity within their team's social networks and that of their immediate non-team peer groups at university as well. Accordingly, the men on this team remind us that identities are always in flux; that even generalisations about well-studied cultures should be made with caution; and that leading gender theories sometimes need re-examining.

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