

“Being Masculine is not about who you Sleep with...:”  
Heterosexual athletes contesting masculinity and the one-time rule of homosexuality

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## Abstract

Using in-depth interviews and participant observations, I examine how two groups of heterosexual high school U.S. football players alter differently the construction of heterosexuality and masculinity after joining collegiate cheerleading. First, I show that informants from both groups make masculinity accessible to gay men before next describing how they reconcile heterosexuality with limited forms of same-sex sex. Forty-percent of the heterosexual men I interview confirm engaging in same-sex sex, although they differently frame the requirements for it. I suggest these findings have various meaning for the relationship between sexuality and masculinity, as both somewhat strengthen and contest the borders of heterosexuality and masculinity. These findings beckon consideration as to how the relationship among sport, sexuality, and homophobia is changing.

### Key Words:

Heteromascularity, masculinity, heterosexuality, cheerleading, one-time rule

## Introduction

In this research I use qualitative methods and a social-constructionist perspective to examine the relationship between masculinity and same-sex sexual behaviors among heterosexual men in a feminized terrain. Social constructionism attributes the creation of gendered identities to a complex process of cultural, institutional and organizational influences (Acker, 1990; Messner, 1992, 1997; Seidman, 1996, 2003) alongside individual agency (Thorne, 1999), with the “power of discourse” (Weeks, 1996, p. 749) serving a system of exchange between these systems (Butler, 1990). Socially constructed gender categories are therefore understood to be “constantly created and re-created out of our human interaction” with social life (Lorber, 1994, p. 13), and individuals are always thought to be “doing” gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Connell (1987, 1995) advances an understanding of the problematic process of constructing masculinities, particularly highlighting the privilege some versions of masculinity retain over the subordinated and marginalized others. She suggests the hegemonic form of masculinity shifts in response to cultural influences, permitting it to maintain social dominance. Of relevance to this research, many of the achieved and ascribed attributes of the current form of hegemonic masculinity can be found within the team sport athlete: strong, masculine, good looking, and hyper-heterosexual. Accordingly, studies of the multiplicity and changing forms of masculinities (Kimmel, 1996) have complimented a growing body of literature examining the role team sports play in the construction of hegemonic masculinity, particularly in North America (Anderson 2002, 2005a; Messner 1992, 2002). These studies attribute sport’s influence to the socialization of almost all boys into gender-segregated team sports, where they are normally

taught to devalue women, femininity and gay men (Anderson, forthcoming; Messner, 2002). Conversely, boys and men who occupy feminine terrain or play feminized sports are often thought gay; homosexualized by the institutional culture associated with feminine terrain (Adams, 1993; Anderson, 2005b; Grindstaff & West, 2006; Hanson, 1995).

However, I have previously shown that the hegemonic form of masculinity produced in teamsports is challenged in two instances: first, by gender-integrating men into women's sports (Anderson, forthcoming) and also by openly gay athletes (Anderson, 2002, 2005a). These findings have implications for this article because heterosexual collegiate male cheerleaders compete alongside both female and openly gay male teammates in competitive cheerleading.

### *Heteromascularity*

Like gender, sexual identities are also socially constructed (Seidman, 2003) and continuously contested (Flowers & Bustin, 2001) categories of social power (Foucault, 1984). Occurring against a backdrop of homophobic social stigma, heterosexuality maintains hegemonic dominance in North America (Rich, 1981; Rubin, 1984). But the stigma associated with men's homosexuality reflects more than just the dislike of sex between men: male homosexuality is also disparaged because it is culturally conflated with femininity (Barrett, 2000; Kimmel, 1994; Nardi, 1995; Pronger, 1990), something Schwartz and Rutter (2000) describe as the gender of sexuality.

Boys (Epstein, Kehily, Mac an Ghaill & Redman, 2001; Pollack, 1999) and men (Anderson, 2005a; Messner, 1992) wishing to avoid homosexual stigma generally do not work (Williams, 1995) or play (Adams, 1993; McGuffey & Rich, 1999) in feminized terrain or act in effeminate ways (Kimmel, 1994) if they desire to be perceived as heterosexual and masculine

(heteromasculine) among peers. Accordingly, boys and men traditionally position themselves away from femininity and feminized terrains, to show they are not feminine and therefore not gay (Anderson, 2005a; McGuffey & Rich, 1999). Epstein et. al. (2001, p. 135) note, “Even little boys are required to prove that they are ‘real boys’ in ways that mark them as masculine, even macho, and therefore (by definition) heterosexual.” Hence, homophobia does more than just marginalize gay men; it also limits the behaviors of many straight boys and men.

The desire to be perceived heteromasculine is understandable in a culture that distributes privilege unequally according to gender and sexuality (Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994). Consequently, when heterosexual boys and men fear the stigma of homosexuality, they normally conceal their same-sex sexual practices. This is because same-sex sexual behaviors are normally conflated with a homosexual identity in North American and Western European cultures (Anderson, 2005a; Jagose, 1996; Lancaster, 1988; Nardi, 1995; Parker, 1999). Almaguer (1991, p. 77) suggests same-sex sex historically carries “...with it a blanket condemnation of all same sex behavior...because it is at odds with a rigid, compulsory heterosexual norm.” Lancaster (1988, p. 116) expands this model, arguing, “Even homosexual desires stigmatize one as homosexual.” Butler (1997) agrees, suggesting gender is acquired by repudiating homosexual sex *and* by having never lusted after someone of the same-sex. According to this model, the only way to be considered heterosexual is to avoid *any* same-sex sexual act *and* to avoid admitting same-sex sexual desire, something Messner (2004, p. 422) describes as being “100 percent straight.”

Borrowing from the one-drop theory of race (Davis, 1991; Harris, 1964), in which a dominant White culture once viewed anyone with even a portion of Black genetic ancestry as

Black, I call the behavioral component of this model the *one-time rule* of homosexuality. I do so because one same-sex sexual experience is equated with a homosexual orientation in masculine peer culture, ruling out the possibility of men engaging in recreational same-sex sex without being homosexualized by their behavior (Anderson, 2005a). However, the inverse of this rule does not apply evenly to straight men. Schwartz (1995, p. 12) therefore says, “We have to rethink how we have demonized the power of homosexuality so that we assume it to be the greater truth of our sexual self—as if one drop of homosexuality tells the truth of self while one drop of heterosexuality in a homosexual life means nothing.” This one-way application of the one-time rule also creates a double jeopardy for men who reveal they have experience with same-sex sex. It disqualifies them from achieving the requisites of heterosexuality *and* it diminishes their masculine capital among peers (Anderson, 2005a). While Reis (1961) and Klein (1993) show some heterosexual men (those who financially profit from sex with men) are less inclined to fear gay stigma, and same-sex sex is also less threatening to heterosexual men in certain homogenous, masculine institutions, like prisons and the military (Bérubé, 1991; Gear & Ngubeni, 2002), the general rule seems to be that for most heterosexual men in contemporary North American culture, their socially perceived heterosexual identities are partially conditioned upon exclusive opposite-sex sexual behaviors (Butler 1990).

Humphreys (1975), Boykin (2005) and Corzine and Kirby (1977) all find that when self-identifying heterosexual men *do* engage in same-sex sex, they normally structure anonymity into these transactions. This is something King (2004) and Boykin (2005) describe among African American men who have sex with men as being “on the down low,” and it might explain why recent quantitative research on teamsport athletes finds less than four percent have engaged in

same-sex sex (Southall, Anderson, Coleman & Nagel, 2006). Confidentiality enables men to have sex with men and avoid the stigma associated with same-sex sex.

None of this is to suggest that sexual orientation, identity and behaviors are synonymous; indeed the matrix of sexuality is fraught with ambiguity and contradictions (Butler, 1993; Rubin, 1984) that are complicated by sexual fantasies, attractions, behaviors, self-identities and cultural understandings (Foucault, 1984; Lubensky, Holland, Wiethoff & Crosby, 2004). For example, this one-time rule does not work equally in all cultures. Carrier (1971, 1995), Lancaster (1988), Almaguer (1991), and others (Parker & Caceres, 1999) problematize the cross-cultural applicability of the way North American models of homosexuality and gay identities are constructed because North Americans do not much differentiate the structure or role men play in same-sex sexual practices. For example, men throughout Latin America are permitted to penetrate other males and retain—or even promote—their heterosexuality. In this model, men's heterosexuality is determined by penetration; not the sex of whom one penetrates. Furthermore, not all cultures conflate homosexual behaviors with a homosexual identity, something Herdt (1981) famously shows with the ritual copulation of younger boys by older boys in Sambian culture. Thus, the way North American heterosexual men do same-sex sex seems more prohibitive, and the meanings attached to it perhaps more stigmatized than the way other cultures understand same-sex sex. This variance highlights the multiplicity of genders and the plurality of sexualities, both intra-culturally and cross-culturally (Redman, 2001).

Of relevance to this article, North American teamsport athletes who identify as heterosexual also engage in same-sex sex, but this research shows the structure and meanings they attach to these sexual activities may be changing to resemble a model closer to a Latin

American system. I have previously found gay athletes were invited to have limited forms of sex with their ostensibly heterosexual teammates (Anderson, 2005a). But these accounts *also* find heterosexual men explicitly concerned with anonymity in their same-sex sexual behaviors; one reason why heterosexual male athletes having sex with men may be under-represented in current quantitative research (Southall et. al., 2006). I suggest that recent trends in shifting sexual attitudes are, at least for this group, influencing how university-aged heterosexual men structure and manage their same-sex sexual behaviors.

### *Shifting Attitudes on Sexuality and Gender*

There are a number of trends that may influence how university-aged, heterosexual men construct their sexual and gendered identities. First, since the early 1990s, both qualitative (Anderson, in press; Barrett & Pollack, 2005; Pascoe, 2005) and quantitative (Laumann, Gagnon, Micheal & Micheals, 1994; Loftus, 2001; Widmer, Treas & Newcomb, 2002; Ohlander, Batalova & Treas, 2005; Yang, 1997) studies show a significant decrease in cultural and institutional homophobia within North American society, something I (Anderson, 2002, 2005a, 2005b) and others (Price & Parker, 2003; Southall et. al., 2006) also find among teamsport athletes. Second, there is increasing evidence of a form of normative masculinity growing more inclusive of feminine gender expression, particularly among university-aged, White, middle class men (Anderson 2005b, in press; Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Hyman, 2004; Price & Parker, 2003). Third, recent decades have brought a lessening of traditional views and institutional control of sexual behaviors and relationships (Joyner & Laumann, 2001). This is made evident by the lessening of the traditional double standard of girls being “sluts” and guys being “studs” in heterosexual intercourse (Tanenbaum, 1999; Wolf, 1997) and the growing percentage of those



engaging in pre-marital intercourse (Laumann et. al., 1994; Johnson et al., 2001). Other relevant trends include the growing willingness of men to be taken (dominated) in sex (Segal, 1994); trends that successfully make men into objects of sexual desire (Dworkin & Wachs, forthcoming; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Miller, 2001) and more fluid gender codes resulting from a merger of gender and sexuality signifiers in consumer culture (Warner, 1993). Finally, some evidence shows institutional sexism may also be decreasing among university-aged men (Anderson, in press, forthcoming; Bryant, 2003).

It is reasonable to suspect these changing cultural trends have implications for a sex-gender system that conflates homosexuality with femininity (Pascoe, 2005). For example, Ibson (2002) shows increasing cultural homophobia influences heterosexual men to further police their gendered behaviors while decreasing cultural homophobia has the opposite affect.

In this article, I examine how collegiate male cheerleaders structure differently the requirements for the inclusion of gay men to be perceived as masculine among their heterosexual peers. I also examine how heterosexual collegiate male cheerleaders differently structure the requirements for their own same-sex sex to be compatible with a publicly perceived heterosexual identity. I then discuss the varying implications these findings have for heteromascularity as a combined category of hegemonic gender and sexuality dominance in collegiate cheerleading. I *do not* however examine the social construction of one's personal sexual identities, nor do I focus on the matrix of variables that construct heteromascularity in more broadly. Instead, I am expressly concerned with how masculinity is differently made compatible with homosexuality among these two groups of cheerleaders already shown to vary in their attitudes toward masculinity; and how they differently view heterosexuality to be more inclusive of same-sex sex.

## Method

### *Participants*

This work stems from a larger project to understand the relationship between homophobia, misogyny and shifting masculinities among university-aged heterosexual male athletes who compete in a feminized terrain. The objective of this project was to analyze how informant's homophobia and notions of masculinity may be changing in response to decreasing cultural homophobia. A previous publication from this work examines how these informants challenge orthodox notions of masculinity, and the role of institutional notions of gender in this process (Anderson, 2005b). Another article (Anderson, forthcoming) examines the affect of gender-integrating sport on men's attitudes toward women. This article examines these same men's attitudes toward same-sex sex, masculinity, and publicly understood notions of sexual identity.

The informants are 68 self-identified heterosexual men who used to play high school football but became collegiate cheerleaders because they were unable to make their university football teams. While a self-selection process cannot be ruled out (i.e., it is possible that men most affected by the masculinization process of football do not become cheerleaders), most of the informants reported that upon entering cheerleading they held orthodox notions of masculinity, including sexist views and overt homophobia. The men, between 18 and 23 years of age, come from diverse regions from throughout the United States but 80 percent are White, middle-class men, so generalizations are limited accordingly.

### *Procedures*

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval for this research, I used the member

profile search on America Online to find 12 cheerleaders (six from each cheerleading association) who agreed to semi-structured, in-depth, taped telephone interviews, because the Internet is useful for contacting members of dispersed communities (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). From these initial informants, I used snowball and theoretical sampling techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to obtain an additional 44 in-person interviews. This brought to total 68 interviews on self-identified heterosexual male cheerleaders who (importantly) all previously played high school football.

In order to further improve reliability (Denzin, 1970), I used multiple methods (in-depth interviews, observations, and participant observations) to capture the subtle complexities of men who cheer among the two leading collegiate cheerleading associations (Anderson, 2005b). I relied on several key informants to review copies of this manuscript and requested another researcher familiar with my project to code and compare a portion of my transcripts until our coding of what category behaviors represented mostly conferred with one another. However, I approached this research from a constructivist/interpretivist perspective, suggesting that the informants co-created a reality through their shared experiences. There may be multiple meanings and interpretations of these meanings, and other researchers may come to differing conclusions regarding the data (Ponterotto, 2005). Therefore, the validity of this paper should be judged by the rich descriptions provided. Also, I did not ask the same questions of all the informants, so giving exact percentages or counts would not accurately represent my data in some instances.

The observation (on competitions) occurred with dozens of teams throughout the United States. However, the participant observations were conducted on one team each from the South,

the Midwest, the West, and the Northwest. Two of these teams belonged to the “Orthodox Cheerleading Association” and two belonged to the “Inclusive Cheerleading Association.” The total number of heterosexual men from these four teams numbered 47, of which 13 participated in the formal interviews. All informants knew the nature of my study.

My observations occurred during on-the-field practices and competitions and off-the-field activities, but I did not participate in the sport of cheerleading itself, and I was not present for the sexual encounters I discuss. I took field notes outside of informants’ presence with either a micro-recorder or pocket-sized memo pad, so as not to disrupt the socializing process (Spradley, 1970). Because this research involves sexuality, I reflected upon the utility of disclosing my sexual identity as gay, opting for full disclosure (Johnson, 2002). I believe this endeared me to informants and encouraged reciprocity of disclosure. Because of the sensitive nature of what was revealed, informants’ anonymity is protected.

### *Measures*

I began the 45 to 90 minute semi-structured interviews by asking informants to discuss their life histories in sport and the circumstances of their transition from football to cheerleading. I asked them about their views on homosexuality, the expression of femininity among men, and how their gendered attitudes and/or identity management techniques might vary from when they played football, but the order of discussion varied depending on the flow of conversation with each informant. Also, if the men had gay teammates, I asked them to discuss how their teammates’ sexual and gendered differences might have influenced the way they think about masculinity and sexuality today.

### *Analysis*

I grouped informants who expressed anti-feminine or homophobic attitudes as orthodox cheerleaders and those who expressed support for gay men and the expression of femininity among straight men as inclusive cheerleaders. It is also important to understand the names I give these two groups are intentionally the same as the names I give the two competing and dominating cheerleading associations. This is because I have previously shown these competing institutional cultures heavily influence cheerleaders to reflect the creed of their governing body (Anderson, 2005b). I define same-sex sexual behavior as kissing, giving or receiving oral or anal sex, or engaging in sexual caressing with other men.

## Results and Discussion

### *Cheerleading as a Transitional Heteromasculine Space*

Cheerleading squads traditionally support other athletic teams with sideline cheering, but today's cheerleaders also compete in complex dancing and stunting routines where a number of judged criteria determine success. Despite this evolution, men who cheer remain stigmatized as gay, so few try out for collegiate cheerleading without persuasion (Anderson, 2005b; Hanson, 1995). To recruit men, existing cheerleaders use a variety of tactics, including the sexualizing of female cheerleaders and the heterosexualizing and masculinizing of male cheerleaders. One university's cheerleading recruitment poster highlights all of these methods. Featuring an illustration of a bikini-clad woman sliding into a pool of water it reads, "Want strong muscles? Want to toss girls? Our Cheer Team needs stunt men!! No experience needed." Ex-football players are somewhat receptive to these recruitment efforts. After failing to make their university football teams, all of my informants clarified that they missed being associated with an athletic

identity and/or being part of a team, and they judged cheerleading as an acceptable final effort to return to teamsports (Anderson, 2005b).

While these men still embody many of the cultural symbols of hegemonic masculinity—their new sport has not decreased their muscular strength or aesthetic appeal—they nonetheless believe those outside cheerleading view their masculine capital as diminished and their heterosexuality as suspect because cheerleading is a culturally feminized sport (Adams & Bettis, 2003; Grindstaff & West, 2006; Hanson, 1995). In their research on collegiate cheerleading Grindstaff and West (2006, p. 515) note, “Cheerleading is a key site for the production of emphasized femininity,” and men who cheer are commonly perceived as homosexual because of this. They add, “*Everyone* we encountered in this study spoke of the gay stereotype for male cheerleaders” (ibid, p. 511). My research concurs, one of my informants said, “As a football player, all the girls wanted me. I was very popular. Now, nobody knows who I am, and if they do, they think I’m gay because I cheer.” Scott agreed, “Yeah, lots, most, of the people think we’re gay because we cheer.”

Whereas these men once occupied a dominant position at the top of the heteromasculine stratification as football players, they now view their current sporting location as subordinating their masculinity and subjecting their heterosexuality to scrutiny. Where they were once masculinized and heterosexualized because of their association with football, their transgression from it now homosexualizes and feminizes them (Grindstaff & West, 2006).

Informants’ reactions to their homosexualization and feminization range from apathy to hostility. Ryan aggressively defended his sport when I asked about the stereotype of male cheerleaders as gay. “It’s absolutely not true!” he yelled. “I hate that stereotype. All it does is

scare away worthy men who might want to cheer” [meaning orthodox acting men]. Conversely, when I asked Eugene how he felt about people thinking he was gay he said, “It bothered me a little at first, but now I don’t care. Not in the slightest...”

Another indicator of the tension some of the orthodox men feel about being homosexualized and feminized by cheerleading is the predominance of football caps, football sweatshirts, and football T-shirts they wear around competition arenas and while socializing with cheerleaders away from the competition arena. During one pre-competition lunch I counted twelve of the approximately 40 men wearing a T-shirt, jersey or cap that specifically mentioned football in the dining hall (counting specifics was made difficult by a constant turnover). Another seven men wore university specific clothing that did not mention cheerleading; and the remaining men wore clothing not associated with a sport or university. None wore apparel that signaled that they were a cheerleader. Conversely, many women wore apparel that specifically signified that they were cheerleaders (although I did not count their percentages). This “hanging on to their lost identity” is something I call *displaying the football player inside* and is part of a larger strategy I call *defensive heterosexuality* (Anderson, 2005b). It is an attempt for the informants to be equated masculine and heterosexual through their former social location because collegiate cheerleading is a sporting space that strips informants of their hegemonic masculinity and subjects them to stigma. Consequently this process influences them to adopt either orthodox or inclusive masculinity. Thus, similar to Turner’s (1967) notion of liminality, I describe collegiate cheerleading as *a transitional heteromasculine* space because it is influential in redefining informants’ attitudes toward homosexuality, masculinity, and same-sex sex.

Whereas my previous research (Anderson, 2005b) on these groups of men examined the

institutional and organizational attitudes that influenced their perception of masculinity (orthodox or inclusive) and their changing attitudes toward women and their athleticism (Anderson, forthcoming), in this article I show that the liminality of this space leads these men to revise heteromascularity as well. I find that each of these groups (inclusive and orthodox) views differently heteromascularity as a combined category of hegemonic gender and sexuality dominance.

### *Heteromascularity among Orthodox Cheerleaders*

When Tim introduced me to his teammate, Jeff, he said, “Jeff is the homophobic one on the team.” I shook Jeff’s hand and asked why that was. “I have no problems with gay men,” he said. “I just don’t understand why some have to prance around like little girls. Being masculine isn’t about who you sleep with; it’s about how you act. Your verbal inflection doesn’t got to be a flamer.” Jeff said his coach and one of his teammates are gay (both male), “But, you don’t see them acting like that.”

Jeff uses the term “straight-acting” to describe how gay men “should” act, saying homosexuality is not problematic but acting feminine is (c.f. Connell, 1992). As I have shown elsewhere (Anderson, 2005b) Jeff’s position is influenced by norms coding men’s expression of femininity as “unprofessional” within the orthodox cheerleading association. Men who don’t meet “professional” expectations are stigmatized for “giving us all a bad name,” and contributing to the homosexualizing and feminizing culture surrounding men who cheer.

Jeff expressed anger over one particular cheerleader, Carson, who is known for both the quality of his stunting (he holds two individual national championship titles) *and* his flamboyancy. However, the following evening we ran into Carson at an intra-squad cheerleading



party. After a few drinks Jeff asked, “Who wants to take a body shot off me?” Flamboyantly jumping up and down Carson shouted, “I do! I do!” The room erupted with laughter as the individual with the least heteromale capital volunteered to perform a sexually-charged drinking game on the man with the most. Jeff smiled, motioning Carson to come closer. “Go for it,” he said as he removed his shirt and lay down on a hotel room bed. Carson poured alcohol into Jeff’s navel, pinned his hips to the bed, and erotically licked it up; running his tongue considerably lower than Jeff’s navel—all to the cheers of onlookers.

The way Jeff allowed Carson to perform a sexually charged drinking game on his body may be surprising, particularly concerning his view that gay men should “act masculine.” I wondered, *was allowing another man to lick his body also consistent with masculinity?* When I later asked about this Jeff answered, “I bet there are lots of things about me that would surprise you.” He continued, “One time, me and [teammate] Trevor had a threesome with a girl. Yeah, well, I actually had a threesome with [teammate] Drew, too.” Jeff said that he also “made out” with his teammate, Ian, and once, “jacked him off a bit.” I followed up with open ended probes to confirm these assertions and found there has been a regular sexual combination of two men and one woman among five of his nine heterosexual male teammates.

Although Jeff indicates these behaviors are not simply a matter of two men separately engaging in heterosexual sex with the same woman, he also considers himself heterosexual. “I’m not attracted to them [men]. It’s just that there has to be something worth it. Like, this one girl said she’d fuck us if we both made out. So the ends justified the means. We call it a good cause. There has to be a good cause.” Similarly, when I asked Jeff’s teammate Patrick, if he had sexual experience with men, he replied, “No. Not yet. But I will. It’s just that there has got to be a

reward. If I have to kiss another guy in order to fuck a chick, then yeah it's worth it. It's a good cause."

Illustrating the malleability of the good cause scenario Jeff, Patrick, three other heterosexual teammates and I went to a gay club, where Patrick met Lauren, who agreed to take him back to her apartment for sex. In the dance club's restroom Patrick told me, "Maybe I'll see if they [Jeff and Lauren] want to have a threesome." Thus, Patrick, who earlier stated there must be a "good cause" in order to have a threesome and had already secured heterosexual sex for the night, overlooked this good cause antecedent and propositioned Lauren for a threesome (to which she agreed). When I asked Patrick what specific interaction would take place with Jeff he said, "Well, for the most part it would be about getting it on with her, but like we might do some stuff together too." Patrick said he would also allow himself to receive oral sex but was not sure if he would give oral sex to Jeff. He then smiled and said, "It depends on what she wants."

The good cause scenario underscores that it is the subjectivity of desire for another man which is problematized not the sex itself; something I argue reproduces heterosexual privilege. The good cause scenario retains the subjectivity of heterosexual desire and the need for a woman's sexual presence (and her request for their same-sex sexual behaviors). This seems to help Jeff and his teammates negate suspicion of homosexuality so the good cause scenario therefore becomes the mantra for acceptable same-sex practices, even if the guidelines are not followed. Jeff and Patrick report being *so* heterosexual they are capable of engaging in same-sex sex without threatening their social identities as heterosexual (Klein, 1993; Reis, 1961), similar to how boys with high masculine capital are given more permission to associate with femininity compared to boys lacking masculine capital (Anderson, 2005a; McGuffey & Rich, 1999).

Accordingly, Jeff and his teammates are therefore able to manage their same-sex sexual behaviors within a heterosexual framework, avoiding discussion of a gay or bisexual identity. They can partake in limited forms of same-sex sex as long as it takes place in pursuit of or in the presence of heterosexual desires: the good cause scenario.

Stuart said, “I’ve done that,” when discussing this type of sex with informants of another orthodox team. “Yeah, switches and trains,” Kevin confirmed. When I asked what switches and trains were Kevin answered, “Switching is when each guy is fucking a girl and then they switch and fuck the other girl. Trains are when a line of guys wait to tag-team a girl.” Stuart elaborated, “You just sort of stand around waiting to fuck her. Hell, I even got my leg shot [ejaculated] on once!” When I asked Stuart if this bothered him he laughed, “No. It was kind of an assumed risk.” And when I asked why he liked threesomes he responded, “Hell, if you’re gon’na hit up a chick, its cool to have another guy there to talk about it.”

This misogynistic language, where women’s bodies become the receptacle of men’s heterosexualizing discourse, is similar to what Curry (1991) describes as normal occurrences in men’s locker rooms, and it was difficult for me to hear this type of sex talk because it is also consistent with research on groups of men bonding over the sexual abuse of a woman’s body (Martin & Hummer, 1989; Sanday, 1981, 1990; Schwartz, DeKeseredy & Walter, 1997). Accordingly, this violent discourse may be viewed as an attempt to regain cultural power—an effort to remasculinize themselves at the expense of women—and it can therefore be argued that these sexual activities are less of an expansion of heterosexual boundaries and more of an expansion of misogynistic practices. However, it would be problematic to apply *only* this framework to the situation.

Stuart's phrase, "Hell, I even got my leg shot on," made me question, *how could he get ejaculate on himself if he was waiting behind another guy for his turn at the "switches and trains?"* He answered, "Well, my friend was fucking her and I was making out with him while he was doing it." Similarly, when I asked Stuart's teammate, Tim, if he had done anything sexual with men he answered, "Yeah, sure. Why not? I made out with a guy once and I would let a guy blow me. I'm not gay but I think all guys wonder what it would be like. And I bet guys do it better anyhow."

#### *Heteromascularity among Inclusive Cheerleaders*

Not all my informants view the expression of femininity among men as unprofessional or undesirable. The men I describe as representing inclusive masculinity (about half the men in collegiate cheerleading) do not feel compelled to act in orthodox masculine ways. I have previously shown these men generally hold few inhibitions about homosexuality *or* the expression of femininity among men (see Anderson, 2005b for many examples of how they do this). For men of this group, homophobia and misogyny largely cease to be tools of masculine marginalization and many pride themselves in associating with things culturally coded as feminine (Anderson, 2005b). Thus, for men subscribing to inclusive masculinity, Carson is both gay and effeminate, but neither is a source of stigma.

Among heterosexual men I classify as exhibiting inclusive masculinity, I found nine of the fifteen asked said that they have slept in the same bed with a gay men, I found none to be uncomfortable hugging another man, and all of the eleven men I went dancing with danced with other men too. All of these men danced flamboyantly during cheerleading competitions (c.f. Grindstaff & West, 2006) and the men from one team even wore women's competitive apparel,

because it was better fitting than what the manufacturer offered in the men's version. These are similar findings to an inclusive form of masculinity I also show operating in a mainstream U.S. fraternity (Anderson, in press) and McGuire (2007) shows operating among men of an English university's rugby team.

I found this inclusive perspective influenced the permissivity of heterosexual men's same-sex sex differently than the orthodox men in several ways. First, I was struck by the comparative ease with which many of these men discussed their same-sex sexual practices. Upon learning that I was gay, four men immediately informed me that they once had sex with a man. Second, a woman's presence was not required for these men to engage in same-sex sex. Pete said that he, Sam, and another (now graduated) heterosexual teammate once shared a room with Aaron (an openly gay cheerleader). "We let Aaron give the three of us a blow job," he told me without hesitation, and then added, "And we're not the only ones who've done stuff with guys." He then listed the names of others who engaged in same-sex sex.

When I asked Sam's teammate, Tom, if a woman's presence was necessary for same-sex sex he said it might be a "bonus" but it was *not* required. His friend, Joe, added, "Hey, gotten some is gotten some." And when I asked if they were afraid others might think they were gay because of their same-sex sex Tom clarified, "Just because one has gay sex, doesn't mean one is gay." This disclosure also confirms what gay male cheerleaders frequently tell me about engaging in sexual practices with straight male cheerleaders. Carson (half-jokingly) said, "Honey, I've sucked more straight dick than gay. It's almost to the point that when a guy tells me he is straight; I just wan'na say, 'yeah, you're straight—straight to bed.'"

The difference between these accounts and other accounts of straight athletes who have

sex with men is that my informants are more willing to engage in these behaviors without anonymity, something I attribute to a lessening of traditional sexual mores and the decreasing levels of cultural homophobia found among men of this cohort (Anderson, 2005a). However I also recognize that this can be interpreted as reappropriating gay men as sexual objects, an approach similar to the orthodox men sexualizing women to reclaim masculine power.

Informants of the other inclusive cheerleading team I conducted participant observation with also viewed same-sex sex as compatible with heterosexuality. Mike expressed several times kissing and receiving oral sex from men. Still, he said, “I don’t perceive myself as gay. I like women far too much for that.” When I asked Mike if he identifies as bisexual he said, “Not really. I mean, you can call me that if you want. I’m not into labels and I don’t think anybody is one-hundred percent anything, but I consider myself straight. I’m just not a homophobe.” His teammate, Rob, added, “Yeah, I let a guy give me a blow job once and I don’t think that makes me gay.”

None of these men discussed “good cause” scenarios or “switches and trains” as men from the orthodox association did. In fact, several outwardly questioned the polarization of sexual identity categories altogether. When I asked Jonathan if he thought gay men could be masculine he said, “Of course. Masculinity has nothing to do with sexuality. I have really flamboyant friends who are straight too.” And when I asked if he thought men who have sex with men are gay he said, “Not really, no. They can be, but don’t have to be. And gay men can have sex with women too. It doesn’t mean they’re straight.”

### *Conclusions*

In researching self-identified heterosexual men who transgress from the

heteromasculinizing sport of high school football to the feminizing and heterosexualizing sport of collegiate cheerleading, I examine the sexual and gendered social identities of heterosexual men in a transitional heteromasculine space. I first describe this transition as triggering a reconstruction of social identities in order to retain some of the privilege of their lost heteromascularity, and I find they do this by ascribing to one of two dominant and competing forms of normative masculinity within cheerleading culture: orthodox or inclusive masculinity (Anderson, 2005b). While I cannot rule out that most men affected by the masculinization process of football may not become cheerleaders, all but seven reported maintaining orthodox notions of masculinity as football players, including many who maintained sexist views and homophobic attitudes before joining cheerleading (Anderson, forthcoming).

As I have previously shown (Anderson, 2005b), men I describe as exhibiting orthodox masculinity slightly alter a traditional, sexist version of masculinity (Bourdieu, 2001; Chodorow, 1978; Frye, 1983; Kimmel, 1996; Lorber, 1994; Lucal, 1999) by welcoming gay men to participate in their anti-feminine attitudes. For men in this group, homosexuality *is* acceptable but the expression of femininity *is not*. This is something Ward (2000) calls *queer sexism*, and gay men who refuse this conditioned acceptance remain stigmatized—perhaps the reason Jeff speaks disdainfully about Carson or other men who openly do femininity. Accordingly, masculinity for men in this group remains mostly conceptualized within well-established feminist findings: in order to be a “real man” one must not be “like a woman” (Chodorow, 1978; Frye, 1983; Kimmel, 1994; Lorber, 1994) although, importantly, one can now be gay (c.f. Connell, 1992). While violating certain aspects of the sexuality order is accepted, these men are not yet able to, or willing to admit, having sexual *desire* for another man: they can however have

sex with him. Perhaps this is why none of their threesomes occurred with gay men.

Conversely, men who I describe as subscribing to inclusive masculinity co-create a culture that makes masculinity available to gay men—and femininity available to straight men (see Anderson, 2005b for multiple examples of how they do this). These informants even celebrate the expression of femininity among men and stigmatize men who act in orthodox masculine ways. To these men, Carson is a source of pride. Thus, men exhibiting inclusive masculinity not only separate the hegemonic powers of sexuality and masculinity from heteromascularity, but they contest the privileging of orthodox masculinity over inclusive masculinity and (to a lesser extent) the privileging of men over women (Anderson, forthcoming).

In addition to finding homosexuality compatible with masculinity, I also find informants negate (or at least lessen) the one-time rule of homosexuality, reconstructing it to be compatible with certain forms of same-sex. In total, 40% of the forty-nine self-identified heterosexual men I asked said they once engaged in or continue to engage in some form of same-sex sex. However, informants frame differently the conditions in which this same-sex sex is thought compatible with heterosexuality. Those subscribing to orthodox masculinity see their limited forms of same-sex sex acceptable only if performed in pursuit of heterosexual desires (a “good cause” antecedent that does not always turn out to be compulsory), while those subscribing to inclusive masculinity do not require the presence of women or explicit heterosexual desires.

For men of the first group, same-sex sex is largely seen as a way of sharing “conquests” with “brothers,” mutually reassuring each other of their heterosexual desirability. It is also a way to get and give pleasure from men, although the subjective desire for men remains stigmatized. For men of the second group, same-sex sex is largely viewed as an acceptable form of sexual



recreation without threat to one's heterosexual identity, as long as their interactions are also limited to kissing, oral sex, and mutual masturbation.

Despite these differences, the frequencies of informants who have sexual experience with other men are equal between those I grouped as orthodox and those I grouped as inclusive. Nine men from the two orthodox teams confirmed participating in same-sex sex, while ten men from the two inclusive teams confirmed participating in kissing, oral sex and "jerking another guy off." Also, these results do not reflect men who may have engaged in "circle-jerk" or hazing rituals that make same-sex sex compulsory. Interestingly, I found no variance in how heterosexual teammates who did not, have yet to, or did not admit to having similar sexual experience viewed their teammate's same-sex sexual behaviors. Most said, "It's not for me," or "I don't care what people do," but (importantly) none of the forty-nine overtly stigmatized their teammates for their same-sex sex.

Interestingly, none of the men in either group used the label of bisexuality to describe their sexual identities either. I suggest this reflects either a defensive maneuver to protect themselves from higher rates of bi/homophobia outside of cheerleading culture or a growing polarization of sexual categorization among men in this age cohort more broadly (Lucal, 1999). Answering this question is difficult because I do not know if these attitudes are exclusive to university cheerleaders or (if as I suspect) they reflect a larger cultural pattern among men of this cohort (Anderson, in press). Also, just because informants indicate they once received oral sex from another man or engaged in occasional kissing or mutual masturbation with other men does not mean they are radically reconstructing what it means to be heterosexual. There is a near-total absence of voluntary discussion about either active or passive anal sex among informants. The

negative responses I received about this (from men in both groups) suggest that the changing definition of heterosexuality is still predicated in the avoidance of anal sex. Perhaps future research will address whether North American and Western European men are displaying evidence of a model of sexuality determined more by sexual activity/passivity, rather than the sex of one's partner (Carrier, 1971, 1995).

These findings differ from previous research on North American men who have sex with men in several ways. First, previous research describes heterosexual men in heterogeneous group sex as men *symbolically* engaging in sexual practices with other men (Martin & Hummer, 1989; Sanday, 1981, 1990; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997). However, I find informants *actually* engage in sexual activity with other men. Second, my informants do not feel that their same-sex sex jeopardizes their socially perceived heterosexual identities, at least within cheerleading culture. They do not conceal their same-sex sexual experiences from peers, nor do they receive measurable stigma for it. Instead, they constitute a coherent community of tacit or explicit approval for limited forms of same-sex sexual behaviors as compatible with heterosexuality, even *if* these actions are viewed deviant from a wider cultural perspective. This is something only previously shown among male sex workers (Klein, 1993; Reis, 1961) or via situational homosexuality (prisons and the military) in North American culture (Bérubé, 1991; Gear & Ngubeni, 2002). Thus, compared to other groups of men who have sex with men (Boykin, 2005; King, 2004), men who cheer are *far less* “on the down low” about it.

These results are also significant because they sharply contrast what researchers have previously thought about teamsport athletes exhibiting highly homophobic attitudes (Wolf Wendel, Toma & Morphew, 2001; Pronger, 1990). When taken into account with my previous

qualitative work on openly gay athletes who play on heterosexual teams (Anderson, 2002, 2005), Southall et. al.'s (2006) quantitative research on declining homophobia in collegiate sports in the American South; and a February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006 *Sports Illustrated* magazine poll of 1,401 professional teamsport athletes showing the majority (and 80% of those in the National Hockey League) would welcome a gay teammate, the evidence supports my assertion that homophobia is on the rapid decline among male teamsport athletes in North America at all levels of play. While I am far from suggesting that the institution of sport is free of homophobia, this research does suggest that we at least need to be more measured in our claims that sport remains a bastion of homophobia (Pronger, 1990, 1999).

Finally, because I have previously shown that men of the inclusive and orthodox collegiate cheerleading groups differently value gay men (Anderson, 2005b), and because I show here that these two groups differently structure the permissiveness of same-sex sex, I suggest that heteromascularity as a combined category of hegemonic gender and sexuality dominance is changing (at least among collegiate male cheerleaders). I argue that while men exhibiting orthodox masculinity *mostly* reproduce heteromascularity as a combined category of hegemonic sexual and gendered identity dominance (because they continue to privilege masculinity over femininity and to value heterosexuality over homosexuality), they also *challenge* heteromascularity by untangling sexuality from gender and renegotiating the rules of masculinity to be conditionally compatible with homosexuality. These men conditionally permit certain forms of same-sex sex to be compatible with heterosexuality.

Men who subscribe to inclusive masculinity also slightly strengthen heteromascularity (by privileging heterosexuality over homosexuality) but they seem to privilege heterosexuality

less than men of the orthodox group. Furthermore, these men differently structure the requisites for men to engage in same-sex sex, permitting it without explicit heterosexual desires. They are therefore more willing to question the value of sexual identity categorization in the first place. But the principle reason I suggest that men who subscribe to inclusive masculinity do more to challenge heteromascularity than reproduce it is because they reject the homophobia and femphobia associated with orthodox and hegemonic masculinity (c.f., Anderson 2005b, forthcoming). Instead, they privilege inclusivity, stigmatizing those who maintain orthodox views of gendered expression among men (Anderson, 2005b).

I suggest these altered (and varying) constructions on heteromascularity occur because collegiate cheerleading places ex-football players into a state of what Turner (1967) calls liminality because collegiate cheerleading is characterized by ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy. I borrow from Turner's work calling collegiate cheerleading *a transitional heteromasculine space* because the transition from football to cheerleading involves a change to the informants' social status and their perceived masculine and heterosexual capital. Men in cheerleading then report befriending gay men in collegiate cheerleading, where they (often for the first time) learn of their sexual and gendered narratives (Anderson, forthcoming). I suggest this then influences them to reconstruct homosexuality to be compatible with masculinity. By accepting gay men as masculine, they are then influenced to reconstruct same-sex sex to be compatible with heterosexuality, eliminating the double jeopardy that same-sex sex traditionally poses.

Although I believe that the reduction of cultural homophobia and the untangling of sexuality from masculinity exist throughout male team sports cultures on both sides of the Atlantic

(McGuire, 2007), only further research will verify this. As broader trends expand or retract the gender and sexuality order, it will be important to track how heterosexual men reproduce or challenge sexism, homophobia, and heteromascularity in sport. This article should raise important questions for those explorations.

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