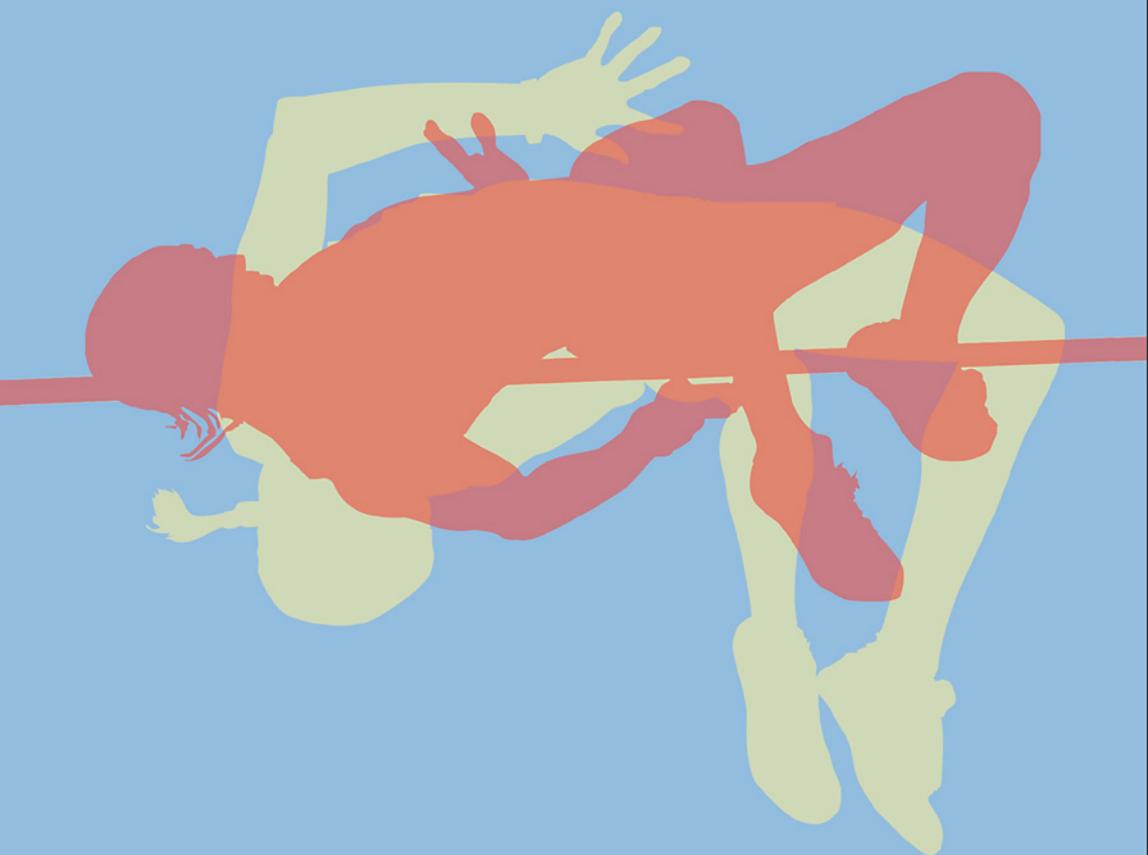


SPORT & GENDER IDENTITIES

MASCULINITIES, FEMININITIES
AND SEXUALITIES



Edited by
Cara Carmichael Aitchison

Sport and Gender Identities

This important new book brings together gender studies and sexuality studies to provide original and critical insights into processes of identity formation in a wide range of sport-related contexts. The authors draw on contemporary debates concerning gender and identity, from a range of disciplines including sociology, social and cultural geography, media studies and management studies, to address key issues in masculinity, femininity and sexuality:

- **Part I: Representing masculinities in sport** analyses media representations of men's sports, exploring the variety and complexity of concepts of masculinity.
- **Part II: Transgressing femininities in sport** makes use of case studies to examine the experiences of women in male-dominated sporting arenas.
- **Part III: Performing sexualities in sport** analyses the role of queer theory in sport studies, explores experiences of and responses to homophobia in sport, and examines the significance of the Gay Games.

This book will be of particular interest to students and academics working in sport studies, leisure studies, gender studies, queer and sexuality studies, social and cultural geography, and sociology.

Cara Carmichael Aitchison is Professor in Human Geography at the University of West of England, Bristol, where she specialises in social, cultural and spatial research into leisure, sport and tourism.

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Kate Russell is a senior lecturer in psychology at the University of Coventry. Her PhD, completed in 2002, investigated the development of body satisfaction and identity among women who play rugby, cricket and netball and the role context plays in determining this. She was recently awarded a Fellowship of Social Sciences from the NZ-UK Link Foundation (2003), to undertake research in New Zealand collecting similar data. Her more recent research has focussed on the development of perceptions of physical attractiveness among young children, and the role physical education takes in the development of positive and negative body images. Kate is also an accredited sport and exercise scientist and a chartered psychologist within the British Psychological Society's Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology.

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Gender, sport and identity

Introducing discourses of masculinities, femininities and sexualities

Cara Carmichael Aitchison

Introducing social and cultural critiques of gender, sport and identity

This book explores and explains the complex ways in which both gender and sexuality, as significant aspects of individual identities, identity politics and identity relations, inform and are informed by sport. This dialectic relationship, in which identities are constantly shaped and reshaped, made and remade, presented and represented, engages with sport as a dynamic social and cultural force. The mutable nature of sport, of identity and of the relationship between the two offers possibilities for resistance, contestation and transgression of hegemonic gender and sexual power relations. In this respect, identities that might be marginal in previous sporting times or in contemporary non-sporting spaces might find a place of sanctuary within sport through avenues such as women's football or the Gay Games, for example. But sport is also an ambiguous site of visible and marked embodied identities where the discourses of power that are dominant within wider society can often be exaggerated to construct sporting arenas as veritable prisons for those marginalised as 'Other' in everyday life. Thus sport can be criticised as being the last great bastion of homophobia, racism and nationalism within contemporary western society.

The chapters collected here seek to explore and explain this contradictory nature of sport in relation to the perennially contested, and frequently overlapping, categories of masculinities, femininities and sexualities. The plurality attached to these terms denotes the sense in which many of the chapters draw on contemporary post-structural critiques to examine sport and identity as mutually informing sites in which dominant power relations are constantly 'in process' and subject to changing patterns of construction, legitimation, reproduction and reworking (Aitchison 2000, 2003, 2005). Indeed, it is this emphasis on 'reworking' that is highlighted in many of the chapters. The contingent nature of identities, as played out in and through sport, is revealed through the mobility in discourses and practices of dominant, residual and emergent cultures within and in relation to sport. Each chapter within the book demonstrates how such discourses and practices serve to inform and, in turn, become informed by the identity relations

of sport, in particular sporting arenas and/or in relation to specific identity formations.

The chapters are informed by a range of disciplines and subject fields. Sociology and, more specifically, the maturing sub-discipline of the sociology of sport, undoubtedly forms the major disciplinary underpinning to the text with anthropology, geography and psychology supplementing and complementing social analyses. As such, many of the chapters seek to develop inter-disciplinary analyses of the inter-connected nature of the social, cultural, spatial and individual in forming identities within and in relation to sport. These inter-disciplinary analyses draw on subject fields including gender studies, sexuality studies, cultural studies, media studies, leisure studies, policy studies and management studies to develop comprehensive social and cultural critiques of sport.

Masculinities, femininities and sexualities: structure and outline of the book

The three parts of the book each focus primarily on one aspect of identity formation in sport. Part I, *Representing Masculinities in Sport*, opens this discussion with the deliberate initial focus on masculinities. Here, the two chapters demonstrate the unstable nature of masculinity and the complex ways in which different forms of masculinity co-exist, compete and control one another at different times, in dissimilar spaces and in diverse ways. In Chapter 2, *Mediating masculinities: the production of media representations in sport*, Garry Whannel reveals how masculinity 'has never been especially stable or fixed and has always been subject to unease and internal tensions. Its boundaries have always been policed, and its parameters re-inscribed'. Illustrating his discussion with reference to a wide range of media forms and examples from football (soccer), Whannel discusses the extent to which the representation of masculinity in sport reveals 'a crisis in male power' or 'a crisis in the cultural modes through which masculinity presents itself'. What Whannel does is to render visible those aspects of identity which, until relatively recently, were either invisible within sport studies or presumed to be neutral. In Chapter 3, *Watching the game: theorising masculinities in the context of mediated tennis*, Eileen Kennedy demonstrates how identities related to masculinity not only change over time and space but are represented differently in relation to class, race and nation. Both chapters in this first part, whilst addressing issues of masculinities, demonstrate that masculinity cannot be discussed other than in relation to femininity as each is a relational, if not dualistic, concept defined by its other.

Part II, *Transgressing Femininities in Sport*, then seeks to explore femininities in relation to masculinities through empirically-informed case studies that explore gender and sexuality in women's basketball and triathlon – two sports heavily dominated by men. In Chapter 4, *The contested terrain of the Women's National Basketball Association arena*, Tiffany Muller shifts our disciplinary gaze

from sociology, cultural studies and media studies to that of social and cultural geography. Informed by analyses that interweave the social and cultural with the spatial, Muller explores the contested relations of both gender and sexuality in the spaces of women's basketball. In Chapter 5, *Triathlon as a space for women's technologies of the self*, Amanda Jones and Cara Aitchison demonstrate how sport can be experienced as both a dominating force and an empowering experience. Through extensive empirical research of women in triathlon, Jones has found that sport can be both a 'technology of power' and a 'technology of the self'; a concept coined by Foucault (1988) to describe the effect of practices that individuals perform in order to transform their own bodies as a means of transcending technologies of power. These *technologies of the self* embody resistance, transgression and empowerment on the part of the individual, unlike *technologies of power* which signify disempowerment on the part of the individual as a result of oppressive regimes of power effected through dominant discourses. In Chapter 6, *Gender in sport management: a contemporary picture and alternative futures*, Sally Shaw moves our focus from power to praxis as she examines the representation of women in sport management and the meaning of gender equity in relational rather than distributive terms.

Part III, *Performing Sexualities in Sport*, explores the complex ways in which hegemonic masculinities and femininities are intertwined with constructions and contestations of sexuality in sport. This part starts with Chapter 7, *Gender, sexuality and queer theory in sport*, in which Corey W. Johnson and Beth Kivel provide an exploration and explication of theory that has informed recent understandings of gender, sexuality and 'Queer' in relation to sport and leisure. This theoretical underpinning is then developed in Chapter 8 where Kate Russell, in a chapter titled '*Queers, even in netball?*' *Interpretations of the lesbian label among sportswomen*, examines the ways in which sportswomen are constructed as lesbians and how this labelling is experienced within the specific sports of rugby, cricket and netball. Chapter 9, *Driving down participation: homophobic bullying as a deterrent to doing sport*, by Celia Brackenridge, Ian Rivers, Brendan Gough and Karen Llewellyn, discusses the evidence of homophobia in sport and explores the impact of such power relations on sport participation. Finally, in Chapter 10, *Challenging homophobia and heterosexism in sport: the promise of the Gay Games*, Caroline Symons examines responses to homophobia in sport, the transgressive action of forming the Gay Games, and questions whether such strategies can challenge the conventional hegemonic gender order to allow for alternative ways of experiencing gender, sexuality and sport. The conclusions offered by Symons might also serve as conclusions to the book in that she argues that whilst the Gay Games have provided an alternative sporting space they might simultaneously have created a 'ghettoised space' that makes further barriers between essentialised identity categories all the more real. Thus, the danger is that practices and processes that serve to label and thus essentialise identity categories in relation to sexuality are as likely to result in *marking* a difference as they are in *making* a difference.

In collecting these chapters together the aim is therefore not just to problematise our conceptual thinking relating to gender, sexuality and sport but also to question our policies, practices, rights and responsibilities in relation to developing a more inclusive sport studies within the academy and a more equitable sport management in practice.

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Part I

Representing masculinities in sport

Chapter 2

Mediating masculinities

The production of media representations in sport¹

Garry Whannel

Introduction

In recent years, masculinity has become an intensely researched topic that, in various books, has been discovered, theorised, deconstructed, dislocated, unwrapped, unmasked, and placed in perspective. There is, of course, no single essential trans-historical and trans-cultural masculinity. Investigation of such 'moments' as the Roman circus (Wiedemann 1992; Crowther 1996), the chivalric conventions of the sixteenth century (Brailsford 1969), gentlemanly behaviour in the eighteenth century (Cohen 1996), nineteenth-century muscular Christianity (Mangan 1981) or the Empire adventurers of the late nineteenth century (Dawson 1994), show that masculinity is always shaped in ways that have a social and historical specificity. In analysing these processes, it is therefore necessary to consider discontinuities as well as continuities (Roper and Tosh 1991).

Masculinity cannot be understood separately from its relation to femininity. One dynamic in the post-war growth of feminism was women's perceived need to escape from definition by masculinity and patriarchy.² Although 'getting men to change' was a significant feminist goal, many of these texts were addressed primarily to and through the experience of women, and to women's need to act to change their own lives.³ The impact and influence of feminism, with its emphasis on the socially constructed nature of gender difference, and its insistence that 'the personal is political', constituted a challenge both to the naturalisation of gender roles in mainstream male scholarship and to its characteristic compartmentalisation that served to marginalise both 'women' and the 'domestic' sphere.⁴

Although sexual politics became more prominent in both the public and the academic sphere, men and masculinity did not undergo extensive analysis until the 1980s. Coward drew attention to the continuing invisibility of men's sexuality as 'the true dark continent of this society' and commented that 'controlling the look, men have left themselves out of the picture because a body defined is a body controlled' (Coward 1984: 228–9). The emergence of a 'men's studies' was attacked by many feminists and by some men, for 'me-too-ism', self-indulgence and lack of engagement with feminism or gay politics.⁵ Chapman and Rutherford (1988: 11) acknowledged that 'masculinity remains the great unsaid ... the cause

but still not the site of struggle', and commented on the ways in which 'feminism has pushed men into a defensive huddle' (Chapman and Rutherford 1988: 25). Just as the castle of the self is defended against incursion (Jones 1993), so the fortress of masculinity has been defended, until recently, against the fierce gaze of analysis and deconstruction. In the developing field of sport sociology, masculinity was, occasionally, marked as a concern, but usually, only as a minor one.⁶ However, by the second half of the 1980s, sporting masculinities were the focus of greater attention.⁷

The impact of the Thatcher era in the United Kingdom spawned a less optimistic analysis of the possibility of socialist-feminist transformation (Butler and Scott 1992; Rowbotham 1989). Indeed a reaction against feminism could be charted and a new revisionist post-feminist feminism was being elaborated (Falaudi 1991; Walter 1998). Indeed, Coward argued that 'nothing would improve the lot of women unless men themselves changed' (Coward 1992: 6–7). The backlash against feminism, the revisions of it, and the political pessimism, all suggest a form of masculinity, structured in dominance and resistant to change. Yet there is a difference between resistance to change and immunity from it, and examination of the tensions within masculinity can be revealing. This chapter draws on a range of popular media forms including films, novels and newspapers to illustrate the production, disruption, policing and hybridity of dominant and emergent masculinities in sport.

Machines for producing masculinity

The social practices of schooling, the rituals of same-sex peer groups, and the representations of the media all contribute to the ceaseless reconstruction of masculinities; in a sense they are machines for producing masculinity. One of the founding texts of muscular Christianity, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, makes explicit a link between masculinity and morality. Reduced on his first day to a 'motionless body', Tom is, nonetheless, transformed by the end of the tale into an active and rounded person. Schoolboy fiction is often structured around narratives in which pupils arrive as passive, acted-upon bodies and, through a series of punishing rituals, tests of character and moral challenges, become acting moral subjects; boys are turned into men through the process of schooling. Such narrative structures offer a transformation through which manliness is produced. Consequently, the representations of such processes have much to tell us about dominant notions of manliness and masculinity, their formation in the mid-nineteenth century, and their continued discursive power in the present (Whannel 1999).

By the end of the nineteenth century this new discursive formation, in which public school athleticism, the moral structure of team games, social Darwinism and English Philistinism are linked together, was well established. The split between the sporting philistine and the non-sporting aesthete was highlighted clearly by the contrast between sporting muscularity and the mannered aestheticism of *fin de siècle* figures like Wilde and Beardsley. Noel Coward described the characters

of the Greyfriars School stories as ‘awfully manly, decent fellows ... no suggestion of sex, even in its lighter forms, ever sullied their conversation. Considering their ages, their healthy-mindedness was almost frightening’ (quoted in Turner 1976: 232).

The distinction between sporting philistine and non-sporting aesthete continued to be a marked and distinctive feature of English bourgeois culture through the inter-war period, and into the era of the welfare state. In the 1970s, Viv Stanshall of the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band alluded to the centrality of sport in this ethos of schooling, and the marginalising of those who rejected it, conjuring up the ‘odd boy reading Mallarmé’ whilst around him sport rages:

Sport, sport masculine sport
 equips a young man for society
 Yes sport turns out a jolly good sort,
 its an odd boy who doesn't like sport.

With the rise of television sport, the tabloid press and celebrity culture, major sport stars became the site of intersecting discourses of morality and masculinity, in which they were supposed to be role models and set good examples. Those who failed came in for public castigation in that modern equivalent of the village stocks, the tabloid press (Whannel 1995, 2001a). The careers of sport stars, reconstructed in biography and autobiography, provided narratives of masculinity in which obstacles are overcome, victories won, and enemies vanquished (Whannel 1998).

The growth of fitness chic and body culture during the 1980s, and its connection to the new competitive individualism and philistinism of Thatcherism, reconstructed the discursive formation of muscular Christianity. The concept of sport as a form of character training remains an entrenched one. In the Sports Council (1995) policy document on sport, *Raising the Game*, the then Prime Minister, John Major, referred to sport as a binding force between generations and across borders, and linked it specifically to moral education, declaring that ‘Competitive sport teaches valuable lessons which last for life’ (Sports Council 1995: 2). The muscular Christianity of Hughes and Kingsley, over one hundred years on, is inscribed into government doctrine in sentiments they would applaud, and in a form of expression that John Major devised but that another Christian, Tony Blair, was happy to endorse: ‘If sport is to play a proper role in building a healthy society in general and in the personal, moral and physical development of young people in particular, we must ensure that young people are introduced to it early in life’ (Sports Council 1995: 40). Faith, however groundless it may be, is still placed in the ability of team sport to transform the young into acting moral subjects, in the same manner as that celebrated in the narrative structure of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*.