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'It seems really inclusive in some ways, but … inclusive just for people who identify as lesbian': discourses of gender and sexuality in a lesbian-identified football club

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This article explores discourses of gender and sexuality in relation to female football players located within the context of 'gay sport'. The findings presented are taken from my PhD research, and as such form part of a larger study of both male and female footballers who choose to play in gay- or lesbian-identified football clubs. Drawing upon participant observation and interview narratives of five women involved in gay/lesbian-identified football contexts, this article considers how these women resist homophobic and heteronormative discourses present within the broader context of mainstream sport, and how they negotiate their position as women in the world of 'gay football'. Engaging with feminist, post-structuralist and queer theories, it offers a critique of 'gay sport', with a particular emphasis on 'inclusion'. In doing so, it highlights the complex and often paradoxical responses to the homophobic and heteronormative climate of mainstream sport, and illustrates the tensions inherent within this specific gay/lesbian football context.

Introduction

It is well documented that football within the UK is imbued with notions of heterosexual masculinity.[1] Historically, this has raised significant issues concerning the participation of women in general, as well as men who fail to conform to the discourse of heteronormative masculinity that pervades the sport. Mainstream football is understood to be one of the greatest institutions involved in the production and maintenance of homophobic discourses. In recent years, however, particularly over the last decade, there have been a number of significant threats to this dominant order. Coinciding with the rise of 'gay sports culture' in general, one of the most noteworthy of these responses to the homophobia embedded within mainstream football has been the development of gay- and lesbian-identified football clubs. Founded upon the principles of equity and inclusion, which are fundamental to many gay sports organizations, gay football teams and leagues have sought to provide a space for football players to compete free from the constraints of oppressive discourses of gender and sexuality, and developed an alternative to the mainstream approach to organizing football.[2]

However, as recent academic engagement with 'gay sports culture' has highlighted,[3] there is reason to be cautious in assuming that the gay and lesbian embrace of sport necessarily equates to the development of unproblematically inclusive sporting environments. As Pronger[4] notes, there are a number of tensions and

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contradictions inherent within the premise of 'gay sport' that undermine its ideal of inclusion and limit its transformative potential in relation to mainstream sports practices. While these issues are rapidly emerging as a significant topic for academic sports scholarship, it is evident that further research is needed if we are to gain a greater understanding of the complexities of social relations that operate within and between different gay and lesbian sports communities.

The work of Caudwell[5] has demonstrated how football spaces provide significant contexts for the exploration of discursive practices related to gender and sexuality. By illuminating the intricacies and nuances of homophobic and heteronormative discourses, it has offered an important insight into the ways in which these discourses can be both resisted, and inadvertently reproduced, within the particular context of an 'out' lesbian football team. However, this work has also highlighted the need for further research, particularly in relation to examining the tensions between normative and transgressive aspects of lesbian-identified football clubs. Furthermore, whilst the gendered power struggles related to female participation in mainstream football have been well documented, comparatively little is known about how this gender dynamic translates to the supposedly 'inclusive' environment of 'gay football'.

This article contributes to the existing body of knowledge on gender and sexuality in sport by investigating the ways in which homophobic and heteronormative discourses are managed within gay- and lesbian-identified football contexts through notions of inclusion. Specifically, it draws upon narratives of five women involved in a lesbian-identified football club to explore how these discourses are negotiated and how these women experience 'inclusiveness'. The ages of the women included in the study ranged from 21 to 39, and the length of time they had played for the club varied between 1 and 10 years. While the main focus of the article relates to the discursive practices that govern social relations within the club, it will also consider how these issues relate to the club's positioning within the broader contexts of 'gay football', 'gay sports culture' and sport in general.

Gay sports spaces and discourses of inclusion

'Gay sports culture' is understood to have arisen as a reaction to what may be described as a climate of homophobia and hostility towards gay and lesbian athletes in mainstream sport. Taking the lead from organizations such as The Federation of Gay Games (FGG) and the Gay and Lesbian International Sports Association (GLISA), gay sports spaces have fostered climates of tolerance and celebration of marginal sexual identities, and in doing so have attempted to redefine the masculinist principles of competition and athleticism that underlie more traditional sports practices. Gay sports spaces also seek to promote the visibility of sexual minorities in order to legitimize and normalize non-heterosexual identities. In this respect, gay sports culture, Pronger[6] argues, 'is the very model of liberal, inclusive lesbian and gay politics and aspirations'. However, sports spaces are both constructed by, and productive of, social relations, and should therefore be understood as sites where power is operationalized.[7] The relations of power that exist within sports spaces inexorably construct and disrupt social boundaries, thus creating opportunities for the normalization of certain identities and subjectivities, and the mariginalization of others.[8] Despite their ostensibly transgressive approach to the organization of sport, gay sports spaces are not free from this power dynamic.

On the contrary, they provide significant locations for processes of marginalization and exclusion to occur. This is particularly salient given that the discourse of inclusion is a central theme underpinning many gay sports organizations, which as academic engagement with gay sports culture has highlighted, is simultaneously a point of contention.

The pervasive concern with promoting the visibility of non-heterosexual identities within gay spaces is problematic. As Skeggs[9] argues 'there are always limits on spatializing visibility, that is, using space to make a claim for political, social or cultural recognition'. In relation to 'gay sport', this is particularly true given that there has not been one cohesive approach to the organization of gay sports spaces or the discursive practices that dictate visibility within these spaces. Instead, gay sports often lie in a constant state of tension between transformation and legitimation.[10] On the one hand, gay sport embodies a radical, queer potential to transform the way that sport is organized:[11] some gay sports spaces have entirely rejected the notion of competition and shifted focus away from ability and athleticism, thus disrupting the dominant order of domination and subordination. However, fears surrounding the possibility that the 'friendly' and non-competitive approach may reinforce notions of gay men's incompatibility with athleticism have resulted in other gay sports clubs being set up as an extremely competitive alternative to mainstream sport.[12] The need to legitimize gay sports competitions by appropriating mainstream values and appealing to governing bodies for sanctioning therefore compromises the transformative potential of gay sport, and necessarily leads to the appropriation of wider oppressive discourses associated with the mainstream that result in the perpetuation of exclusionary practices. Similarly, the desire to celebrate diverse representations of gender and sexuality is concurrently undermined by efforts to demonstrate the apparent 'normalness' of gay athletes. Just as early attempts to legitimize women's sport focused upon attempts to 'prove' that women who took part in sport could still be 'feminine',[13] there appears to be an underlying assumption within certain forms of gay sport that it will only be taken seriously if it goes out of its way to demonstrate the existence of 'appropriately masculine' gay male athletes, and highlight the presence of lesbian athletes that do not conform to the 'butch' stereotype.[14] This normalizing and legitimizing process is central to the identity politics approach of most gay sports organizations, however it is problematic in the sense that it encourages homosexuality to be interpreted as 'a minor variation on an essential sameness'.[15] This, Pronger[16] argues, directly inhibits the potential for homosexuality to challenge the dominance of heterosexuality. The identity politics approach results in a reinforcement of the essentialism that underpins the homo/hetero binary, which not only represents a failure to interrogate the presumed stability of identity itself, but risks reproducing homosexuality as a marginalized Other, thus strengthening the heteronormative status quo.

While gay sports culture may be imbued with discourses of inclusion, it is clear that it simultaneously maintains its own system of gendered and sexualized power relations in which some identities are permitted and others are marginalized. In this respect, it is apparent that even within gay and lesbian sports contexts, some (non-hetero)sexualities and representations of gender are able to gain currency over others: bi-sexualities, for example are often discursively positioned as Other to 'gay sports culture',[17] and transgendered athletes appear to adopt a similarly contentious position.[18] Clearly, this raises questions concerning who, exactly, *is* included within gay sport.

Discourses of football, homophobia and heteronormativity

The deeply rooted historical connection between football, men and notions of masculinity has been extensively documented.[19] In both academic scholarship and popular media football has been marked as unequivocally male. However, in recent years the propensity for the academic study of football to centre on male experience has begun to be challenged by a number of feminist sports sociologists.[20] Building upon academic work on gender and sport more broadly, this research has illuminated the multiple ways in which women and femininity have been positioned as marginal to the discourse of football. There is widespread documentation of the historical exclusion of women from the game and the subsequent impact that this has had on female participation in the current climate of mainstream football.[21] Research into the gender dynamic of contemporary football has revealed the multiple implicit means of oppression that continue to prevail throughout football culture, and highlighted that it is at the discursive level that the marginalization of women in football is most deeply entrenched.

Scraton *et al.*[22] have demonstrated the complexities of gendered discourses in relation to female footballers' experiences. Specifically, they have highlighted how despite overcoming barriers to participation and to some extent transgressing gender boundaries, many women are still positioned in a state of conflict between their identities as football players and the overarching discourse of compulsory heterosexual femininity which remains prevalent within the sport. Jeanes and Kay[23] also allude to the difficulties in challenging widespread ideological notions of football being 'inappropriate' and incompatible with femininity. It is evident from these accounts that gender-based exclusion in football, like many other sports, is inextricably linked with prevailing discourses of sexuality. Female athletes, particularly those competing in sports that have traditionally been defined as masculine, transgress the boundaries of 'acceptable femininity'.[24] Due to heteronormative assumptions that associate femininity in women with heterosexuality, this perceived gender transgression is compounded with the assumption that the sexuality of female athletes also deviates from the 'norm' of heterosexuality.[25] Homophobic discourses, therefore, act to control the participation of women by creating pressure to conform to notions of 'emphasized femininity'.[26] Football, being perhaps one of the most instrumental sports involved in the production of notions of masculinity in the UK, is unsurprisingly one context in which the production of homophobic and heteronormative discourses are also most pervasive. Indeed, as Caudwell[27] has demonstrated, despite a considerable lesbian presence, '"compulsory heterosexuality" in football is reified … through homophobic positioning of the figure of the lesbian as "predator" and "converter"'.[28] Cox and Thompson[29] also highlight the pressure that exists within women's football to conform to dominant notions of heterofemininity. What is perhaps most noteworthy in these findings is that while this pressure may stem from the external male gaze, homophobia and heteronormativity are so deeply ingrained in the discourse of football that they are often reproduced and perpetuated by female football players.[30] It is the lesbian presence in football that is discursively depicted as the 'problem', not the homophobic attitudes themselves, which serve only to restrict and control the behaviours of all women involved, regardless of sexual identities.

In this vein, it is important to acknowledge that the workings of homophobic and heteronormative discourses within women's football spaces are by no means straightforward. An understanding of complexities and tensions inherent within these

discourses allows for the exploration of the various means by which they may be resisted, and more importantly, transformed. Ianotta and Kane[31] caution against contributing towards the construction of a 'meta story of victimization' surrounding women's experiences in relation to sexuality in sport. It is vital that research explores the ways that female footballers are able to actively challenge existing power relations and redefine the notions of gender and sexuality that have previously shaped their involvement in the sport. However, it would be over-simplistic to assume that all women's football contexts are necessarily hostile environments, adverse to the presentation of diverse representations of (non-hetero)sexualities. Indeed, there is a significant body of research which suggests that football can provide a 'safe' space for the exploration of homosexualities.[32] The very presence of lesbian sportswomen in football teams (although often exaggerated) indicates something of an environment of tolerance towards otherwise marginal sexualities. Mennesson and Clement,[33] for instance, explore how female football teams in France provide a unique type of 'homosociability', which 'makes room for the homosexual practices of female players by enabling its discovery for some and its acting out for others'. Similarly, engaging with theoretical debates around space, Caudwell[34] identifies how women-only football contexts offer opportunities for the subversion of normative constructs of gender and sexuality and the production of 'dykescapes'. With specific reference to the physical embodiment of identities, Caudwell[35] also illustrates how women's footballing bodies themselves may be considered as 'sites/sights' for the disruption and '(re)articulation' of the 'norms' of sex, gender and sexuality.

The recent development of a number of 'out' lesbian-identified football clubs, particularly over the last decade, can be viewed as evidence of one aspect of this transformative and subversive response to homophobic discourse. However, clubs such as these should not necessarily be viewed as representative of a complete transformation of the oppressive practices of mainstream sport. Caudwell[36] states that 'football spaces are where power is materialized and where women's bodies are controlled and regulated; the football fields are places where processes of Othering occur'. It is evident that the discursive tensions and contradictions embedded within mainstream sport may be present within lesbian-identified clubs themselves. As such, it is important to consider the extent to which lesbian football communities may be regarded as normative, as well as transgressive.[37]

Theoretical framework

My interpretation and analysis of the research findings presented within this article is influenced by feminist understandings of gendered and sexualized power relations, as well as post-structural and queer deconstructive theories of identity, subjectivity and discourse. Radical feminist work on the experiences of lesbian sportswomen has provided invaluable insight into the governance of particular forms of dominant masculinity in athletic contexts, and the pervasiveness of homophobia within women's sport.[38] However, it is important that research into gender and sexualities looks beyond homophobia and extends towards an analysis of the workings of heteronormativity.[39] Sykes[40] demonstrates the need for work within this area to move on from the essentialism of empiricist or standpoint epistemologies that view identity as stable and fixed and that privilege the position of explicit and visible 'outness' as fundamental to the transformation of homophobia. King[41] states that

> … if we accept that homosexuality and heterosexuality are mutually constituitive, and that each presupposes the other in a relationship of hierarchy, not equivalence, then the "epistemic and political project of identifying a gay subject reinforces and reproduces this hierarchical figure" (Sykes, 2006: 16)'.

By shifting the focus towards a queer disruption of the production and management of the boundaries that preserve the normative status of heterosexuality, feminist research is better equipped to destabilize the sexist and homophobic discourses that persist within sports spaces. This is increasingly being demonstrated by a number of authors interested in the operation of sex, gender and sexuality in sport.[42] Whilst I acknowledge that the definition of queer is contested, I draw upon King's[43] notion that the term queer can be used to describe 'an analytical approach that interrogates the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire', and moreover, that it 'subverts the privilege, entitlement, and status obtained through compulsive heterosexuality and questions how heteronormative behaviours enacted by both heterosexuals and homosexuals function to maintain heterosexuality's dominance'.[44] Fundamental to this queer deconstructive approach to sexuality is Butler's[45] notion of identity as performative and discursively produced. Post-structuralist concepts of power are also central to any attempt to interrogate the binaries associated with normative and non-normative subjectivities. Specifically, an understanding of power as fluid, dynamic and existing as part of a network of social relations, rather than a stable but disproportionate oppressive force, enables the instability of these boundaries to be made visible. The connection between power and discourse is key to understanding the ways in which resistance may occur. Discourse, Foucault[46] argues, 'can be both an instrument and an effect of power'. Discursive practices, according to Veri, 'structure the disciplines that socialize individuals and monitor their behaviour'.[47] However, Foucault further states that 'discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile, and makes it possible to thwart it'.[48] It is this possibility for the production of 'counterdiscourses',[49] which may lead to the resistance and subversion of normative constructs of gender and sexuality, that is of particular relevance to feminist and queer work.

The queer and post-structuralist project of interrogating the discursive practices which produce boundaries is not restricted to the analysis of gender and sexual binaries, however. By exploring the limits of boundaries more broadly, a queer approach is also applicable to the critique of 'gay sports culture'. Drawing upon a Derridadian deconstructive approach, Pronger[50] demonstrates how the 'limits' of gay sports culture can be called into question. This is particularly relevant to the issue of inclusion because it allows for a consideration of who is included in 'gay sport', and who it inadvertently positions as marginal.

Method

The research findings form part of my PhD thesis, and are therefore representative of a broader study of the experiences of both male and female footballers playing in gay- or lesbian-identified football contexts. For the purpose of this article, I focus specifically upon the findings generated as a result of my involvement with a lesbian-identified football club. Research was undertaken by way of participatory observation and involvement with the club over a 12-month period, which was supported by a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with five of the players.

Drawing on an ethnographic approach, my involvement with the club consisted of playing in 'kick about' games, matches and tournaments, and regularly attending social events organized by the club. It is also important to note that my involvement with the club was not viewed in isolation from broader contexts of both gay and mainstream football. Throughout my time with the club I was simultaneously involved with a number of other events, campaigns and organizations related to gender and sexuality issues in football and LGBT issues in sport. While these experiences may not be directly documented within the findings presented here, they nonetheless provided important insights into broader political and structural issues that were relevant to the research, and allowed me to contextualize the experiences of the women who were involved as participants in the study.

Following on from existing feminist research that has explored women's sports subcultures,[51] it is important to acknowledge the significance of my own identity in relation to the research process. My status as non-heterosexual and my previous experiences of playing football were particularly influential in allowing me access to the club, and enabling me to 'get inside' the research site.[52] Disclosure of aspects of my own identities and experiences was an integral part of the interview process, which was treated as a conversational exchange between myself and each research participant. As Ravel and Rail point out, this approach allows for a 'climate of mutual understanding',[53] and thus minimizes the potential for inequitable power relations between the researcher and participants.

Interviews covered broad themes including: early experiences of football, experiences of playing in 'mainstream' clubs, reasons for participating in a lesbian-identified club, feelings about 'gay/lesbian football', 'outness', experiences of discrimination (homophobic or otherwise) and overcoming discrimination. However, participants were encouraged throughout interviews to discuss issues and experiences they felt were important to the topic of research. With the permission of each respondent, interviews were recorded and later transcribed, and each participant given a self-selected pseudonym in order to protect their anonymity. The name of the club has also been withheld.

Analyses of interview narratives, interactional exchanges between players, and my own experiences of participatory involvement with the club were influenced by feminist, post-structuralist and queer theoretical approaches to gender and sexuality. Like Sykes,[54] my level of engagement with the respective theories varied according to the themes in question, with some topics influenced more by feminist assumptions around the dynamics of gender, and others more by deconstructive queer theories. The focus of analysis rested predominantly on the task of disrupting assumed notions of inclusion, and with that, uncovering the complexities of gender and sexuality. Particular attention was also paid throughout the analysis to exploring the extent to which sexist, homophobic and heteronormative discourses were transformed, or indeed reproduced, within gay and lesbian football communities.

The findings presented here are representative of experiences that are specific to the women involved in this particular lesbian football space. It is not my intention to make generalizations about the experiences of all women involved in football; nor do I contend that universalized claims can be made about the nature of all gay sports spaces based on this research. Rather, it is hoped that this article will illuminate some of the complexities associated with relations of gender and sexuality and the problems inherent within the discourse of inclusion. Furthermore, while the discourses surrounding sex, gender and sexuality are at the centre of my analysis, following

King,[55] I acknowledge that they are not the only discourses through which power is operationalized, and that the processes of racialization, class-based inequalities, assumptions about disability and other factors that shape identities and subjectivities have significant influence in the ways in which the women at the centre of the research experience their position within their club, 'gay sport', and sport in general.

Taking note of the problems that arise in attempting to label participants' sexual identities, particularly from a queer perspective, I adopt the term 'non-heterosexual' throughout the discussion of findings. I acknowledge that this term could itself be considered problematic, however, given that the research did not require participants to identify or define their sexuality (this process itself would only result in a reproduction of the homo/hetero binary), it would be incorrect, and indeed antithetical to the principles of queer theory, to impose an identity category on participants on the basis of their affiliation with a 'lesbian' football club. Instead, I use the term 'non-heterosexual' in much the same way that it has been utilized by authors such as Ravel and Rail,[56] to denote their rejection of an exclusively heterosexual identity, and importantly their subsequent positioning as non-normative within mainstream societal constructs.

The research findings are divided into three sections: the first explores the ways in which the club may be considered 'alternative' to mainstream football, and the ways in which this shapes players' involvement; the second, with particular emphasis on the distinction between transgressive and normative aspects of 'lesbian football', considers the extent to which the club may be regarded as an inclusive football space; and the third locates these debates within a consideration of the club's positioning in broader 'gay football' structures.

'Out' and 'inclusive': discursive practices of a lesbian-identified club

A common theme that emerged recurrently throughout interview narratives was the notion of the club as an 'alternative' football space that was different from mainstream sports contexts. It is important to highlight that this 'alternativeness' related to two different, yet interrelated factors: the first was the club's positioning as an 'out' lesbian football club; and the second, its status an 'inclusive' and 'non-competitive' football space. While many gay sports clubs and organizations are underpinned by the principle of inclusion, it is also worthy of note that the club did not emerge as a conscious attempt to co-opt the values and philosophies that are understood to circulate within wider 'gay sports culture', nor was it aligned with what may be described as the 'gay sports movement'. In fact, the club may also be viewed as different from other lesbian-identified football clubs in the sense that it is organized and structured in such a way that it does not comprise of teams that compete within leagues: unlike many other gay or lesbian clubs, play is organized purely in the form of 'friendly' 'kick about' games, open to players regardless of experience or ability. Already, this demonstrates why it is necessary to avoid referring to 'gay sports culture' as a unified or cohesive approach to sport.

The club was set up over a decade ago by Lindsie who, at the time, was in her late 20s and had not played football since she was a young child. Born out of her frustration with the exclusivity, competitiveness and 'cliquey' nature of the league teams that she had attempted to join, the club was founded on two main principles: inclusivity, with a specific emphasis on being 'non-cliquey'; and dependability, to ensure that games would take place on a regular basis at the advertised time and location, without

the possibility of cancellation. Interestingly, when asked about her initial reasoning for setting up a lesbian-identified club, it became apparent that Lindsie did not set out with a political agenda to tackle homophobia, to increase lesbian visibility, or even necessarily to attempt to provide a community resource for non-heterosexual women. The 'lesbian issue', it seems was secondary to the issue of providing an inclusive, friendly and non-competitive space for women to play football. For a more complete account of how exactly this came about, I now refer to the words of Lindsie herself:

> So I just thought well I'll make something … erm, and the one thing about it would be that anyone who walks through the door could play on the same terms as everybody else, and nobody's better than anyone else, and that's it … erm and then you don't have to deal with all that crap… (*SD*: What did you advertise it as?) Erm … a lesbian kick-about. And the reason I said lesbian was because, I thought, I didn't put a great deal of thought into the fact that it was lesbian, I just thought there's kick-abouts go on all over … all the time and they always fold after a few months, you know people can't be arsed or it's raining or they've got other things to do, and I just thought well … you see dykes will make the effort if they think there's going to be other dykes there, it's as simple as that … when I got it off the ground I just wanted somewhere to play football without having to fit in with a clique or without having to, you know, be able to run as fast as a 15-year-old, and I wanted that to be available to me when I'm like you know knocking on in my forties and fifties … erm, so just thought there must be a huge market for all those people who've been pushed out of the game one way or another.

It seemed that Lindsie's views were reflected in many of the other players' responses when asked about their reasons for joining the club. For most, their motives for participation were evidently linked with previous experiences of playing in mainstream football contexts. It is important to stress, however, that this was not necessarily driven by negative experiences of homophobia and hostility towards non-heterosexual identities in mainstream leagues. On the contrary, many players reported positive experiences of previous involvement in mainstream league teams with regard to negotiating issues of sexuality. Women's football in general was understood as a 'safe' space for the existence of non-hetero sexualities and one in which homophobia was often resisted. Echoing Ravel and Rail's[58] findings, the interview narratives demonstrated how heteronormative discourses were challenged and subverted within particular mainstream sports spaces as a result of the presence and visibility of women with non-heterosexual identities.

> *Kim*: Well, women's football is perceived as gay. So whether you're playing for an openly gay team or not, it's perceived as gay … and in all fairness, in my experience it is fairly gay.

It was clear that Kim's experiences were not isolated. Other participants reported that participation in mainstream women's football teams provided a significant space for the exploration of their own non-heterosexual identities: Nancy, for instance, identified her first football team as the environment in which she first became aware of non-heterosexual identities, and 'started hanging out with lesbians', which was later influential in her own decision to come out as 'gay'. These findings reinforce the well-established notion that women's sports communities can offer 'counter-sites'[59] for the protection of non-normative sexualities. Indeed, numerous researchers interested in women's experiences of sport have posited that mainstream women's team sports, including football, are able to foster climates of tolerance around non-heterosexual identities.[60] However, it is also worth noting that the women's experiences presented

here represent a clear contrast to the findings of research into the lives of gay-identified male athletes. As Price and Parker,[61] Wellard[62] and Eng[63] indicate, for many non-heterosexual men, the decision to compete within specifically gay-identified sports clubs is more closely linked with a need to avoid the overtly homophobic climate of mainstream men's sport in order to compete in an environment in which they are not forced to suppress their sexual identity.

For the women involved in this study, however, it was clear that initial participation in their current (lesbian-identified) club was not necessarily motivated by a desire to play in a non-heterosexual environment. Much of the club's appeal was based not on the fact that it is lesbian-identified, but instead, on its ability to provide an alternative approach to organizing and playing football.

> *Jo*: … the lesbian thing was kind of like 'ooh, that's interesting', but I think the key was that I couldn't find anywhere that I could just turn up and if I was rubbish I didn't have to commit. So yeah it was the non-commitment thing.

While few players experienced problems related to homophobia within mainstream teams, many reported negative experiences of the over-competitive, cliquey and exclusive nature of such teams as being largely influential in their decision to play for their current club.

> *Nancy*: The thing about this team is that whenever we've gone to play on traditional Sunday league football teams … you go along on your first day and everyone knows each other and there's like fifteen or twenty people … so that can be quite intimidating because everyone's passing and talking to one another, but with this team because there's like a hundred people on the email list and you might get twenty people and you'll go along in your first week … and people talk to you because there's just so many people, and that's quite nice because it doesn't like set you out at the start as like a new person, which I think is good.
>
> *Kim*: I've been on teams where even if you're good they won't pass to you because you're not on their team yet. But here, it's like so what if you give the ball away?
>
> *Ashley*: Here, it's more like football plus socializing and meeting new friends so you can be friendly, but in those league teams … they're everywhere, I don't think it's just [name of league team], it's everywhere really like, you know, more competitive and they want to be the best … I just found that they will not welcome me like inside … it's such a difference you know compared to here.

These narratives illustrate the extent to which this particular lesbian football context is positioned in opposition to mainstream teams in relation to its approach to organizing football. It may be argued, in this respect, that the club signifies to some degree a 'queering' of normative practices. Where many of these players felt excluded from mainstream teams, their current club allowed them to enjoy an alternative way of playing football that represented a point of departure from the masculinist discourses that dictate the way football is more commonly played.

However, it was clear that for many of the women involved, the club held significance within their lives that went beyond its capacity to allow them to play football. The different meanings players inscribed into the club were often reflective of notions of community and commonality. Ashley, for instance, described the club as 'like family'. While most players may not have been drawn to the club initially for reasons relating to sexuality, it became clear that many of the positive aspects of the club described by participants were inextricably linked with the club's positioning as a

'safe' space for 'lesbian and bisexual' women. 'Lesbian football' provided greater opportunities for the discursive subversion of normative sexuality than those available in mainstream football. Indeed, many players referred to the importance of being able to socialize with other non-heterosexual women in a context in which lesbian sexuality was normalized. Supporting van Ingen's findings,[64] some discussed the club in relation to its position as an alternative to 'the gay scene': specifically, Jo referred to it as 'a brilliant dating agency'. Younger players in particular found it instrumental in the affirmation of aspects of their own lesbian identities; they described the significance of being around older lesbians with 'good jobs' and 'normal lives', and highlighted the role that certain members of the club played in providing support to other players in relation to 'coming out'.

> *Jo*: I think certainly as a kind of social space it has, it's good to not have to go out and go to pubs, so in terms of meeting people I know a lot of people that use it for purely, you know they don't necessarily care about football, but they have that kind of, I suppose like a little community or family network and a lot of support sort of behind the scenes, and erm it's regular, it's always there, you know whatever they're going through there's still somewhere they can come and not have to explain themselves, just you know, be very natural and there's, there's, because it's full of all sorts of people, you know you're bound to find someone that you can have some sort of conversation with.
>
> *Kim*: That is a big thing in this club as well, like if someone comes out, like a couple of weeks ago a girl came out and said 'I told my parents', and we were all like, 'oh fantastic…' you know, and I've had conversations with another girl saying, 'you know you really should come out … because I came out last year before I joined the club' … I'm not saying it's for everyone, but it does help.
>
> *Ashley*: It has helped me a lot, you know. I've met new friends through football, lesbians, which I did not meet in [home country] or before actually I came out here … when I was in [home country] I was still 'heterosexual', so … yeah that has helped me a lot … I'm glad I found different, you know, loads of friends who are lesbians, a whole lot.

It is clear that this particular lesbian football context undoubtedly provides an alternative space to mainstream football. By virtue of its positioning as non-heterosexual, it is as I have argued, a space for resistance to heteronormativity. True to the club's original ethos, it is also representative of a space that is inclusive of women who may not otherwise have the opportunity to play football within mainstream league teams.

Where other formations of gay- or lesbian-identified sport have been critiqued for what van Ingen[65] describes as a 'conspicuous absence' of diversity, particularly with respect to the (in)visibility of non-white bodies, the club is also notable for its diversity in relation to 'race' and ethnicity. Non-white bodies in this context are not erased or displaced, but remain visible and appear to hold currency within the club's integral discourse: numerous players spoke of the importance of the club's 'multiracial' composition, and the significance of having diverse range of different nationalities represented within the club. Interestingly, this finding not only contradicts the norm of whiteness that is said to permeate certain gay sports spaces,[66] but that which has also been identified to exist in the context of mainstream women's football. In contrast with studies on 'race', ethnicity and gender in football, which have identified how women's football is constructed as a white institution,[67] it is indicative of the existence of one women's football arena in which predominant whiteness has been displaced. Discussing the occupations of various players, Jo also alluded to the

diversity of the club in relation to social class, referring to it as a 'melting pot' of women 'from all walks of life'. However, it is still important to acknowledge that this represents only the specific dynamics of this particular club, which may not be reflective of other women's sports spaces, 'gay' or otherwise. Additionally, while a full exploration of the intersections sex, gender and sexuality in relation to other social identities may be beyond the scope of this article, it is clear that a more detailed analysis is needed to uncover how the intersectionality of multiple axes of difference such as those related to 'race', ethnicity, disability and class operate across different structural, interactional and representational levels within lesbian-identified sport spaces.

It is important then to consider the extent to which this may be regarded as a transformative, or queer space, and to examine how this relates to notions of inclusion that circulate within this context. Exploration of the tensions and contradictions inherent within the discursive practices of gay or lesbian-identified football communities is vital in allowing for an understanding of the nuanced ways in which the discourse of inclusion informs the social relations that operate within these clubs.

Lesbian football: sites of inclusion, transgression and normalization?

It could be argued that this specific football community exemplifies what Caudwell terms a 'dykescape'.[68] Football in general, as I have argued, has largely been marked as a space that is distinctly male and heterosexual. The very existence and visibility of a football club that is defined in opposition to this normative conception of football, that is, as female and non-heterosexual, demonstrates a resistance to the heteronormativity that otherwise pervades the sport. However, as Caudwell[69] has argued, there is reason to be cautious in assuming that a lesbian-identified space necessarily equates to a queering of normative discursive practices.

In order to understand the social relations that operate in gay spaces and to assess the extent to which they may be considered inclusive or transgressive, we must question what remains hidden within that space.[70] Adopting a deconstructive approach informed by Derrida, and Cornell's 'philosophy of the limit', Pronger[71] argues that it is important to interrogate the limits of 'gay sports culture'. In other words, we must consider who or what is included within a gay or lesbian sports community, and who or what exists outside of its periphery. A deconstruction of gay sports culture, Pronger states, 'aims to expose what is left out by that culture and what that marginalization indicates about the nature of that culture'.[72] Applying this to the apparently transgressive context of a lesbian football club, it becomes clear that while certain aspects of mainstream normative culture are disrupted, discursive practices that serve to limit and restrict the operation sex, gender and sexuality continue to prevail. Indeed, the very notion of the existence of a lesbian-identified club highlights the presence of boundaries between gendered and sexualized subject positions, and therefore demonstrates a contradiction in the politics of inclusion. As Jo succinctly put it: 'it seems really inclusive in some ways, but … inclusive just for people who identify as lesbian'.

Tensions surrounding the relative inclusivity of 'lesbian football' were evident throughout the research. While 'lesbian' sexuality occupies a discursive position that may be regarded as normative within this specific context, this simultaneously results in the Othering of non-lesbian identities. 'Bisexuality', as identified by participants, appeared to occupy a particularly marginal discursive space. The narrative below highlights some of the complexities surrounding the position of women within the club who do not identify as lesbian:

Jo: I know they would never change it, ever … because we've had heated late night conversations…
SD: Oh really? About including people who're not gay or…?
Jo: Well just talking about, you know, what happens if someone came along and really enjoyed it and they were straight, you know, talking about bisexuality, you know, what if someone … I've thought this, what if someone had, what if I suddenly went out with a guy, would I like not be allowed back? I mean that sort of thing, I just think that's just weird, that is really strange … suddenly, out of nowhere comes this charming prince – Prince Charming – and whisks me off my feet, I would feel really uncomfortable, I would feel really uncomfortable.
SD: So do you … with the bisexuality issue, would it be that kind of hard to…
Jo: I've spoken to people about it that are bisexual and come along, erm … I'm not sure they'd engage in that sort of debate … certainly not with some people. I think it very much depends on who is around, and I know that there's a lot of hard line, kind of like you know, 'this is a lesbian space, and we feel comfortable here', erm, so yeah somebody who calls herself open-minded, which I love, I really like that phrase, 'I'm open minded', brilliant you know, no doors are shut, erm … I know she'd never discuss her sexuality really in front of the team.

Evidently, bisexuality occupies a contentious position within the club. As Jo's narrative demonstrates, while discussion of bisexuality may be permitted in some contexts, it is clear that it remains largely unspoken within the broader social relations of the club. Bisexuality, as a subject position, is silenced. In this respect, while the subversion of heteronormativity may have resulted in the appropriation of viable discursive space for the representation of lesbian sexuality, it has simultaneously perpetuated the silence that exists within normative cultures around the presence of other marginal identities. In much the same way that the dominant discursive position of heterosexuality within mainstream sports culture is dependant upon the silencing of lesbianism and the presence of 'the closet',[73] it could be argued that within the context of lesbian sports communities the silence surrounding bisexuality, coupled with the absence of heterosexuality, enables lesbian sexuality to maintain its privileged discursive position. In this sense, the threat that the club poses to normative discursive practices may be regarded as subversive, but not necessarily transformative. Taking into account previous studies of lesbian sports communities, it appears that the silencing of particular identities is not an unusual discursive practice: Ravel and Rail[74] have identified how a normalized version of lesbian, or 'gaie', sexuality exists within certain women's sports subcultures in Quebec, which results in the silencing of other non-normative identities, including bisexuality; Caudwell[75] has also indicated how 'femme' lesbian identities are often dismissed and invisiblized in relation the more normative 'butch' lesbian identities in women's football spaces.

However, reflecting wider debates around the politics of inclusion, it is important to note that the marginal positioning of bisexuality within the club does not necessarily relate to a structural exclusion of bisexual women. In fact, the club is identified specifically as a space for lesbian and bisexual women: as Lindsie stated, 'nobody would walk through the door and be quizzed about their sexuality'. Indeed, it would be incorrect to suggest that the club was organized as a political strategy to counter the presence of non-lesbian sexualities. Discussing broader LGBT community issues, Lindsie acknowledged the political debates that the club had inadvertently become a part of. In particular, she referred to media interest in the club that had questioned their inculsionary policies:

> *Lindsie*: I mean people would always come up to us and say 'do you allow trans people to play?', and you know, one of our earliest players was a trans-woman…

This indicates that any exclusive practices enacted within the club may lie at discursive rather than structural levels. Indeed, van Ingen argues that 'the pluralistic appropriation of difference keeps existing spatial practices intact without critically interrogating or attempting to transform the contradictions and hierarchical power relations in the social organization of space'.[76] It is apparent then, that the appropriation of marginal identities and subjectivities within structural objectives of sports spaces does not simplistically result in their automatic access to the social relations that govern the particular space. Considering this issue from a queer perspective, it is important also to question the extent to which a mere inclusion of 'bisexuality' at a structural level necessarily represents a fully inclusive strategy for the accommodation of other sexual or gendered identities that may not be labelled as either 'lesbian' or 'bisexual'.

Related to this, the issue of inclusion of heterosexually-identified women was also a contested topic:

> *Kim*: … if a straight girl turned up with a friend on the football team, would that matter? And as far as I'm aware it would … they're not supposed to be able to come. Which I understand, but I also think is kind of bad. I almost think it should be gays and friends, because … but I understand why they wanna keep it wholly gay, but then there's another part of me that's like well if their friend is very openly happily okay with it then what does it matter?

It became apparent that for some players this related to perceptions about the potential for 'lesbian football' to challenge the homophobia and heteronormativity that existed outside of the club, given its 'separate' nature. Both Kim and Jo's narratives indicated some level of discomfort with the club's lesbian-specific identification in relation to its transformative potential. For Kim, this related to an awareness of the lack of influence that the club may have over other football contexts, their absence in terms of lesbian visibility within mainstream culture being particularly significant:

> *Kim*: …any gay group in society is helping to tackle homophobia in society … but how much are we really changing things? Not significantly, how many people know about us? You have to be gay, go on [website], or search up gay football to find us … And you wouldn't do that if you weren't gay.

For Jo, however, this was more about its ability to instigate change at the interactional level. The lack of association or contact with heterosexual players and mainstream football communities in general was highlighted as a factor which may limit the potential for gay or lesbian-identified sports communities to transform oppressive discourses.

> *Jo*: Well … I think it's the whole enclave thing, pushing yourself away and just closing it off. Because it's so safe, and I think that's a lot of the reason why a lot of people keep coming back and, you know, they feel very, they just feel very comfortable and you don't have to get outside that and sort of like expose yourself, it's just easier … but I think there's a lot to be said for just being mixed, and being like 'hey well it's just another attribute', like having different coloured eyes or hair or whatever, why would you say 'hey, all the ginger people, let's go over here and play football'? … there is a certain place for it, but I do find it problematic.

These narratives illustrate a number of significant points: first, the participants' awareness of the extent to which 'gay sport' risks becoming 'ghettoized' – that is, by being detached from more normative formations of sport, it could fail to pose any real threat to mainstream normative sports practices, and instead risk reproducing the homo/hetero binary. This is a well-established critique of 'gay sports culture'[77] and an evident concern for some participants in gay sports communities. This also goes some way towards explaining the second point that is highlighted in the above narratives: both Jo and Kim provide further evidence of the centrality of the issue of mainstream visibility in debates that take place within gay sports circles. The transformation/legitimation dichotomy that appears to contentiously underlie the objectives of many gay sports clubs creates a continued tension between the need to provide a 'safe' space for the appropriation of non-normative identities – which is by necessity set apart from mainstream projects – and the need for visible engagement with the mainstream in order to demonstrate the apparent normalcy of gay identities.

However, while the lesbian-identified space carved out by this particular club remains largely intact and unhindered by mainstream affiliation in spite of this tension, it is clear that this is not the case for all gay or lesbian-identified sports clubs. Research has demonstrated that some clubs adopt an approach that prioritizes interaction with heterosexual competitors and gay visibility in mainstream events as a means of breaking down homophobic stereotypes. Owen's[78] study of a gay-identified rowing club, for instance, uncovers some of the issues faced by gay male rowers when attempting to challenge heteronormative traditions that underpin mainstream rowing events. While their visibility undoubtedly troubles prevalent discourses concerning sexuality, as Owen[79] notes, it is inevitably framed by a need to 'prove' that gay athletes are as competent as their heterosexual counterparts; and thus, the legitimizing process once again comes into play. For lesbian-identified footballers, however, concerns surrounding the need for visibility in the realm of mainstream sport relate less to a need to 'prove' themselves as capable footballers, and more to a desire to be acknowledged as a 'positive' existence within the sport. Indeed, a number of participants referred to the significant part the team could play in portraying images of lesbians as 'successful' women.

Clearly, aspirations for the normalization and legitimization of homosexuality implicitly and explicitly permeate gay spaces. However, as I have argued, there are problems inherent within identity politics which posit visualizing, and thus 'normalizing', homosexuality as the most effective means of achieving sexual liberation. While this is understood to be a common practice within gay sports spaces, the Gay Games being a particularly notable example, this approach has been widely critiqued.[80] Pronger[81] argues that liberal gay and lesbian political ambitions based on assimilation have contributed towards the erasure of homosexual difference. This assimilation approach is somewhat representative of what King,[82] drawing upon Duggan, describes as the politics of homonormativity – a context in which 'lesbian and gay comes to mean "just like everyone else": accepted, integrated, and above all, normal'.[83] This in turn limits the possibilities for the transformation of the system within which the desired assimilation occurs. Building upon this, Eng,[84] argues that the appropriation of 'queer space' and 'queer visibility' in sport does not necessarily constitute an overall queering of heteronormativity. Instead, 'it can run the danger of strengthening heteronormative existence as the "normal" by constituting queer refuge as an alternative for the "deviants" and hence articulating what is not normal in the context'.[85]

These criticisms aside, it is apparent particularly in relation to Jo's narrative that some participants in 'gay' sports spaces are receptive to what may be regarded as a more queer approach to sport. Jo's earlier comment about her approval of another player's identity as 'open minded', coupled with her desire to play in a 'mixed' football space, is perhaps indicative of a desire for what may constitute a 'queering' of both hetero- and homo-normative practices that she has experienced. Jo further went on to cite the significance of a tournament that the team had previously entered that was identified not as 'gay' or 'lesbian', but as an 'anti-homophobia tournament', involving competition between a more diverse range of clubs. It was this type of 'mixed' event that she highlighted as important in terms of its ability to 'stamp out homophobia in football'.

Discourses of gender within 'gay sports culture'

Locating the analysis of this particular lesbian football context within a broader consideration of 'gay football' and 'gay sport' as a whole, it is evident that many of the tensions and contradictions related to discursive practices of gender, sexuality and inclusion that I have presented here are reflective of the politics of 'gay sport' in general. In addition to the issues concerning the complexities of inclusion with the club, it became clear that tensions had also arisen in relation to the club's position as lesbian-identified within broader 'gay football' contexts. Although the club was organized in such a way that it could operate independently of external funding or intervention, and due to its non-competitive ethos, function separately from leagues and other football teams, there were instances when the club had developed links with other teams, organizations or events. These associations usually resulted from contact being made with the club concerning their possible involvement in football matches, tournaments, or LGBT community events. However, interview narratives and discussions with other players revealed that these links were not without complications. The club's relationship with gay men's football teams appeared to be particularly contentious. Many players spoke of tensions surrounding the claim that gay men's teams were inclusive of female players, and the marginal position that women appeared to adopt within events that were advertised as 'gay and lesbian' sports events. Indeed, there were numerous examples throughout the research that indicated that the gender dynamic of 'gay football' may be reflective of the inequitable balance of power that feminist sports scholars[86] have identified as existing within mainstream football.

Given her position as the organizer of the club, Lindsie's narrative offered a particularly valuable insight into sex based inequities that the club had experienced as a result of their involvement with other gay sports organizations and events. Contact with the organizers of the International Gay and Lesbian Football Association World Championships, in particular, was fraught with debate over the position of women in the tournament. After being approached by the organizing committee about entering teams into the competition, Lindsie explained how she had questioned the lack of any representation of women footballers in the promotional material for the tournament, only to be told by the organizers that the absence of female representation was simply 'an oversight'. This, along with numerous other issues concerning the marginalization of women in the competition that were unresolved resulted in the club withdrawing from participation in the tournament altogether.

> *Lindsie*: … when they did that IGLFA World Cup they should have been looking after us women who'd been doing that for years, keeping it all together, providing a service for the community. There's, what, eight gay, eight women's teams … that are lesbian-identified or lesbian friendly. They did fuck all about them you know, they were just pushed aside.

On discussing how this gender dynamic compared with that of mainstream football contexts, Lindsie argued that gender relations within 'gay football' were not simply reflective of broader contexts, but perhaps even more unjust:

> *Lindsie*: It's worse … it's worse here because, you know in straight football there's at least … because women's football's unthreatening to male football at a structural level, I mean there might be a few blokes on the terraces who get the hump, but on a structural level it's so unthreatening they will make token efforts … but not here, you know in this world it's like it's even worse … because the resources are so much more limited, and it's like 'if there's any pie we're gonna fuckin' have it', you know?

These experiences indicate that 'gay football' may be far from equal with regard to gendered power relations. That said, taking into account the seemingly hostile climate of mainstream men's football with respect to the inclusion of non-normative sexualities, compared with that of women's football, it is easy to understand why there may be more men who feel the need to compete in specifically gay-identified clubs. This notwithstanding, it is still important to consider how this dynamic may reproduce the power relations that reinforce mainstream processes of exclusion, rather than contributing towards their contestation and transformation.

Conclusion

Analysis of the social relations and interview narratives of the women involved in this particular lesbian-identified football club has revealed the complexities of discursive practices related to gender and sexual identities. The club undoubtedly provides a significant site for contesting many of the dominant practices involved in mainstream ways of organizing and playing football. The de-centring of competition, coupled with the emphasis on fostering a friendly and supportive football environment, has enabled the development of an unequivocally alternative football space, which provides an important resource for many women who would otherwise remain largely excluded from mainstream football contexts, and, for women who reject the principles of the mainstream. While this approach may be reflective of the ethos associated with many gay sports organizations, it is important to acknowledge that for this particular club, it does not necessarily relate directly to the clubs' positioning as a space for lesbian and bisexual women. However, it is evident that the club's lesbian identification is undoubtedly of significance to the women involved. In support of existing research on lesbian sports communities, the findings demonstrate how heteronormativity may be subverted, to the extent that lesbian sexuality is discursively constructed as 'normal'. This may also be understood to be reflective of 'homonormative' politics.[87]

However, this should not be understood to represent a straightforward transformation of heteronormativity. Lesbian football contexts, though transgressive in the sense that they challenge heteronormativity, might also inadvertently contribute towards a reproduction of dichotomous constructs of gender and sexuality. In this respect, some practices of lesbian-identified sports spaces may be regarded as normative. Rather

than disrupting the boundaries of sexuality, it could be argued that this particular football context contributes towards the maintenance of hierarchical relations between certain identities. Lesbian sports spaces might therefore be considered to be subversive, but not necessarily transgressive with regard to dominant discursive practices.

The research has also highlighted that tensions relating to the discourse of inclusion were not only embedded within the social relations of the club. Associations between the club and other gay football teams and organizations were also imbued with tensions surrounding inclusionary politics relating to the position of women within 'gay football'. The findings have uncovered that, rather alarmingly, the gendered dynamic of supposedly 'inclusive' gay- and lesbian-identified football contexts operates in similar ways to the gendered power relations that exist within mainstream football.

Evidently, while some gay football contexts may have sought to transform the oppressive discourses of mainstream football, they have only done so with respect to challenging and subverting heteronormativity. While this allows the appropriation of discursive space for some sexualities and gender identities that would otherwise remain marginal, it simultaneously reproduces processes of Othering. In this respect, it is inclusive for some, but not for others. While the findings are representative of a specific football context, it is clear that gay and lesbian-identified football clubs provide a useful lens for the analysis of the complexities of discourses of gender and sexuality in general. More research is needed to uncover the intricacies of processes of inclusion and exclusion in relation to gender and sexuality in football contexts.

Notes

1. Scraton *et al.*, 'It's Still a Man's Game?'; Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls?*.
2. Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport*.
3. Pronger, 'Homosexuality in Sport'; Elling, De Knop, and Knoppers, 'Gay/Lesbian Sports Clubs and Events'; Davidson, 'The Necessity of Queer Shame for Gay Pride'; Travers, 'Queering sport'; Wellard, 'Exploring the Limits of Queer and Sport'; Symons and Hempill, 'Transgendering Sex and Sport in the Gay Games'.
4. Pronger, 'Homosexuality in Sport'.
5. Caudwell, 'Women's Football in the United Kingdom', 'Women's Experiences of Sexuality Within Football Contexts', 'Queering the Field?'.
6. Pronger, 'Homosexuality in Sport', 232.
7. van Ingen, 'Theraputic Landscapes and the Regulated Body'; Vertinsky and Bale, *Sites of Sport*; Muller, 'The Contested Terrain of the Women's National Basketball Association Arena'.
8. Vertinsky and Bale, *Sites of Sport*.
9. Skeggs, 'Matter Out of Place', 221.
10. Pronger, 'Homosexuality in Sport'.
11. Elling *et al.* 'Gay/Lesbian Sports Clubs'.
12. Price and Parker, 'Sport, Sexuality and the Gender Order'; Wellard, 'Exploring the Limits'.
13. Hall, *Feminism and Sporting Bodies*.
14. Price and Parker, 'Sport, Sexuality and the Gender Order'.
15. Pronger, 'Homosexuality in Sport', 233.
16. Ibid.
17. Caudwell, 'Queering the Field?'.
18. Symons and Hempill, 'Transgendering Sex and Sport'; Travers, 'Queering Sport'; Caudwell, 'Queering the Field?'.
19. Williams and Woodhouse, 'Can Play, Will Play?'; Cox and Thompson, 'Facing the Bogey'; Macbeth, 'Women's Football in Scotland'; Welford and Kay, 'Negotiating Barriers to Entering and Participating in Football'.
20. Magee *et al.*, *Women, Football and Europe*.

21. Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls?*
22. Scraton *et al.*, 'It's Still a Man's Game?'.
23. Jeanes and Kay, 'Can Football be a Female Game?'.
24. Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets*; Lenskyj, *Out On the Field*.
25. Veri, 'Homophobic Discourse Surrounding the Female Athlete'.
26. Lenskyj, *Out On the Field*.
27. Caudwell, 'Women's Football in the United Kingdom', 'Women's Experiences of Sexuality Within Football Contexts'.
28. Caudwell, 'Women's Experiences of Sexuality Within Football Contexts', 41.
29. Cox and Thompson, 'Multiple Bodies'.
30. Caudwell, 'Women's Football in the United Kingdom', 'Sporting Gender', 'Queering the Field?'; Cox and Thompson, 'Multiple Bodies'.
31. Iannotta and Kane, 'Sexual Stories as Resistance Narratives in Women's Sports'.
32. Scraton *et al.*, 'It's Still a Man's Game?'; Cox and Thompson, 'Multiple Bodies'; Caudwell, 'Sporting Gender'; Mennesson and Clement, 'Homosociability and Homosexuality'.
33. Mennesson and Clement, 'Homosociability and Homosexuality'.
34. Caudwell, 'Sporting Gender'.
35. Ibid.
36. Caudwell, 'Queering the Field?'.
37. Ibid.
38. Cahn, *Coming on Strong*; Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets*; Lenskyj, *Out On the Field*.
39. Eng, 'Queer Athletes and Queering in Sport'.
40. Sykes, 'Turning the Closets Inside/Out'.
41. King, 'What's Queer About (Queer) Sport Sociology Now?', 430
42. Caudwell, 'Sporting Gender', 'Femme-Fatale', 'Queering the Field?'; Sykes, 'Turning the Closets Inside/Out', 'Queering Theories of Sexualities'; Eng, 'Queer Athletes'.
43. King, 'What's Queer About (Queer) Sport Sociology Now?', 421.
44. Johnson and Kivel, 'Gender, Sexuality and Queer Theory in Sport', 102.
45. Butler, *Gender Trouble*.
46. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 100.
47. Veri, 'Homophobic Discourse', 359.
48. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 101.
49. Veri, 'Homophobic Discourse', 360.
50. Pronger, 'Homosexuality in Sport'.
51. Caudwell, 'Women's Experiences of Sexuality Within Football Contexts'; Ravel and Rail, 'On the Limits of "Gaie" Spaces'.
52. Wellard, 'Exploring the Limits of Queer and Sport', 77.
53. Ravel and Rail, 'On the Limits of "Gaie" Spaces', 407.
54. Sykes, 'Turning the Closets Inside/Out'.
55. King, 'What's Queer About (Queer) Sport Sociology Now?'.
56. Ravel and Rail, 'On the Limits of "Gaie" Spaces'; Elling and Janssens, 'Sexuality as a Structural Principle in Sport Participation'.
57. Ravel and Rail, 'On the Limits of "Gaie" Spaces'.
58. Eng, 'Queer Athletes', 54.
59. Cahn, *Coming on Strong*; Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closets*; Caudwell, 'Women's Football in the United Kingdom; Lenskyj, *Out on the Field*; Cox and Thopmson, 'Multiple Bodies'; Mennesson and Clement, 'Homosociability and Homosexuality'.
60. Price and Parker, 'Sport, Sexuality and the Gender Order'.
61. Wellard, 'Exploring the Limits of Queer and Sport'.
62. Eng, 'Queer Athletes'.
63. van Ingen, 'Theraputic Landscapes'.
64. Ibid., 256.
65. Ibid.
66. Scraton, Caudwell, and Holland 'Bend it like Patel'; Ratna, 'A "Fair Game"?.
67. Caudwell, 'Women's Experiences of Sexuality Within Football Contexts', 35
68. Caudwell, 'Femme-Fatale', 'Queering the Field?'.
69. van Ingen, 'Theraputic Landscapes'.
70. Pronger, 'Homosexuality in Sport'.
71. Pronger, Ibid., 228.

72. Sykes, 'Turning the Closets Ins/Out'.
73. Ravel and Rail, 'On the Limits of "Gaie" Spaces'.
74. Caudwell, 'Femme-Fatale'.
75. van Ingen, 'Theraputic Landscapes', 265.
76. Pronger, 'Homosexuality in Sport'.
77. Owen, 'Catching Crabs'.
78. Ibid.
79. Wellard, 'Exploring the Limits of Queer and Sport'; Davidson, 'The Necessity of Queer Shame'.
80. Pronger, 'Homosexuality in Sport'.
81. King, 'What's Queer About (Queer) Sport Sociology Now?'.
82. King, Ibid., 427.
83. Eng, 'Queer Athletes'.
84. Ibid., 54
85. Scraton *et al.*, 'It's Still a Man's Game?'; Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls?*.
86. King, 'What's Queer About (Queer) Sport Sociology Now?'.

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