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Shifting Masculinities in Anglo-American Countries

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of the changing nature of masculinities in several English speaking cultures. The evidence and theory come from numerous investigations into masculinities among both gay and straight male youths in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. Collectively, I show that cultural homophobia is rapidly decreasing among young men in these cultures, and that this is particularly true of team sport athletes. I suggest that the dominant way of theorizing masculinities over the previous quarter century, hegemonic masculinity theory, is incapable of explaining these changes. Thus, I introduce a new theory, inclusive masculinity theory, and the new heuristic concept of homohysteria, to make sense of the changing nature of young men's masculinities.

Key Words: Masculinities, inclusive masculinities, homophobia.

Introduction

There are many and multiple myths surrounding young men's masculinities and homophobia in the English speaking world. Principally, this concerns the erroneous assumption that youth are steeped in homophobia. Nowhere is this more assumed than in the arena of competitive organized team sports. This is because sport is considered one of men's most macho institutions (Messner 1992). Thus, I argue that if we can evidence a change to masculinities in sport, we can also be assured that the change is present in less macho institutions.

While there is considerable historical evidence of considerable homophobia in sport a few decades ago (Pronger 1990), I have been systematically studying the relationship between sport, homophobia and masculinities over the previous decade (Anderson 2011a, 2011b, 2009a, 2009b, 2008, 2005a, 2005b, 2002, 2000; Anderson & Adams 2011; Anderson, Adams & Rivers 2012; Anderson & Kian 2012; Anderson, McCormack & Lee forthcoming; Peterson & Anderson 2012). My findings indicate that there has been tremendous cultural change since I first came out of the closet as America's first openly gay high school coach in 1993 (Anderson 2000). Thus, the purpose of this article is to not only inform readers of the journal as to the cultural, and therefore theoretical changes occurring to the study of masculinities in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia (countries from which I have ascertained primary data) but to expand my primary message more globally. That message: 1) We can no longer assume homophobia based on team sport affiliation; and therefore 2) We can no longer assume homophobia based on simply being a young male—the relationship between masculinity and youth is changing.

I evidence my statement through multiple modalities, but principally I look to the experience and increasing numbers of openly gay high school and college athletes coming out of the closet in the United States. Today's youth have grown up in a significantly more inclusive culture regarding homosexuality, and this has dramatically improved upon the expression of once marginalized masculinities. In my research on openly gay male athletes I show that competitive team sport is hospitable to their presence. I even show that when an athlete comes out

today, it promotes social cohesion among teammates (Anderson 2011a).

My research on openly gay male athletes is only part of the cultural milieu in which masculinities are embedded in sport, however. Evidencing that the impact of decreasing cultural homophobia has a greater impact on masculinities more generally, in this article I also share some of the results of my multiple ethnographic and quantitative studies into the construction of heterosexual masculinities in sport from several countries.

These findings have led to new ways of theorizing masculinities (Anderson 2009a) in ways that Connell's (1987, 1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity fails to capture. Thus, I argue that a new cultural zeitgeist requires new ways of theorizing masculinities. My theory, inclusive masculinity theory (2009a), argues that with decreasing stigma against homophobia, a hierarchical stratification of masculinities erodes. Instead, decreasing cultural homophobia permits various forms of masculinities to exist linearly, without hegemonic dominance of any one type.

Theorizing Masculinities

The most important theoretical tool for understanding this social stratification of men and their masculinities since sex role theory has come thorough Connell's (1987, 1990, 1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity. From a social constructionist perspective developed in the mid-1980s (West and Zimmerman 1987), hegemonic masculinity theory has articulated two social processes. The first concerns, how all men benefit from patriarchy, however, it is the second social process that has been heavily adopted by the masculinities literature. Here, Connell's theoretical contribution has been particularly adopted for its conceptualization of the mechanisms by which an intra-masculine hierarchy is created and legitimized.

In conceptualizing intra-masculine domination, Connell argues that one hegemonic archetype of masculinity is esteemed above all other masculinity types, so that boys and men who most closely embody this one standard are accorded the most social capital, relative to other boys

and men. Some of the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity concern variables which are earned, like attitudinal depositions (including the disposition of homophobia) while other variables concern static traits (i.e. whiteness, heterosexuality, and youth). Connell argued, however, that regardless of body mass, age or even sporting accomplishments, gay men are at the bottom of this hierarchy. Furthermore, Connell maintained that straight men who behaved in ways that conflict with the dominant form of masculinity are also marginalized. It was for these reasons that I have argued homophobia has traditionally been an effective weapon to stratify men in deference to a hegemonic mode of heteromale dominance (Anderson 2005a).

Connell explicated (1987, 1995) that the power of a hegemonic form of masculinity was that those marginalized by the stratification believed in the right of those at the top to rule. Instead of disputing their position (forming a coalition among the complicit, subordinated and marginalized masculinities that Connell describes), these men looked up to the men (usually jocks) ruling their schools, sports, and social spaces. Accordingly, multiple studies found American high schools to be locations where teamsport players (predominantly football players) controlled school space (Plummer 1999). This is because sport is intertwined with American school systems more thoroughly than in European countries.

Hegemonic masculinity theory made sense in 1987, and undoubtedly it continued to be effective throughout the 1990s. But the level of homophobia at a cultural level peaked in Anglo-American speaking world in 1988 (Anderson 2009a) and it may have peaked in other Western Nations as well. Principally, this is because of a decline of hysteria around HIV and its association with gay men.

The homophobia and hypermasculinity of the mid 1980s (think Rambo) had serious implications not only on how gay men were treated (and therefore acted) but also on how straight men performed their masculinity (Peterson and Anderson 2012). Thus, in order to fully understand hegemonic masculinity theory, I argue that it has to be historically contextualized within its own temporal moment—in a culture that I suggest is ‘homohysterical’ (Anderson 2009a).

I use the term homophobia to describe heterosexual men's fear of being homosexualized. My notion of homophobia incorporates three variables: 1) cultural awareness that homosexuality exists as a sexual orientation; 2) high levels of homophobia within a culture, and 3) the conflation of feminine behaviors in men with same-sex desire. Varying cultural combinations of these three traits will determine unique outcomes for men's gendered behaviors in any given culture. For example, in a highly religious theocracy, citizens are likely to maintain that homosexuals do not exist within their nation. While this is highly homophobic, it is not homophobic. Evidencing this, men in many Islamic countries are permitted to engage in physical and emotional intimacy (not sex) without threat to their publicly perceived heterosexual identities. This is because they don't believe that someone can be gay (homosexuality is understood as a western construct), thus one cannot be thought gay for holding another male's hand.

Conversely, a homophobic culture (like Jamaica) is found in a country that has a high degree of cultural homophobia (like most Islamic countries) but one that also understands that homosexuality actually exists among a significant proportion of their citizenry. It is in a culture that loathes homosexuals but also knows that anyone can be homosexual that leads (generally men), both gay and straight, to attempt to distance themselves from anything associated or coded as gay. Thus, in America throughout the 1980s pink was coded for women. If men wore pink they were associated with homosexuality. In a homophobic culture men also esteem the most extreme representations of masculinity (sports, muscularity, and violence) and position themselves as highly homophobic, all in attempt to signal that they are not gay.

During the 1980s America, the United Kingdom and Australia were (among other Western countries) highly homophobic cultures. Here it was maintained that any male (regardless of their gendered expression) could be gay. This is largely attributed to the work of Alfred Kinsey and colleagues (1948) who identified that 10% of the American population was gay (most likely an over-estimate). With this knowledge embedded in our culture, it was no longer possible to assume that one was heterosexual simply for 'acting straight.' This awareness (that anyone

could be gay) was further highlighted as the result of ‘normal’ men dying of AIDS in ‘normal’ families (Peterson 2011). Furthermore, and more so in the United States than other Western cultures it was promoted by a vehemently anti-gay Christian Fundamentalism. With homosexuality being so vilified, homosexual suspicion was rife. This was a historical moment in which men were hysterical about proving that they were not one of those vilified homosexuals. This was a culture of homophobia.

Homophobia has traditionally limited the gendered expression of men wishing to retain an image of heterosexuality. Thus, heterosexual men have had to avoid the expression of homosocial intimacy, sadness or displaying love for their male friends. Men in these cultures are denied the ability to express the emotions of fear or intimidation, and they generally must adhere to extremely rigid body language (no crossing the legs and no arms above the head while dancing) while avoiding certain clothing types or entertainment choices. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s these were expectations we placed on boys as young as eight (Pollack 1998) in Anglo-American cultures.

But by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, studies began reporting a rapidly decreasing level of homophobia, even in men’s teamsports (Anderson, 2005a; Kian and Anderson, 2009a; Southall et. al., 2009). Explicating this, at the start of this millennium, I interviewed 26 openly gay high school and university athletes throughout a spectrum of sports in the United States (Anderson 2002). The study provided the first examination of the experiences of openly gay male athletes on ostensibly all heterosexual teams. I found that, in the absence of the ability to ban gay athletes from sport, heterosexual athletes resisted the intrusion of gay male athletes through the creation of a culture of silence around gay identities. Although publicly out, the athletes I studied largely maintained a heteronormative framework. That is to say that they self-silenced their speech pertaining to sexuality. In fact, they frequently engaged in heterosexual dialogue with their heterosexual teammates.

In this (2002) investigation, I also found fewer openly gay football players and soccer players than runners or swimmers. I made sense of

This through the work of Brian Pronger (1990) who theorized that competitive team sports involving collision are more likely to be over representative of macho men, than sports which do not. Pronger argued that gay men might be likely to deselect out of contact sports as they grew older and more aware of their sexuality. Using data from the 1994 to 1995 Longitudinal Add Health Study of adolescent health, Zipp (2011) empirically validates this: showing that while gay youth played team sports equally with their heterosexual counterparts in middle school, they began to self-select out of team sports by high school.

In 2005, I expanded my work on gay male athletes to 40 openly gay (and 20 closeted) athletes (Anderson 2005a). In this research I found an absence of physical harassment or psychological bullying of openly gay athletes. I found more acceptance than in my earlier research; however, this acceptance was partially attributable to the stigma of homosexuality being mediated on the account of my participants being mostly top-performing athletes. Thus, although many of these athletes reported gay friendly team cultures before coming out, others used their athletic capital to work through existing homophobia. I therefore concluded this research by arguing that hegemonic masculinity (as an archetype) seemed to be losing its grip on youth. I suggested that this would have profound implications in the near future for the use and utility of Connell's (1987) hegemonic masculinity theory. I began to formulate my idea of a new social constructionist theory of masculinities, formalizing it in 2009a with my inclusive masculinity theory.

Inclusive Masculinity Theory

There are clear signs that hegemonic masculinity theory is losing favor among a new generation of masculinities scholars. Scholars are increasingly highlighting areas where hegemonic masculinity fails to capture the intra-masculine dynamics of men (Adams 2011; Anderson 2009a; Anderson and McGuire 2010; McCormack 2010, 2011, 2012; Peterson 2011). I, for example, provide (2005a, 2005b; 2009a; 2010a; 2010b; 2011a; 2011b) multiple studies of young men across multiple university, sport and fraternity settings where hegemonic masculinity

theory has not proved productive (see Anderson, McCormack and Lee forthcoming; McCormack and Anderson 2010). McCormack (2010, 2011, 2012) has found similar results in school settings.

I devised inclusive masculinity theory (2009a) to theorize the social dynamics of men in non-homohysteretic settings. Extending hegemonic masculinity theory, I argued that the stratification of men moves from a horizontal one (in Connell's model) to a vertical (inclusive) one as homophobia (and thus homophobia) decrease. Here, gendered power is distributed more evenly between men, and homosexuality is not stigmatized.

In a recent *Gender & Society* article, Anderson (2011a) I argued that inclusive masculinity supersedes hegemonic masculinity theory because it is a more flexible theory that can be used to explain the social dynamics of settings with lower levels of homophobia. I argued that this makes Connell's theory redundant in such a setting. While it is not yet possible to tell whether inclusive masculinity theory will indeed replace hegemonic masculinity theory, its adoption by other scholars (i.e. Adams 2011; Cleland & Cashmore in press; McCormack 2012; Peterson 2011) is further evidence of the erosion of the dominance of hegemonic masculinity theory.

Evidencing the Shift

Key to understanding the shift toward softer, more inclusive masculinities is a reduction in cultural homophobia, which then feeds a reduction of homophobia. It is my thesis that in modern western cultures, there exists mass awareness that homosexuality exists as a static, biological, trait; and that it exists in relatively equal and (likely near even) percentages in all societies. But because it is impossible to prove that one is not gay in a homophobic culture, young heterosexual men used to demonize gay men as part of their defensiveness of their own heterosexuality. Straight men used to distance themselves from any public expression or other cultural symbols of femininity, which was associated with men's homosexuality.

However, as cultural homophobia has decreased rapidly over the

previous decade (Kozloski 2011)—particularly among youth—young men have lost their fear of associating with symbols of homosexuality. Whereas it used to be that associating with stigma (homosexuality) used to implicate young men (Anderson 2000), calling his heterosexuality into question through a guilt-by-association process, this is no longer the case. I explicate this through summarizing the results of three of my research studies. I begin with the changing experiences of gay male athletes in the United States.

North American Gay Male Athletes

There is increasing evidence that as cultural homophobia continues to dissipate (particularly among male youth) teamsport athletes are coming out in greater numbers in the United States. This is eminently evident simply by clicking on Outsports.com, which hosts hundreds of articles related to openly gay athletes. More systematically, however, in April of 2011, I published a *Gender & Society* article about the experiences of 26 openly gay American high school and university athletes. What is unique about this research, however, is that I conducted the same methods as my 2002 study of the same topic.

The athletes (who represent the same class and racial demographic) from the 2011 sample did not fear coming out in the same way or to the same degree as the 2002 athletes did. Perhaps most significantly, unlike the men from the 2002 study, the later cohort did not fear that their coming out would result in physical hostility, marginalization or social exclusion. They felt safe to come out to their teams, and safe to come out in their schools.

Athletes in the 2011 cohort were also a more diverse group of athletes. Unlike the first cohort, who was comprised mostly of swimmers and runners, teamsport athletes in the 2011 cohort were represented equally with individual sport athletes. Equally significant, the group of athletes that I acquired for the recent cohort was not as good a group of athletes as those in the first. From this finding, I conclude that gay athletes no longer need to be good in order to have a successful coming out experience: they were not using sporting capital

cas a shield against homophobia.

The men in the most recent sample were also more widely accepted by their teammates. In fact, they report that their teammates are closer now than before they came out: that disclosure of something personal engenders further disclosure drawing teammates to upgrade their opinions of one another. I found that this was as true for a benchwarmer as it was a star player.

Most of this finding emerges from the dissipation of a culture of don't ask, don't tell that characterized the experiences of athletes in my 2002 study. Athletes in the later study instead found that their sexualities were totally, and openly, accepted among their teammates. These athletes talked about, and were asked about, their sexualities by their heterosexual counterparts. None of the men in my most recent study reported that their teammates tried to publicly or privately heterosexualize them. None reported that their teammates were afraid to socialize with them outside of practice.

I concluded this research by arguing that because the social demographics of the two cohorts studied are alike, it therefore stood to reason that there are two possible reasons which account for the improvement of experience of gay athletes in the first compared to the later study. First, I concluded that sport has either 'learned' (as a collective institution) from pioneering openly gay athletes across America; or second (and a much more likely possibility) is that cultural homophobia has decreased in the local cultures of the 26 men of the 2011 sample. And if this is the case, it speaks to a broader decrease in homophobia throughout the country (see Kozloski 2011). Accordingly, I suggest that the existence of local cultures with great social inclusivity speaks at some level to inclusivity in the broader culture.

This argument is supported by some quantitative research that I have conducted on 18 year old university athletes in the United Kingdom. Here I show that only 6% expressed some form of reservation about having a gay male teammate share their sporting spaces (Bush, Anderson & Carr, forthcoming). Although unpublished, I find that even at a religiously based university in the United Kingdom 70% of incoming university athletes express support or strong support for

homosexuality.

Cunningham (2010) has also recently surveyed 700 university athletic department members across 200 institutions to show that while sexual diversity lags behind age or gender diversity, 54% of the universities studied maintained strong sexual orientation diversity. In fact, only 17% showed no diversity (i.e. no openly LGBT members). These descriptions of sport, sport institutions, and young men's gendered behaviors clearly do not correspond with research from the early 1990s (Pronger 1990).

British and Australian Straight Men Kissing

I took my first post in the UK in 2005. Here, I was immediately struck by the difference that my British students displayed, physically, toward each other compared to my American students. Men in the UK were much more tactile, giving longer hugs, sitting closer, and touching more. Whilst I first suspected that this was simply a cultural difference, I very quickly gauged that their same-sex touching behaviors were escalating over the years. Soon, I noticed that heterosexual men began kissing each other: only when drunk at first, and only with good friends. But the behavior spread.

Desiring to learn more of this behavior, I interviewed 145 men with a mixture of short and long surveys. I strategically selected some men from sports teams, and choose random sampling for other subsets of my target demographic, university students. In a 2012 Archives of Sexual Behavior article, I published the results. Most of the participants my colleagues and I interviewed have kissed another man on the lips. That 89% of these young men, regardless of their athletic participation, were able to kiss another man on the lips, without being homosexualized by their actions, suggests that either kissing men has been stripped of its sexual significance and/or the sexual significance of two men kissing has been accepted within the terrain of heterosexual behaviors for this demographic of white, middle class youth.

Although it has yet to be published, I show that the trend of decreasing homophobia leading to more homosocial (i.e. two straight

men) tactility, including kissing, is not only domain to men in the United Kingdom. Colleagues of mine have recently discovered that 25% of university men in Australia have kissed another man in the ways I below describe, and I have recently found this to be true of about 7% of American university men.

My colleagues and I categorized and contextualized social kisses according to how they seem to have emerged in the U.K. We first suggested that social kissing was determined as acceptable in sports (particularly football) as a celebration of athletic glory. Invasion teamsport athletes (as opposed to ice-skaters or male cheerleaders) were permitted to engage in kissing because of the heteromasculinizing nature of their competitive team sports. This is a consistent finding in sport and masculinity literature (Anderson 2005a; Pronger 1990), as it reflects the increased bravado, camaraderie, and acceptable heightened sense of emotional intimacy that comes with team sport participation.

Kissing other men then merged into the social spaces university athletes mutually occupy with other students (dance clubs, classrooms, and pubs), concomitantly creating a spatial acceptance of kissing among non-athletes. Thus, my colleagues and I found that the same-sex kissing had temporally and spatially shifted from the sporting context, into drunken, celebratory behaviors on nights out. Here, it was widely made available to men with various degrees of heteromasculine capital. Parenthetically, it is also made available to gay men—within these same student contexts (Anderson 2009a)—as the behavior seems to have removed the stigma from homosexual kissing: a same-sex kiss no longer marks one as gay in certain venues.

We also found that a large number of students had engaged in sustained kissing in these mixed student spaces. Here, 40% of the students engaged in what, ostensibly, looks like making out. However, unlike the simple kisses which emerged on the playing field, prolonged kissing seems to have been generated in and mostly restricted to pubs and nightclubs. Sustained kissing does not occur on playing fields or in other aspects of students private lives.

Although many of our informants maintained that the simple kisses have been stripped of all sexual connotations, this is not always the case with sustained kissing. Although the students who engaged in this

type of kissing, they were nonetheless aware that others could interpret the meanings of such behavior differently in their shared public space.

Perhaps it is because of this awareness that these men played up their kissing, exaggerating it, performing it for heterosexualizing attention in the form of homosocial banter. Their performance can be seen as a way of using semi-arbitrary ambivalent language and behavior to produce homosocial intimacy (Emerson 1969). Thus, it follows the same principle as the mock homosexual acts that heterosexual male athletes (and men in other homosocial institutions) have engaged in for the purpose of homosocial bonding; it demonstrates that homoerotic behaviors sometimes serve as an ironic proclamation of one's heteromascularity (McCormack & Anderson 2010). Accordingly, heterosexual men who engage in prolonged kissing can be viewed in terms of a juxtaposition of a semi-public performance with a semi-private meaning. Because of the concurrence of public and private associations, it can be sexual, but is not always publicly coded this way because it is symbolized by homosocial joking and repartee.

I concluded that heterosexual men in the UK are able to kiss other men like this for two reasons. First, they no longer care if they are casually associated with homosexuality. But more important, as enough men grew to maintain this disposition, the very codes of homosexuality began to fade. Ironically, kissing other men has moved from a symbolic act of homosexuality, to a symbolic act of heterosexuality.

Even if these kisses are ironically designed to perform heterosexuality for one's peers, it should be noted that the men in my study also report kissing their male friends in private, more endearing moments. Thus, the contestation of orthodox notions of heteromascularity occurs in multiple ways. First, because the simple kisses reported here represent an endearing expression of homosocial intimacy, they challenge notions of hegemonic masculinity by reconstructing the once-feminized nature of intimacy. Second, because their kissing is based in intimacy, intimacy is made compatible with heteromascularity. This is both an effect of decreasing levels of homophobia (McCormack 2010; Van de Ven 1994), while simultaneously reproducing homophobia as unacceptable among youth in these educational cultures (McCormack 2011).

The findings, like those of the gay male athletes earlier discussed, are consistent with my (2009a) inclusive masculinity theory. Quite simply

put, young men in these geographical contexts are not as bothered by homosexuality as they once were, and this means that they are less likely to police gendered behaviors with homophobia. It is difficult to say whether these men intend to contest orthodox notions of heteromascularity politically, or whether they simply do so implicitly.

The performance of simple kisses does not seem to reflect political intent. Instead, simple kisses reflect a mastery of their homosocial bonding in a more inclusive regional context. However, when it concerns extended kissing, respondents indicated that they knew they were actively and intentionally contesting older versions of acceptable heteromascularity behaviors.

Furthermore, placing photos of both types of behaviors on Facebook enacts political agency, again whether intended or not. Claiming a same-sex kiss on Facebook is a means to extending cultural values beyond an immediate cohort of university or college friends. Most students have Facebook friends that include their teachers, parents, relatives, or others who may not understand the meanings of the portrayed kisses. Intentional or not, kissing and boasting of their kissing helps erode what has traditionally been a highly regulated culture for heterosexuals. In kissing these men, with or without understanding the potential implications of their actions, it seems these heterosexual men have also challenged heteronormativity and homophobia.

Softening Masculinities in the National Football League

American football is normally considered the most masculinized team sport in the United States. This is a status supported by the sport media, who I argue exist as a group of heterosexual men desiring to be associated with a hegemonic form of masculinity. Part of the production of this hegemonic form of masculinity has traditionally included self-sacrifice and the willingness to accept and inflict injury, in order to keep players in-line with the ethos of sacrificing tomorrow's health for today's glory. In professional American football, this is even true in the face of debilitating injury and/or risk of death (e.g., Pedersen 2002; Vincent and Crossman 2008).

There is, however, growing cultural awareness about the use of contact sports in promoting chronic brain injury. In a 2012 *Men and Masculinities* article Ted Kian and I show that National Football League (NFL) players, and even the media pundits who report on them, are increasingly choosing to sit games out when they suspect concussion, and to take other measures to protect their health at the expense of athletic outcome. I suggest that this is a reflection of a larger cultural shift in the type of masculinity that young men value today; and this includes team sport athletes.

Important to this research on concussions, homophobia not only promotes homophobic attitudes, and discourages physical and emotional intimacy between men, but in a cultural period of high homophobia, men are also encouraged to take great risks with their health. It is when men are overly-concerned with proving their masculinity as a way of distancing themselves from homosexual suspicion that men will act in hypermasculine, violent, and dangerous ways toward themselves and others. Accordingly, I have previously (2009a) called traditional notions of homophobic masculinity 'a public health crisis' (p. 46).

However, recent sport-focused research (Adams 2011; Adams et al. 2010; Anderson and McGuire 2010) in addition to that of which I have already highlighted in this article, show that as cultural homophobia decreases, so does cultural homophobia. These studies show young male athletes as unconcerned about whether people perceive their actions as feminine/gay, and that this made the expression of femininity acceptable among university team sport athletes. Adams et al. (2010) theorize that this might give heterosexual men less reason to accept unnecessary risks in sport, in that there is less shame in denouncing it.

In light of these findings, our media research into the reporting on head injuries in the National Football League suggests that the practice of accepting traumatic injury for the sake of team victory may be under assault in the NFL. We suggest that there are three reasons for this.

First, there is growing cultural awareness as to the significant, debilitating, and oftentimes life-ending impact that concussions (and even repeated hits to the head that do not result in immediate concussions) have on players (Colvin et al. 2008).

This fact is highlighted by the suicides of several ex NFL players in recent years. It is also evidenced by the appearance of chronic traumatic encephalopathy in the brain of a university player who had never suffered a concussion. Thus, the media, players, coaches, and especially National Football League officials are seemingly awakening to the very real dangers that using the head for sport causes.

Second, young athletes today are socialized into a rapidly changing culture: one that fosters emotional intimacy between men, and the expression of feelings, including fear and pain (Anderson 2008). This means that NFL players might increasingly be risk-adverse, in part because inclusive masculinity does not require men to sacrifice health for the sake of sport (Adams et al. 2010; Anderson and McGuire 2010) the way previous researchers (Messner 1992; Trujillo 1991) found decades ago.

Accordingly, as the once orthodox image of the teamsport athlete loses its cultural hegemony, multiple types of masculinity are permitted to flourish without the hierarchy necessary in a hegemonic system (McCormack 2011). This means that those who once used to flirt with hegemonic masculinity, those Connell (1995 p. 79) described as ‘complicit,’ have less reason to build their masculine capital by upholding the ‘heroism’ of playing through concussion as they once did. Accordingly, men who write about sport maintain more freedom in decrying this type of self-violence, too.

Third, and largely out of scope of this paper, it is likely that governing bodies of sport are increasingly concerned about being held accountable for the health and safety of the players they govern. Injury in the NFL can, for example, be viewed as an occupational hazard that subject the organization to potential litigation. The drive to protect athletes from unnecessary injury is growing among American sports. For example, the national youth American sport league i9 Sports play flag American-football (where there is no tackling). And in a move that might shock those in Europe, in order to prevent youth’s from concussing themselves when two heads collide while competing for a header in football (soccer), this organization has even banned heading the ball in soccer. I suspect other youth and educationally based sporting teams will soon

follow.

Discussion

In this survey of some of the research I have been conducting on gay and straight male youths in sport, I have argued that inclusive masculinity theory (Anderson 2009a) supersedes hegemonic masculinity theory (Connell 1987, 1995) because it explains the loss of a stratification of men alongside in times of lower homophobia. The theory was constructed to explain settings with low homophobia; cultures in which young heterosexual men are no longer afraid to act or otherwise associate with symbols of homosexuality. Here, heterosexual boys are permitted to engage in an increasing range of behaviors that once led to homosexual suspicion, all without threat to their publicly perceived heterosexual identities.

In my various ethnographies, I have, For example, shown that fraternity members (Anderson 2008a), rugby players (Anderson and McGuire 2010), school boys (McCormack and Anderson 2010a), heterosexual cheerleaders (Anderson 2008b), and even the men of a Catholic College soccer team in the Midwest (Anderson forthcoming) have all been shown to maintain close physical and emotional relationships with each other.

Collectively, these studies highlight that as cultural homophobia diminishes, it frees heterosexual men to act in more feminine ways without threat to their heterosexual identity. I suggests that in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia (and likely in other Anglo-American cultures) we have dropped out of homophobia: homophobia used to be the chief policing mechanism of a hegemonic form of masculinity, but there no longer remains a strident cultural force to approximate the mandates of one type of homophobic masculinity.

Results of my research make it evident that we can no longer assume homophobia on the part of young based on team sport affiliation. Similarly, we can no longer assume homophobia based on simply being a young male in any institution—the relationship between masculinity and youth is changing.

I cannot know the degree to which cultural homophobia is declining among young men in other western, yet non English speaking cultures. Similarly, because of my monolingual limitation, I am not aware what theories predominant outside of English speaking sociology. Thus, I hope that this article helps promote masculinity scholarship more broadly, and I encourage those with more language skills than myself to contact me concerning their findings into the relationship of sport, masculinities, and homophobia.

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