

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

**Inclusive Masculinity in a ‘Man’s Game’: Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers**

Steven Roberts  
*Monash University, Australia*

Eric Anderson  
*University of Winchester, UK*

Rory Magrath  
*Southampton Solent University, UK*

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

## **Abstract**

Following recent research evidencing that young men are redefining the essential components of what it is to be a man, this paper draws on qualitative interviews with 22 elite-level, English Premier League academy level football (soccer) players to investigate their performances and understandings of masculinity in relation to decreasing homophobia. Even in this gender-segregated, near-total institution, these working-class, non-educationally aspiring adolescents evidence an attenuated performance of 'maleness' and improved attitudinal disposition toward homosexuality. Congruent with insights developed by inclusive masculinity scholars, respondents maintained emotional closeness and physical tactility with male teammates and friends. These more inclusive attitudes and homosocial behaviours were, however, slightly more conservative than in other recent research. We close by explaining this variation with reference to theoretical apparatus' provided by Goffman and Bourdieu to advance theoretical debates about social class and masculinities.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

## Introduction

Research concerned with men's performances, expressions and understandings of gender has increasingly reported the changing nature of masculinities (Anderson 2014; McCormack 2012; Roberts 2014). Deviating from positions associated with traditional, orthodox or hegemonic forms of masculinity – almost all of which have been problematic, discriminatory or oppressive (Sprecher & Sedikides 1993) – empirical evidence increasingly suggests that contemporary heterosexual young men appear to be exhibiting a set of social behaviours characterised by a softened version of masculinity (McCormack and Anderson 2010) compared to what research from decades ago found (e.g. Pronger 1990). This 'attenuated form' (Roberts 2013) includes improved attitudes towards homosexuality and, specifically, a move from acceptance to overt support for homosexual peers and friends in a variety of educational, recreational and occupational settings; as well as an expansion of socially acceptable and esteemed physical contact and emotional connections between straight men (Adams 2011; Adams and Anderson 2012; Anderson 2009, 2012; Hall and Gough 2011; McCormack 2011; Roberts 2013). Building on this work, we explore qualitative data from interviews with young, elite-level football players to examine whether the traditional characterisations of orthodox working-class masculinity retain their descriptive accuracy in this sporting context.

Association football has been noted as something of an impenetrable fortress when it comes to research access (Adams et al. 2010). Given the connection made in previous literature between the construction and maintenance of masculinity – and oftentimes the toxic practices of orthodox masculinity (Sherrod 1987) – and sports settings (Pronger 1990), this

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

study provides access to a unique and extremely restricted setting which we use to further critically consider recent evidence that masculinity has softened and broadened in comparison to the behaviours discussed in literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Having previously discussed their explicitly stated potential support and acceptance in the event that a teammate came out as gay in the future, as part of an absence of homophobic attitudes (authors 2013), in this article, we analyse these young men's attitudes towards and experiences of emotional closeness and physical tactility with friends and teammates. The absence of such expressions are important and well-examined attributes of masculinity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Field 1999) and thus remain important in the consideration of modern masculinities. Homosocial touch has, particularly, been prohibited as a result of a 'homohysteric' regulatory gender regime that deemed such behaviour suspicious of homosexuality (Anderson 2009; Ibson 2002).

Our results are broadly congruent with research revealing that young men now practice a wider set of behaviours than identified in earlier theorisations of masculinity (i.e. Connell 1995), and that these behaviours are indicative of more inclusive versions of masculinity (Anderson 2009). Notably, even among this group of largely working-class youth, in a setting often recognised as a bastion of traditional working-class ideals, these behaviours include enhanced engagement in and reliance upon emotional and physical closeness with other men (McCormack 2014).

However, these men are, occasionally, more conservative than their peers (cf. Adams et al. 2010). We explain these variations using a combination of Anderson's (2005a) Goffman-inspired notion of a 'near-total institution' and also the Bourdieusian concept of

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

institutional habitus in order to theorize the unique context that is professional level, competitive sport. This research thus uniquely advances debate about the contemporary experiences of men and theorisations of masculinity by expanding IMT so that it takes account of the institutional context in which the dynamics of masculinities are reproduced.

### **Hardened Masculinities**

The complexity of masculinities is entwined with sexuality, class, age and ethnicity; with heterosexuality, white lower class and non-white men said to be embodying a more hardened masculinity. This understanding was the cornerstone for Connell's (1995) notion of hegemonic masculinity, which demonstrated that masculinities not only afforded men various benefits and power in relation to women but - crucially - that power was differentially experienced by different groups of men. Establishing a hierarchy of masculinities, Connell explained how those at the top of this hegemonic order wielded power over and subordinated other groups of men.

While the idea of hierarchy developed in response to gay men's experiences of prejudice by straight men (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), subordination was extended to include other groups of men in society who lacked power. Evidenced in UK literature in the 1970s, one group was working-class boys and young men, whom were marked out by embodiment of orthodox notions of masculinity that served as a means of demonstrating an active struggle for dominance or retaliation against structures of authority. This resulted in disaffection with school, but also political and economic marginalisation and exclusion from

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

various basic, but fundamental social institutions (see e.g. Willis 1977; Corrigan 1979; Robins and Cohen 1978).

While not characterising all working-class boys as being sexist, homophobic and maintaining a strong aversion to school, one legacy of studies concerned with the cultures of young working-class men from the 1970s has been that such features are not only embedded in the public consciousness, but also the academic imagination (Reay 2002; Roberts 2014). This is apparent in Mac an Ghail's (1994: 56) study which revealed how working-class boys performed a symbolic display of working-class masculinity through 'the three F's - fighting, fucking and football'. Linked to this, further commentary postulates that football, and footballers, are required to perform a certain type of maleness and that the sport is a 'major signifier of successful masculinity' (Epstein 1998: 7). Consequently, football is perceived to 'take heterosexuality for granted and dismisses as deviant any alternative form of masculine representation' (Parker 1996:132). We might thus surmise, perhaps even expect, that the behaviours and representations of working-class young men conform to the narrow set of expressions often defined as orthodox masculinity: explicitly homophobic, avowedly anti-feminist and misogynistic, alongside holding a strong predilection for the embodiment of anti-feminine behaviours, dispositions, and physical demeanour.

Despite usually occurring at the same time as more fluid, contested and contradictory modes of 'doing' masculinity, young working-class men (e.g. McDowell 2003; Nayak 2006; Richardson 2010), as well as team sport athletes (Pronger 1990), are described as hyper-adhering to this form of masculinity. This has also certainly been the case in previous studies of youth football trainees, such as that by Parker (2001) which revealed the academy, as door

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

step to professional football, as well as the sport itself, to be a key site for the demonstration and reinforcement of working-class masculine values. Indeed, the toughness and physicality associated with orthodox masculinity are thought requisite to be successful in a variety of sports (Parker 2001; Allain 2008; Hirose and Pih 2010).

### **Theorizing Contemporary Masculinities**

Anderson's (2009) IMT describes a shift over time that sees an increasing incorporation of practices and attitudes that were once considered feminine and thus would cause a person to be perceived by others as gay. Thus, IMT - especially its concept of homophobia (i.e. the fear of being socially perceived as gay) - provides a development in thinking that allows us to contextualise and give due explanatory power to the historical specificity of the period from the 1980s up until late 1990s. This period was characterised by a heightened fear of the prospect of being thought homosexual, with three factors combining to create the conditions that allow for a 'homophobic' culture to prevail: 1) a widespread awareness that homosexuality exists as a static sexual orientation; 2) a zeitgeist of disapproval towards this orientation; 3) and a suspicion and concomitant condemnation of men's femininity as a relational signifier of being gay (McCormack and Anderson 2014).

One of the driving forces of the stigmatisation of homosexuality during this epoch was the emergence (and subsequent reporting and misunderstanding) of the AIDS crisis, which in no small part facilitated an increase during the 1980s of the proportion of British public deeming homosexuality to be 'always wrong': according to the British Social

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

Attitudes Survey, in 1983 this figure was around 50%, but by 1987 had reached a high of 64%.<sup>1</sup>

Widespread recognition that homosexuality existed combined with a discriminatory and disparaging political discourse (exemplified by the Thatcher government's introduction of the infamous Section 28 legislation) to produce an environment in which anything coded as feminine was seen to be the opposite of appropriately male. This 'perfect storm' of homophobia ensured that men felt compelled to avoid homosexual suspicion by aligning their behaviours with those befitting a heterosexual identity (McCormack and Anderson 2014). Such a compulsion and its consequences led Kimmel (2008) to suggest that fear of being seen as 'not a real man' is fundamental to the formulation of masculinity.

Subsequent decades witnessed slow but steady erosion of this homophobic culture; something McCormack and Anderson (2014) suggest is fuelled by rapidly improving cultural attitudes toward homosexuality. The reversal of public attitudes has been profound, with the proportion of British people perceiving homosexuality as always wrong declining from its peak of 64% in 1987, to 50% in 1993, 31% in 2003 and, 22% in 2012. Correspondingly, the proportion of the British public who stated that being gay was 'not wrong at all' grew from 11% in 1987, to 18% in 1993, to 37% in 2003 and 47% in 2012<sup>2</sup> (Clements and Field 2014). While some ambivalence remains, in that some consider homosexuality as 'rarely or sometimes wrong', the direction of the trend is unmistakable, supporting that we are now in an epoch of relatively diminished cultural homophobia; particularly among youth (Clements and Field 2014).

---

<sup>1</sup> These figures can be found at the *British Social Attitudes Survey* website <http://www.bsa-29.natcen.ac.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> These figures can be found at the *British Social Attitudes Survey* website <http://www.bsa-29.natcen.ac.uk/>



"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

As applied to sport, Anderson initially documented positive attitudes toward homosexuality in 2002, where he conducted the first research on openly gay high school and collegiate athletes. Over a decade later, Anderson (2014) contends that the evidence of positive change is such that to argue that team sport athletes are more homophobic than non-athletes is prejudice: i.e. homophobia among athletes is something that social science research should seek to explore through empirically, rather than something that should be continually presupposed. In football, specifically, Adams' (2011) ethnographic research among a U.S. college football team found inclusive attitudes toward sexual minorities, with athletes challenging orthodox notions of masculinity. Anderson (2011b) found similar inclusivity among a university-based football team in America. Adams and Anderson (2012) also highlighted a decrease in heteronormativity and increase in social cohesion when they observed the first-hand account of an athlete's coming out with researchers present. Considering the hypothetical prospect of a fellow teammate coming out, [author] (citation) reveal similarly supportive and accepting attitudes among elite level academy level footballers. Finally, research on openly gay male athletes in a variety of other ostensibly heterosexual team sports, such as rugby (Anderson & McGuire 2010), male cheerleading (Anderson 2005b), American football (Anderson 2008a), and equestrian sports (Dashper 2012) concurs with some of the key claims made by IMT.

Beyond the field of play, Cashmore and Cleland (2011) show that homophobia among football fans is also in decline. Using mixed online methods, they found 93% of 3,500 respondents – including 62 professional players, referees, managers and coaches – held no objection to the presence of openly gay players, arguing that homophobia has no place in

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

football. Cleland (2013) also documents this when analysing discussions and narratives of homosexuality on 48 online football fan forums.

Despite this changing context, the number of openly gay men competing in professional men's sport remains relatively small, indicating some tension with the increasingly supportive environment envisaged by teammates and the wider public. However, and importantly, gay male athletes, do presently perform at the elite level such as long distance running (Matt Llano), swimming (Olympic champion Ian Thorpe), diving (Tom Daley), as well as sports that might be perceived as more 'typically masculine' such as boxing (Orlando Cruz), NBA basketball (Jason Collins), and, most recently (August 2015), English Rugby League (Keegan Hirst). This also extends to hybrid sport-entertainment arenas such as professional wrestling (Matt Cage and Darren Young) and even the 'World's Strongest Man' (Rob Kearney, 2013 runner-up). While *British* men's football is yet to have an openly gay athlete play at the elite level (since Justin Fashanu in the early 1990s), football is home to a high-profile, openly gay player in the shape of the LA Galaxy's Robbie Rogers (US Major League Soccer). In addition, Liam Davis recently came out in the semi-professional tier of British football. This was on the back of the high profile coming out (just after his retirement) of Thomas Hitzlesperger, who played at the top level divisions in England and Germany as well as international level football for Germany. Hitzlesperger stated forcefully that "The perceived contradiction between playing football, the man's game, and being homosexual is nonsense".

A notable point of convergence in the coming out stories of these athletes is that they almost all state that positive support from fans and peers was overwhelming. Institutional,

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

cultural and even commercial issues are perceived to be more problematic barriers than individual or peer-group reactions to the prospect of a gay teammate (author citation). However, even here we have witnessed visible change, exemplified by players from over 70 clubs including, Arsenal, Aston Villa, Chelsea, Everton and Manchester City wearing rainbow coloured shoe laces on a targeted weekend in 2013 and 2014 to support an high profile anti-homophobia campaign. Then Queens Park Ranger's player stated in an interview with the *Metro* newspaper "The key is getting the message out to the public that us lads are supportive of fellow pros and supporters, no matter what their sexual orientation". Several clubs supported the message of the campaign but did not formally endorse it. However, because the campaign was originated and marketed by a particular bookmaking chain, some elite clubs that did not take part in this campaign suggested this was because there was not adequate consultation allowing them avoid issues in respect of associated third-party commercial entities (*Daily Mail* 2013). Others clubs raised concerns that the language used by the bookmakers' advertising campaign inadvertently reinforced particular stereotypes or trivialised the issue of sexuality (BBC 2013).

Correspondingly, and contrasting with older literature (Plummer 1999; Field 1999; Floyd 2000), Anderson (2009; see also Lyng 2009) argues that heterosexual men are now afforded more homosocial tactility, with decreasing homophobia facilitating increased emotional and physical tactility and intimacy to become a possibility in sports settings and beyond (e.g. sixth form schools and colleges (McCormack 2012)) and universities (Anderson et al 2012)). Recent research shows that cuddling and spooning is common among heterosexual, British undergraduate athletes (Anderson and McCormack 2014), while

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

hugging as a means to demonstrate love for one another has been shown to be frequent on a U.S. soccer team (Adams (2011).

Meanwhile, Anderson, et al. (2010) found nearly 90% of 140 British undergraduate men have kissed another male on the lips. While participants in this study said that they did not kiss other men for sexual pleasure, they highlighted that they kissed other men because they platonically loved other men. In a replicate Australian study, Drummond, et al (2014) show that this behaviour is emerging there, too, at 29%. Finally, highlighting international applicability to his theory, Anderson (2014) showed that among 550 undergraduate men studied through mixed methods across 11 universities from the United States, 10% had kissed on the lips and 40% on the cheeks. While there is a big variation across these three national contexts, they each still support the emergence of a shift in socially permitted physical behaviours. Given this paper attends to the case of sportsmen in the UK, the findings relating to British undergraduates hold enhanced relevance for the context of the present study.

Irrespective of these changing conditions, Anderson (2011a: 90) holds explicitly that a 'diminished state of homophobia is not to be mistaken as a gender utopia'. IMT-inspired research clearly documents that men might still be heterosexist (McCormack and Anderson 2010), sexually objectify women (Anderson 2008b), continue to value excessive risk-taking (Adams, Anderson, and McCormack 2010); and even use homosexually themed language without intent to wound (McCormack 2012). Equally, IMT does not suggest the total *absence* of homophobia, but the *growing redundancy of its significance* for young men – i.e. the characteristics of orthodox masculinity have transitioned from being widespread to a minority form of gender expression.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

## Bringing in Bourdieu

We accept that on the basis of such considerations there is greater need to further empirically document and theorise the dynamics between masculinities, sexualities and physical culture (Jarvis 2013), taking into account and prioritising the voices of those who are often perceived as making a play for power through their performance of masculinity. There is also a need to further investigate the intersection of lower class youth with contemporary notions of masculinity (Roberts 2013). This is something this paper addresses, utilising Bourdieu to complement IMT.

Bourdieu fleetingly engaged with issues of masculinity (most notably in *Masculine Domination* (1998)), but some researchers have integrated his theoretical tools to aid with class-inflected readings of masculinities. His own assessment of masculinity follows a well-established line of thinking, highlighting how manliness ‘is an eminently *relational* notion, constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of fear of the female, firstly in oneself’ (1998: 53).

However, Coles (2009) more usefully invokes Bourdieu’s interlocking theoretical concepts of habitus (a socialised, generative, lasting set of predispositions), capitals (social, economic, and cultural resources which enable one to exercise and resist domination in social relations) and field (the arena in which agents and their social location exist) to give better attention to how ‘masculinity as an unconscious strategy forms part of the habitus of men that is both transposable and malleable to given situations to form practical dispositions and actions to everyday situations’ (2009:39). This more nuanced treatment of masculinity aids

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

our understanding of how ‘external sources of influence such as class, age, and ethnicity intersect with the field of masculinity to form complex matrices that allow for a variety of masculinities to exist’ (Coles 2009:38).

Moving from a theoretical to an empirical account, McCormack (2014) employs Bourdieu’s notion of habitus and capitals to explore variations in the intersection of inclusive masculinity theory; with a focus on tactility. His research usefully shows how and why the influence of the symbolic economy produces somewhat more conservative levels of tactility among working class teenagers, whilst simultaneously being careful not to present working-class culture as being in deficit or pathological. While using capitals as a resource to help understand *intra* generational difference, he also shows how differences in the production of habitus can explain *intergenerational* difference in expressions of masculinity. Finally, Stahl’s (2013) utilisation of the neo-Bourdiesian concept of institutional habitus and exploration of how working class boys’ learner identities are (sometimes problematically) restructured by attendance at a high performing school in a socially marginalised area is useful for explaining the role of institutions in transforming or producing a divided habitus.

We use some of the conceptual tools outlined to account for variations in performances across social settings to help illustrate how ‘multiple masculinities coexist harmoniously, but also fewer behaviours [are] associated with homosexuality’ (Anderson 2011c: 254).

## Methods

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

The research sample represents a relatively homogenous group of male footballers from an English Premier League football club academy. Designed to promote footballing success, English academies underwent a major shift in the late 1990s with the publication of the ‘Charter for Equality’ by the Football Association – English football’s governing body. This served to professionalise youth football in England, along with the development of ‘world class facilities, staff and training programmes to talented footballers aged between eight and 18 years’ (Weedon 2012: 200). It also included the expansion of scouting programmes for Premier League football clubs, locating talented footballers worldwide. Accordingly, English Premier League academies serve to develop the next generation of professional footballer, and play host to both young domestic and international players (Elliott and Weedon 2010).

The club researched for this article is particularly renowned for producing a number of elite level professional footballers, many of whom have progressed not only to play in the English Premier League, but have also represented their national teams later in their careers. The vast majority of these participants have played for the club from a very young age, and the players interviewed moved away from home to live in the club, in shared dorms with a peer. At age 16, those who survive the annual selection process enter into a scholarship programme. Alongside professional coaching and a group for about 14 hours across five days a week, and a regular calendar of matches, players at this stage undertake academic education in sports-related qualifications<sup>3</sup>. In this research setting education sessions occurred at least twice a week for 2.5-3 hours, with class sizes of about 8-10. While not a ‘total institution’

---

<sup>3</sup> This is most commonly, but not always, the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence. More details can be located at the Premier League Charter for Academy Players and Parents (version 2013-14): <http://www.premierleague.com/content/dam/premierleague/site-content/News/publications/other/charter-academy-players-parents-2013-2014.pdf>

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

(Goffman 1961) in the same way as a prison, the military or a hospital, we understand this academy environment to be a near-total institution (Anderson 2010) that demands and promotes homogeneity of thought and action as the basis for achieving desirable athletic results. Accordingly, justifying both our definitional prescription of calling football academies 'near-total institutions' and highlighting the uniqueness and value of our study, Manley et al. (2012: 313) note 'academies are "closed" environments and contain a very specific population'. The population within this near-total organisation are, as will be shown, influenced by codes of competition and professionalism (including the absence of alcohol) aspects of a residual working-class masculinity associated with previous generations' ideals.

The 22 participants were aged between 16 and 18. Eighteen players were white and four black. All participants identified as heterosexual on a sexuality continuum. Consistent with the majority of professional footballers (McGillivray et al 2005), all participants hailed from a working-class background (using parental occupation as a proxy). **We are, thus, interested in what happens in a uniquely homosocial environment, which limits our analyses to interaction between males and the politics and power within masculinities.**

### *Procedures*

Each player underwent a one-to-one, loosely structured interview in a private location with one of the research team. The interviews ranged from 15-45 minutes, averaging 25, and explored attitudes toward homosexuality; how friendships are developed and maintained; physical and emotional behaviours between friends; and how players would feel if a fellow player was to come out as gay. Interviews were audio recorded and thematically coded, with



"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

coding being cross-checked by at least two members of the research team. Interviews were strategically conducted over a four-month period in order to avoid master narratives emerging among players. We of course acknowledge that interviews do not necessarily capture objective reality, instead they are an account. We are interested in how respondents use such discursive practices to represent their experiences, feelings and understandings in relation to the topics studied.

Interviews were supplemented by ten hours of observation, where one of the researchers observed the participants in their education and leisure settings in the academy. Importantly, these observations occurred three months before interviews and formed the basis of the themes explored in interviews. The validity of the coded notes from the observations were also co-verified by interviewing an academy teacher. Whilst the geographic boundaries of these observations precludes their life back home, they are representative of daily life in the academy. We take as a starting point that a culture imbued with orthodox notions of masculinity would suggest that interviewees might accentuate accounts of traditional masculinity, rather than mute them.

## **Results**

We have already reported the favourable attitudes toward the prospect of a gay teammate among these participants (authors 2013). In this article we examine their homosocial intimacy and tactility.

### ***Emotional closeness***

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

Previous research has highlighted how men must ‘try like hell’ to be emotionally restrictive with one another (Brannon 1976), particularly during periods of high homophobia (Anderson 2009; Williams 1985). A culture of inclusivity, however, permits boys’ and men’s emotional openness, without cultural homosexualisation (Anderson 2009; also Silva 2012), thus enabling stronger forms of emotional support (Way 2011). Evidence of this was abundant in this research.

Participants unanimously discussed enjoying close emotional same-sex friendships. All talked about issues they found important, even upsetting, with their friends; either on or off the team. Equally, they enjoyed discussing relationship dynamics about their romantic interests, including relationship troubles. They felt no need to be stoic about painful emotions. Finally, the importance of trust in a friendship was pronounced.

Evidencing these points, Adrian recalled that he could share ‘anything, without limits’, with his best friend. He proclaimed, ‘If I tell him not to tell anyone he won’t tell anyone. I trust him like that’. John felt he too could tell his best mate ‘absolutely anything’. Jake talked to his friends about ‘private personal issues’ and Harry said that, ‘if he’s your best mate you can talk about anything you want’.

Reflecting the temporality of academy friendships, however, their best friends were generally not teammates, but instead friends from ‘back home’. Nonetheless, similar emotionality extended to their teammates, of whom they spoke in endearing terms. They positioned teammates as friends they could talk with about sensitive issues, including their football performance, especially with those described as a ‘best mate on the team’. This extended to the teammates though as Jamal explained, ‘Many of them I’ve known for 9 or ten

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

years now, so I've got a few guys I'm close to and we can all talk about stuff". Echoing this, John said, 'If there's something to talk about, I encourage people to talk about it'.

Highlighting the normalcy of emotional openness among these men, Alex failed to understand why men were once emotionally restricted: 'If there's a problem, just talk about it! There's no reason to hold back'.

While most of the participants openly expressed emotions with friends and teammates alike, a few of the players limited what emotions were expressed according to the depth of their friendship. Danny explained:

My best mate is there to support you, whereas others don't care as much. Many of them I've known for nine or ten years now, so I've got a few guys I'm close to...He [best friend on the team] tells me when I was wrong...so he tells me the truth, and that's the sign of a good mate. Life's not just about football, there are other things as well, and we talk about that stuff.

For these men, there existed some reluctance to share personal and private information with teammates in the way they described doing with friends outside of football. Richard explained that relationships with teammates are closer to work colleagues saying, 'this is my job, ain't it?' Raheem agreed, 'I talk about certain things with teammates, but I open up to friends back home more'. This mirrors the response given by John, who proposed that some things are best discussed with his friends back home. Bryn concurred, stating that, 'I have other friends [back home] I talk to about everything. So it's less so with my best friend on the

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

team'. Oliver also supported this sentiment: 'I wouldn't really talk about that [personal issues] here. I might mention it, but not really explain it'.

Participants argued that the divide in closeness between teammates and friends back home is understood with reference to the competitive nature of academy level football. Simultaneous to being friends, they are also direct competitors; there are more academy players than professional contracts. Thus, their friends are both rivals and colleagues, meaning that even if they yearned to be as open with their teammates as with friends back home, they remain wary of doing so. Adrian explained:

If I were to say something to my best mate on the team and it would've slipped out and get around that might hurt me here [in respect of making the team or being perceived as a not focussed on the game]. [I'd] rather just get on with what I do by myself rather than tell somebody and have them talk about me and what I'm doing.

Harry added, 'Here I'm in competition with my friends. So you have to be bit selfish. You maybe don't get as close as you do to friends from back home'. Peter argued that emotional closeness, and preparedness to reveal intimate personal details, to others is contingent on the level of intimacy with a person, rather than a masculinity-inspired restricted code of expressions. He said, 'I talk to my best friend [on the team] about little things, but nothing major. I speak [about more] to my best friend back home (in Northern Ireland). I just don't know people here that well'.

### ***Physical Tactility***

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

While some participants refrained from discussing certain issues with teammates, they nonetheless enjoyed the emotional and physical bonding that occurred at the academy. As with studies of other athletes, our participants interlink their emotional closeness with physicality. This physicality extends to cuddling and spooning, both on sofas and in beds, as per Anderson and McCormack (2014). However, the participants in the present study explained that they varied their degree of physicality with teammates relative to more expressive and open modes with friends back home.

Participants noted that hugging is frequent among the players. Harry said that hugging was an important element of showing friendship. Similarly, Jake said that a ‘great deal’ of hugging goes on ‘even in public’, explaining ‘guys [are] sitting on each other, flapping arms around each other sort of stuff’. Despite the comfort with hugging among the players, there was more reluctance than found in other studies. Bryn, for example, said that he maintains stronger physical relationships with girls than boys, but will show support ‘if required’, irrespective of the social setting. He added, however, ‘If he looks like he needs a hug, I’ll hug him’. Harry also qualified when hugs were given, insisting there was ‘a time and a place’. Thus, as opposed to other research on adolescent males of this age (i.e. McCormack 2012) finding hugging profuse and wide-spread, some of the men on this team described doing it selectively. For those who did not hug profusely, they engaged in other forms of physicality – commonly knuckle-touching or chest-bumping – with each other. We highlight here a difference in methods however. We question whether interviewing these players about hugging does not conjure up a more serious embrace than the playful types McCormack

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

(2012) highlights. More extensive observation outside of the academy setting might have found spontaneous hugging the way McCormack shows.

As with recent research (Anderson & McCormack 2014), participants discussed falling asleep with their head resting on a teammate's shoulder, crossing legs on a sofa, or sleeping in the same bed as a teammate. Some described cuddling a teammate by spooning with him in bed. However, a difference here is that a few of the men said that when they share bed they sleep head-to-toe. Despite this, most of the men described cuddling and bed-sharing as normal. One said, 'It's just natural. It's comfortable'. None of the players objected to men cuddling in bed.

Participants were also more reserved when it came to kissing, compared to existing research on adolescents. Three admitted to kissing a teammate during times of celebration, but suggested that they did not kiss teammates apart from this. However, others said kissing does occur. Edward said that kissing was also more likely to happen when alcohol was involved, but that he had not kissed another boy at all. Overall, these young men see kissing other males in the same light as research on other groups of males kissing: as a 'symbol of platonic love between friends' (Anderson, Adams and Rivers 2010: 425). For example, Joe said that he would find it odd if he were kissed by a stranger, but not by a close friend, irrespective of gender. Accordingly, these young men, like in those of other studies (Anderson 2014), remove the sexual significance from their actions when kissing one another, but their status as both friends and direct competitors—along with their limited alcohol consumption because of academy monitoring—means that they kiss less.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

Players also bonded over being naked together. Raheem recalled, 'I was in the shower at my mate's and he had to quickly wash his hair...so he just hopped in the shower and washed his hair while I was in there'. Others mirrored this relaxed attitude of nudity, documenting similar situations, and showering with teammates in both communal showers, and two males sharing one shower.

These 16-18 year old players recognise the generational differences in physical behaviours, as their coaches do not do them. Lewis summarised, 'I can't really imagine my dad hugging and stuff the way we do'. He also made reference to what he perceived as the 'new' acceptance of nudity together (see below; Anderson 2014). Callum said that he appreciates that older men do not understand younger men's physicality with each other and thus he gives his coaches handshakes instead of hugs.

Observations confirmed the willingness and casualness in which boys touched each other's bodies within the academy classroom and communal settings. In addition to some general 'mucking about', players would also lean on each other, touch each other's arms, and put their chin on the shoulder of a friend in front. Whereas earlier masculinities research notes how policing against physical boundaries typified boys' conduct, even in this regimented setting we observed a proximity of behaviours described in McCormack's (2012) study of sixth form boys.

### ***Constructing Banter***

Participants discussed the prevalence of banter - ironic or sarcastic exchanges aimed at humour (Lyman 1987) – in the football club. They commented on how they would frequently

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

engage in bum-touching, high-fives, testicle slaps, and feigned sexual attractions toward teammates in various settings, such as in the changing rooms or the dorms (see author citation). Raheem noted how teammates would run around the streets naked at night whilst being slapped. Peter discussed how he engaged in more overt physicality when bantering with teammates, too. Jake attributed this overall approach to physical banter to the fact they spend large periods of time together as a team:

Sometimes we're a bit hyper and want to have a laugh. No-one thinks anything of it.

With us lot, we're with each other all week – we have a laugh; people touch your bum and stuff. I don't know what the line would be, really. I find it funny. If someone is just sat there, you just go up to them and touch them. Nobody thinks about it.

As older research has often documented high levels of homophobia, and restricted forms of tactility accompanying the construction of banter (Dunning and Sheard 1979; Elias and Dunning 1986; Sedgwick 1985), we also sought explanations for the behaviours described by these participants. These academy players felt that banter was a way to demonstrate the strength of one's friendship. For example, following the disclosure that he frequently slaps his friend on the bum, James said that, 'It's a way of showing love'. Richard used the same explanation, 'It's just a way of showing love for close friends'. Charles added, 'We spend so much time together...Nobody thinks anything of the banter – just a bit of a laugh among friends'.

Along a similar theme, Adrian did not understand the significance of the physicality of some of his teammates: 'I don't know why but everybody kept touching each other's bums...they were all joking but some people take it too far and sometimes you're like 'ease



"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

up, it's not fun'. Nevertheless, he acknowledged similar behaviour with some friends in an alternative setting, stating that he'd happily engage in it. This indicates that such physicality was and should be linked to levels of intimacy and familiarity. Bantering with others was one way to show friendship.

Because banter signals friendship, the players in this academy mostly feel that they know the limits of what and how much they can get away with. Knowing someone well enough to understand when to draw the line with banter is a more subtle dimension of emotional closeness, yet also points to an important degree of awareness. Jake said, 'you know what your best mate can take; you may not know about others'.

## **Discussion**

This article adds to the growing literature on inclusive masculinities by showing that lower-class, non-educationally aspiring, young men display attributes that researchers ascribe as inclusive masculinities (Anderson 2014; see also McCormack 2014; Roberts 2013). We also expand the theory by showing the effect that a near-total institution has on the behavioural acts and emotional openness that players maintain when they simultaneously view their teammates and friends and occupational competitors. While we still code these behaviours as indicative of inclusive masculinities, similar to other investigations of working-class youth (McCormack 2014), and while it is clear that their behaviours and emotionality stand in contrast to older literature on football players (Hekma 1998; Parker 1996, 2001), it is also evident that the structural mandates of the academy leave these men less homosocial than

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

young heterosexual male athletes in other studies (Adams 2011; Anderson 2011b; Parker 2001).

We explain this by considering Anderson's (2005a) notion of the 'near-total institution' alongside the Bourdieu-inspired concept of institutional habitus, as means by which to understand the mediating influence of the football club and the sport more generally. Because a near-total institution demands and promotes homogeneity of thought and action as the basis for achieving desirable athletic results, the presence of old masculine codes, thought at odds with what the young men describe as being their own attitudes, have some bearing. It likely emerges in this study of team sport athletes, and not others, because this setting is near approximate to a total institution, compared to other sporting teams where athletes do not live in a common facility.

This is similarly explainable through the concept of institutional habitus, which can be understood as 'the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation' (Reay et al 2005:35). Beyond simple transmission of culture, though, we argue that our participants are impacted by 'relational issues and priorities, which are deeply embedded, and sub-consciously informing practice' (Thomas 2002: 431). This is exemplified in the ways the boys perceive their coaches, managers, and parents' generation as being important personal influences, but having different views on appropriate masculine conduct, just as much as it is in their commitment to physical homosexual banter – something which has historically been a hallmark of male team sports. The players' representations can also be understood as being evidence of how 'identity transformation is both vacillating between a desire to *change* and a desire to *maintain*' (Stahl

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

2013: 31 italics in original). This echoes McCormack's (2014) finding that habitus can be used to explain generational differences in attitudes about appropriate masculine behaviours.

The impact of these concepts is clearer if we consider Wolf-Wendel et al's (2001) ideas that organised sport leads to an emphasis on the team and community over individual identity. This allows for two important, but partly paradoxical, factors in relation to the sometimes more modest subscription to inclusive masculinities found when interacting with men on their team: 1) The context prevents a total agential usurping of institutional norms related to the near total institution and thus solidifies and facilitates the processes of the institutional habitus on some level. 2) The required, self-imposed and competitive pressure necessary in team sport (to be selected, above one's peers, by the coach for the first team) operates in a complex way to ensure that too much closeness is deemed problematic. The words of some participants document clearly that being too open emotionally might make a player be perceived or actually feel something less than entirely focussed, and might harm their future job prospects. The academy players suggested that they compete with one another in terms of making the team, making the grade as a professional, generally being 'better than the next guy', and that this necessitates a degree of emotional distance. This again is a product of institutional norms. However, while this explains some of the more mildly conservative behaviours, we should remain clear that most of the boys talked of having a best mate on the team who they might confide in, hug and cuddle with.

A further important nuance is that the opportunity to socialise with closer, long standing friends back home brings with them a freedom of expression more conducive to the extension of masculine behaviours often found in the IMT literature. Accounts of positive

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

emotional closeness and enhanced physical tactility are often markedly pronounced when the boys were discussing being 'back home'. This was even the case in respect of male-to-male kissing, with attitudes and experiences of this seemingly relatively distant from that documented in recent research (Anderson et al 2010; Drummond et al 2014) in respect of teammates, but more liberal and open minded in respect of friends in home locales. This highlights the importance of institutional context in the dynamics of masculinities, and shows that these men are not necessarily distancing themselves from these inclusive behaviours, but circumscribing their identities in the context of their professional lives.

We hypothesise that this is also linked to the potential for alcohol consumption (something that is much more difficult during their boarding period at the football club), which has been demonstrated to make a significant difference to performances of more liberalised masculinity (Anderson et al. 2010; Peralta 2007). The differentiated performance, free from the constraints and influences of the institutional norms, makes sense because we know that 'men enact masculinity in different ways, depending ... on the dynamics of the social spaces in which such enactments take place; whether this is a more private or public setting' (Richardson 2010: 738). This confirms the long standing, but sometimes overlooked, notion that identity expression is situated, changeable, multi-faceted and complex, rather than static (Jenkins 1983); even across the course of one day (Roberts 2012).

Another issue imbued with complexity is the persistence, but also the changing understandings, toward homosocial banter. It is important to first stress that the more overt types of physical banter described by the participants – such as bottom and testicle slapping – were one element of a broader interactional repertoire with other men, which included

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

leaning on or placing their arms around one another, hugging, sharing beds without repercussion, and falling asleep in one another's arms. The banter was one part of their day, and far from the most predominant (Roberts 2012). Importantly, we also detect a distinct shift in the way this banter is both conducted and understood. Parker's (2001) research on a youth trainee soccer team in the early 1990s documented that banter involving genital touching simultaneously raised both the potential for homosexual suspicion but also served as a basis for the construction and policing of an 'appropriate' masculine self. Our research, however, indicates something quite different. In this contemporary setting, rather than banter being a resource for exaggerating some form of hypermasculinity or testing the mental and physical strength of 'manliness', it was instead described as a way of 'having a laugh'. It was understood as a mechanism for enhancing togetherness, and driven by and reinforcing a certain degree of closeness. Similarly, harsher forms of practical jokes that Parker identified as being necessary banter rituals (such as making lads inadvertently drink urine or sabotaging their underwear with heat spray to inflict pain) were not present at all in the accounts of our participants. That is to say, what is constructed as acceptable banter, what constitutes having a laugh, has shifted and perceptibly has an altered meaning. This shift has parallels with vividly clear distinctions in the accounts of wider 'dressing room' behaviour between professional players from the 1980s and those of today (e.g. see <http://www.bbc.com/sport/0/30101221>).

This focus on banter is a previously under-researched area of IMT, but nonetheless remains significant. Younger men are clearly redefining contemporary notions of banter away from behaviours documented by footballers from previous generations. Rather than using

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

banter as a way of policing appropriate masculine conduct or a method ‘feminising’ or testing the strength and limits of masculinity of others, as per older literature on football locker room cultures (e.g. Parker 1996), like other essential findings, this is interpreted as a signifier of friendship; a way of enjoying the company of other young men under similar pressure. It could also be interpreted as a way of relieving the pressure that these men are under within the competitive confines of a Premier League academy. Critically, the players generally conveyed an appreciation of the risks of taking banter ‘too far’, but this demonstrated more an awareness of not wanting to risk making a teammate feel uncomfortable or isolated rather than implying that, for example, some behaviours linked to any kind of sexuality taboo.

While perhaps more subtle than documented elsewhere, these attenuated expressions of masculinity, in an ostensibly working class setting, which has historically been a site for the maintenance and dominance of orthodox masculinity, are coherent with inclusive masculinity theory. Indeed, where these expressions might be read as being less progressive, our research, like that of McCormack (2014), allows for more nuanced understandings of why varying levels of inclusiveness occur.

Contemporary young men, freed from the constraints imposed by homohysteric cultures that typified previous generations, have a wider range of expressions available to them. This is in keeping with general trends where ‘young people tend to have more liberal and tolerant views than their elders’ (British Social Attitudes Survey 2013). Exposed to the requirement of the institutional habitus of the ‘near-total organisation’ that is association football, compounded by the role of competition with one’s colleagues, these expressions become slightly more contained. More broadly, this generational divide is supported by

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

academic literature: Anderson (2009) comments that older generations of men were socialised into a culture of extreme homophobia. Accordingly, our participants aligned their attitudes and behaviours, resisting overt forms of physical and emotional closeness with other older men. Yet, in respect of interactions with one another, they continually rejected orthodox notions of masculinity. The wider and more fluid accepted range of gender expressions that emerge as a result have implications for the operation of gendered power. Rather than being ‘constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of fear of the female, firstly in oneself’ (Bourdieu, 1998: 53), hierarchy is seemingly built *without hegemony* (see McCormack 2011). Instead of active subordination, the maintenance of masculine status is achieved through engaging with the spirit of competition and the building of athletic capital [REF?], but also through commitment to collective outcomes (i.e. desired match results). Hence, while there complicated by the presence of some continuities, this article presents evidence of the changing nature of the operation of power relations between men.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

## References

- Adams, A.** 2011 “Josh Wears pink cleats”: Inclusive Masculinity on the Soccer Field’, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58(5): 579 – 596.
- Adams, A., Anderson, E. & McCormack, M.** 2010 ‘Establishing and Challenging Masculinity: The Influence of Gendered Discourses in Organised Sport’, *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 29(3): 278 – 300.
- Adams, A., & Anderson, E.** 2012 Exploring the relationship between homosexuality and sport among the teammates of a small, Midwestern Catholic college soccer team. *Sport Education and Society*, 17(3), 347 – 363.
- Allain, K.A.** 2008 Real fast and tough: The construction of Canadian hockey masculinity. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 25(4): 462–481.
- Anderson, E.** 2002 Openly Gay Athletes Contesting Hegemonic Masculinity in a Homophobic Environment. *Gender & Society*, 16(6), 860-877.
- Anderson, E.** 2005a *In the game: Gay athletes and the cult of masculinity*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Anderson, E.** 2005b Orthodox and inclusive masculinity: Competing masculinities among heterosexual men in a feminized terrain. *Sociological Perspectives*, 48(3), 337 – 355.
- Anderson, E.** 2008a ‘Being masculine is not about who you sleep with...’: Heterosexual athletes contesting masculinity and the one-time rule of homosexuality. *Sex Roles*, 58, 104 – 115.
- Anderson, E.** 2008b Inclusive masculinity in a fraternal setting. *Men and Masculinities*, 10(5), 604 – 620.



"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

**Anderson, E.** 2009 *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities*. London: Routledge.

**Anderson, E.** 2010 *Sport, theory and social problems*. New York: Routledge.

**Anderson, A.** 2011a The rise and fall of Western homophobia, *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* 1 (fall), 80-94.

**Anderson, E.** 2011b Inclusive masculinities of university soccer players in the American Midwest. *Gender and Education*, 23(6), 729-744.

**Anderson, E.** 2011c Updating the Outcome Gay Athletes, Straight Teams, and Coming Out in Educationally Based Sport Teams. *Gender & Society*, 25(2), 250-268.

**Anderson, E., Adams, A. and Rivers, I.** 2010 "I kiss them because I love them": The emergence of heterosexual men kissing in British institutes of education', *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, 39(5), pp. 421-430.

**Anderson, E. & McCormack, M.** 2014 'Cuddling and spooning: Heteromascularity and homosocial tactility among student-athletes', *Men and Masculinities* (OnlineFirst).

**Anderson, E., McCormack, M., and Lee, H.** 2012 Male team sport hazing initiations in a culture of decreasing homophobia. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 27(4), 427-448.

**Anderson, E. and McGuire, R.** 2010 'Inclusive masculinity and the gendered politics of men's rugby', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 19(3), pp. 249-261.

**BBC.** 2013 (online) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/football/24161011> [accessed 09-09-2015]

**Bourdieu, P.** 1998 *Masculine domination*. Stanford University Press.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

**Cashmore, E., & Cleland, J.** 2011 Glasswing butterflies: Gay professional football players and their culture. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 35(4), 1 – 17.

**Cleland, J.** 2013 Discussing homosexuality on association football fan message boards: A changing cultural context. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 0(0), 1 – 17.

**Coles, T.** 2009 Negotiating the Field of Masculinity: The Production and Reproduction of Multiple Dominant Masculinities. *Men and Masculinities*, 12(1), 30-44.

**Connell, R.W.** 1995 *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

**Connell, R.W., Hearn, J., & Kimmel, M.S.** 2005 Introduction. In M.S. Kimmel, J. Hearn, & R.W. Connell (Eds.). *Handbook of studies on men and masculinities* (1-12). London: SAGE.

**Connell, R.W., & Messerschmidt, J.** 2005 Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829-859.

**Corrigan, P.** 1979 *Schooling the smash street kids*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

**Daily Mail.** 2013 (online) <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-2426073/Rainbow-row-Premier-League-clubs-refuse-wear-bootlaces-gay-campaign.html#ixzz3mugyOztX> [accessed 09-09-2015]

**Dashper, K.** 2012 “‘Dressage is full of queens!’: Masculinity, sexuality and equestrian sport’, *Sociology*, 46(6), pp. 1109-1124.

**Demetriou, D.** 2001 Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique. *Theory and Society*, 30(3), 337-361.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

**Drummond, M.J.N., Filiault, S.M., Anderson, E., and Jeffries, D.** 2014 'Homosocial intimacy among young Australian undergraduate men', *Journal of Sociology* (OnlineFirst).

**Elliott, R. and Weedon, G.** 2010 Foreign players in the English Premier Academy League: "Feet-drain" or "feet-exchange"? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 46(1), 61-75.

**Epstein, D.** 1998 Stranger in the Mirror: gender, ethnicity, sexuality and nation in schooling. Paper presented at Multiple Marginalities: Gender Citizenship and Nationality in Education Conference. Nordic-Baltic Research Symposium (NORFA) Helsinki: August 1998

**Field, T.** 1999 'American adolescents touch each other less and are more aggressive toward their peers as compared with French adolescents', *Adolescence*, 34(136), pp. 754-758.

**Goffman, E.** 1961 On the characteristics of total institutions. In *Symposium on preventive and social psychiatry*. 43-84.

**Hall, M. & Gough, B.** 2011 Magazine and reader constructions of 'metrosexuality' and masculinity: a membership categorisation analysis, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 20(1), 67-86.

**Hekma, G.** 1998 "As long as they don't make an issue of it . . .": Gay men and lesbians in organized sports in the Netherlands. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 35(1), 1-23.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

- Hirose, A. & Pih, K.K-h.** 2010 Men who strike and men who submit: Hegemonic and marginalized masculinities in mixed martial arts. *Men and Masculinities*, 13(2), 190-209.
- Jarvis, N.** 2013 'The inclusive masculinities of heterosexual men within UK gay sports clubs', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* (OnlineFirst).
- Jenkins, R.** 1983 *Lads, citizens, and ordinary kids: Working-class youth lifestyles in Belfast*. London: Routledge.
- Kestner, J.A.** 2010 *Masculinities in British Adventure Fiction, 1880–1915*, Ashgate: Farnham.
- Kimmel, M.S.** 2008 *Guyland: The perilous world where boys become men*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Lyman, P.** 1987. The fraternal bond as a joking relationship: A case study of the role of sexist jokes in male group bonding. In M. S. Kimmel (Ed.), *Changing men* (pp. 149–163). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lyng, S.T.** 2009 Is there no more to "antischoolishness" than masculinity? On multiple student styles, gender, and educational self-exclusion in secondary school. *Men and Masculinities*, 11(4), 462-487.
- Mac an Ghail, M.** 1994 *The Making of Men: Masculinities, Sexualities and Schooling*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

**Magrath, R., Roberts, S., & Anderson, E.** 2013 On the doorstep of equality: Attitudes toward gay athletes among academy-level footballers. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* (OnlineFirst).

**Manley, A., Palmer, C. and Roderick, M.** 2012 'Disciplinary power, the oligopticon and rhizomatic surveillance in elite sports academies', *Surveillance and Society*, 10(3/4), pp. 303-319.

**McCormack, M.** 2011 Hierarchy without hegemony: Locating boys in an inclusive school setting. *Sociological Perspectives*, 54(1), 83-101

**McCormack, M.** 2012 *The declining significance of homophobia: How teenage boys are redefining masculinity and heterosexuality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**McCormack, M.** 2014 The intersection of youth masculinities, decreasing homophobia and class: an ethnography. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 65(1), 130-149.

**McCormack, M., & Anderson, E.** 2010 'It's Just Not Acceptable Any More': The Erosion of Homophobia and the Softening of Masculinity at an English Sixth Form. *Sociology*, 44(5), 843-859.

**McCormack, M. & Anderson, E** 2014. The Influence of Declining Homophobia on Men's Gender in the United States: An Argument for the Study of Homophobia. *Sex Roles* 71(3-4): 109-120.

**McGillivray, D., Fearn, R., & McIntosh, A.** 2005 Caught up in and by the Beautiful Game A Case Study of Scottish Professional Footballers. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 29(1), 102-123.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

**Messerschmidt, J.** 2010 *Hegemonic masculinities and camouflaged politics*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

**Nayak, A.** 2006 'Displaced masculinities: Chavs, youth and class in the post-industrial city', *Sociology*, 40(5), pp. 813-831.

**Parker, A.** 1996 Sporting masculinities: gender and the body, in: M. Mac an Ghail (Ed.) *Understanding Masculinities* (Buckingham, Open University Press).

**Parker, A.** 2001 Soccer, servitude and sub-cultural identity: Football traineeship and masculine construction. *Soccer and Society*, 2(1), 59-80.

**Peralta, R.** 2007 'College and alcohol and the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity among European American', *Sex Roles*, 56(11-12), pp. 741-756.

**Reay, D.** 2002 Shaun's story: Troubling discourses of white working class masculinities, *Gender and Education*, 14(3), 301-318.

**Reay, D., David, M., & Ball, S. J.** 2005 *Degrees of Choice: Class, Gender and Race in the Higher Education choice process*. Trentham Books.

**Richardson, D.** 2010 Youth masculinities: Compelling male heterosexuality. *British Journal of Sociology*, 61(4), 737-756.

**Roberts, S.** 2012 'I just got on with it': the educational experiences of ordinary, yet overlooked, boys. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 33(2), 203-221.

**Roberts, S.** 2013 Boys will be boys won't they? Change and continuity in contemporary working class masculinities. *Sociology*, 47(4), 671-686.

**Roberts, S. (Ed.).** 2014 *Debating Modern Masculinities: Change, Continuity, Crisis?*. Palgrave Macmillan.

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Roberts, S., Anderson, E. and Magrath, R. (2017), Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers in England. The British Journal of Sociology, 68: 336–357., which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12237> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

© 2017 Wiley-Blackwell

**Robins, D. & Cohen, P.** 1978 *Knuckle sandwich*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

**Sherrod, D.** 1987 'The Bonds of Men. Problems and Possibilities in Close Male Relationships'. Harry Brod, ed. *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies*. " 212-39.

**Sprecher, S. & Sedikides, C.** 1993 "Gender differences in perceptions of emotionality: The case of close heterosexual relationships." *Sex Roles* 28, (9) 511-530.

**Stahl, G.** 2013 Habitus Disjunctures, Reflexivity and White Working-Class Boys' Conceptions of Status in Learner and Social Identities. *Sociological Research Online*, 18(3), 2.

**Thomas, L.** 2002 Student retention in higher education: the role of institutional habitus. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(4), 423-442.

**Tosh, J.** 2005 *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain: essays on gender, family and Empire*. Harlow: Pearson.

**Weedon, G.** 2012 "Glocal boys": Exploring experiences of acculturation amongst migrant youth footballers in Premier League academies. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 47(2), 200-216.

**Whitehead, S.** 2002 *Men and Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

**Willis, P.** 1977 *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

**Wolf-Wendel, L. E., Toma, J. D., & Morpew, C. C.** 2001 How Much Difference Is Too Much Difference? Perceptions of Gay Men and Lesbians in Intercollegiate Athletics. *Journal of College Student Development*, 42(5), 465-79.