

2 Sport and Masculinities

Sport occupies a central position in contemporary western culture. Commercial sport is a multi-billion pound industry, but at the same time a pursuit which holds significant meaning in the lives of individuals. In 1986, John Hargreaves stated that 'sport stimulates young men to dream of escape from boredom and deprivation. It is eulogized by educators, philanthropists and social reformers, appropriated by politicians and promoted by the modern state' (Hargreaves 1986: 1).

Sport, in this description, is seen as something to aspire to, or a way out of everyday drudgery and is framed in a class-based analysis. However, Hargreaves was correct to argue that sport is problematic precisely because, in comparison with other institutions seen as directly related to the state, the power relations within it are largely unrecognised or ignored. Whether one wants to regard sport as an 'institution' may be problematic, but an historical overview is useful in terms of tracing the emergence of sport to its contemporary form. Hargreave's particular institutional perspective is located clearly in terms of power relations theorised through a Marxist framework and there has been a tendency for those who have adopted this approach, such as, for example, the figurational accounts of Elias and Dunning (1986), to apply class in a generalised sense. Those who have access to power are simply categorised as white, middle-class men. Although this analysis is instructive, there is little exploration of the conflict and contradictions within this group and there is only passing reference to the role of the individual body or the different versions of masculinity found both within and external to class categories. As McKay et al. (2000) assert, more recent research into masculinities and sport has either adopted a focus upon institutionalised team sports (football, baseball, rugby etc.) or those that could be considered non-institutionalised, such as individual sports like swimming and running or alternative sports such as skateboarding and surfing (when performed outside of commercial settings). Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of the relationship between sport and the formation of sporting 'character' applied to men. The focus for this book, however, is how sporting practices construct masculinities, bodies and sexualities rather than on the historical development of sporting institutions and

power relations between 'opposing' class categories. Consequently, power is considered as more complex and pervasive, operating individually and socially, on bodies, through bodies and between bodies.

Although exploring the historical development of sporting institutions is useful, these accounts often assume class as a 'simple' category and ignore gender and sexuality as problematic within them. However, it is still important to recognise that, historically, there has always been some form of 'sporting' physical activity although it was not until the Victorian era that it really started to take its present form (Haley 1968, Brailsford 1969, Malcolmson 1973, Bailey 1978). The Victorian period can be seen as influential in shaping the way many sports are played today. At the same time, the cultural transformations in attitudes to health and the body in this period can also be considered as contributory factors to the social understanding that sport was, in particular, a space for the healthy, male body (Haley 1978, Park 1987)

What Hargreaves (1986) does provide us with is an account of the way sport developed into its current form and how the ethos of 'Muscular Christianity' was significant in the formulation of what he termed the dominant male ideology in English public schools during the 19th century. It is this construct of an ideal form of masculine behaviour located in action and heroic deeds which has prevailed within sport practice in more recent history throughout the globe and contributes to contemporary idealisations of sporting masculinity. Hargreaves also argues that during the latter stages of the twentieth century with the decline of heavy, manual-based industry and a relative decline in the incidence of large-scale wars, the sports field became a primary social space for displays of this form of masculinity.

In addition to the emergence of organised sport during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a strong relationship between work and leisure time developed (Cunningham 1980). It is arguable that the whole socialisation process for men and women is now geared towards employment where futures are mapped out in terms of a chosen occupation or career. Although this relationship towards employment is influenced by other social factors, particularly gender, race, class and disability, it is reasonable to claim that a large proportion of an individual's life is built around training towards and then maintaining a specific career. Men and women are also categorised in terms of relationship to the workforce; those who work and those who do not, such as the unemployed, the retired, the disabled, children and students. In contrast, leisure time is seen as time 'outside' of work and importantly as 'free' time. The greater historical presence of men within the workplace may also provide one explanation for sport occupying a position as a male space. In the past, men may have experienced a broader distinction between work and play, where sport has been invested in more heavily because of its relationship to leisure. However, in contemporary society, where the majority work in order to provide an income and means of support rather than the pursuit of a vocation, leisure time continues to hold

great significance for the individual. Not only as a means for attaining pleasure, but as a way of expressing an identity (Tomlinson 1990). It is a time which is considered 'one's own', a time to pursue an activity of one's own choosing even though nearly all of the process of participation in leisure activities is organised through either government or commercial directives. Significantly, as Edwards (2006) suggests, the decline of manufacturing has coincided with 'the rise of gym cultures and weight-training as popular activities for working class men' (Edwards 2006:157). In addition the 'technologies of fitness' (Pronger 2002), initially a preserve of the middle classes, have been incorporated into a general orientation towards maintenance of the physical body.

Sport, for those outside professional circuits, has maintained its position in general consciousness as being 'free-time' and as such pleasurable. According to Hargreaves (1986) and Clarke and Critcher (1985), even the blatant commercialism and organisation of contemporary sport and leisure time has not diminished its hegemonic status. However, a more sophisticated reading which incorporates how the individual is drawn into a decision-making process, suggests that developing knowledge of sport as well as developing sporting prowess is a prime area for the acquisition of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977, 1988). The body can provide an initial display to others that one has been involved in sporting activity, not only in terms of 'on court' performances but also through specific bodily gestures and techniques which are associated with particular sports. For example, within contemporary western youth culture, capital is achieved through performances which are directly attributed to 'cool' sports, such as basketball and surfing. Displays to others can be inferred through specific bodily presentations (without necessarily having to take part in a game) such as walking with a stooped gait with one's arms hanging low in the manner of a basketball player. Achieving a particular 'look' (Nixon 1996) requires knowledge on behalf of the performer of the social significance but can also be seen as an indication of the historical specificity related to idealized, bodily presentation and sporting performances. For example, during the latter stages of the twentieth century there was a transformation in male bodily presentation which gave the impression that young men should be socially aware of the need to acquire a specific image. This often entailed maintaining a glorified representation of the 'hard', muscular male body as a signifier of authentic masculinity and can be evidenced in the popularity of films stars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone. Their popularity has continued alongside more recent versions, such as Vin Diesel and the current 'James Bond', Daniel Craig. During the same period, in the fashion industry, for instance, clothing adopting a sports theme has proved to be popular and has provided a means to attract men into the consumer market (Edwards 1997). Idealized maleness is generally represented in association with being tough and heroic. However, although there may have been more recent outward changes in the way men present their bodies, the masculine

ideal has remained as that of 'tough guy' and the pursuit of heroism can be traced to what Segal (1997) describes as the late Victorian 'storm-troopers of a new aggressive masculinity' (Segal 1997: 107).

Although I am not aiming to provide an account for the historical emergence of sport, it is still important to remain aware of the social processes which can be seen to have played a significant part in contemporary understandings of sport and, in particular, the construction of masculinities. The consideration, albeit briefly, of historical perspectives provides support for claims that contemporary sport remains a predominantly male territory.

SPORT AS MALE TERRITORY

In 1982, Paul Willis wrote the following about the strong association between masculinity and sport:

It is also clear that sport is strongly associated with the male identity, with being popular and having friends. Rugby and football are archetypal here. We imagine men to be at their most gregarious, expansive and relaxed in the pub after the match.

(Willis 1982: 122)

However, Willis's identification of an area so 'strongly associated with male identity' did not go far enough to question why sport was considered a male space and much of sociological research on sport within the UK which followed tended to focus on the broader issues of class based power relationships, predominantly in sports such as football or rugby (Dunning 1986, Hargreaves 1986, Williams and Taylor 1994). Similarly, in the USA, the focus has tended to be more upon the power relationships within competitive, professional sports (Messner and Sabo 1990, Messner 1992). To an extent, the experiences of those outside these areas have failed to emerge or have been ignored. Whether this is to do with the social backgrounds of the authors, as there has been a tendency for research in the social sciences of sport to be conducted by those considered having a 'stake' in it. In particular, those who came through the ranks of college sports (US) or through working-class, socialist (heterosexual) male pathways (UK) where football and rugby were considered a 'birthright', as well as part and parcel of authentic 'real' masculinity. Consequently, there has often been a taken for granted attitude within the study of sport that certain activities (competitive, team sports such as football, rugby, baseball) are 'real' male territory or more 'authentic' whereas issues relating to gender and sexuality have been left unquestioned or paid lip service. In the UK, many studies have focussed upon typologies of male participants, either players or spectators, in terms of class (Williams and Taylor 1994, Taylor 1995) or authenticity (Fiske 1992, Redhead 1993, 1997) and have been predominantly located

within football. Again, whether this is the result of the predominance of working-class, heterosexual men in sports sociology is debateable, but there has been a distinct lack of reflexivity apparent in other areas of sociology which have been more willing to embrace post-modern and feminist ideas. As Wheaton (2002) has also pointed out, few ethnographies of sport by male researchers acknowledge the researcher's gendered identity.

It is also important to recognise within these accounts of sport that there is a slippage between adult sports and sporting activities for children and young people. The continued debates about the benefits of adult sport (based upon organised, professional, competitive structures) are often made without reflecting upon the impact such activities have on the young person and the different interpretations of sport. These debates have been more critically reflected upon within the fields of physical education in UK and Australia (Evans Davies and Wright 2004, Penney 2002) but have yet to impact upon the predominant 'taken-for-grantedness' of competitive sport processes within US based sports sociology. Connell's (2007) description of the insularity of the voice from the 'Metropole' is endorsed in this case.

The few notable exceptions of work located from within sport sociology which attempt to address this imbalance are tellingly from either gay men (Anderson 2005, Pronger 1990, 2000) or women (Hargreaves 1994, Caudwell 2003, 2006). Although Anderson's focus upon the gay sportsman within elite and professional sites, and in particular how the gay male athlete can be 'just as good as' straight elite athletes could be criticised for overlooking the broader discriminatory practices which many gay men exhibit to other gay men and women, particularly in relation to ability. What is important to recognise is that there remain clear gaps within this field relating to questions of gender, sexuality and bodily performance in relation to participation in social sport *in all contexts*.

In mainstream sport (which includes broader social participation), I argue, a version of masculinity based on a particular kind of bodily performance continues to prevail. This operates not only in organised sport but also within sports groups initially established as alternatives to mainstream (predominantly heterosexual male) practices, for example those involving gay men and women, heterosexual women and disabled people, or aimed at children and young people in the context of physical literacy. As such, contemporary sporting practice produces and promotes an environment where displays of traditional masculinity, those which present competitiveness, aggressiveness and toughness, are seen as normal and necessary. It is the perceived understanding of a traditional, 'natural' version of masculinity which dominates sport and continues to hold immense power. Connell (1995) notes that in many schools a version of masculinity, championed through competitive sport, prevails and consequently, sporting prowess becomes a test of masculinity. Even those who do not like sport, she suggests, have to negotiate, usually with difficulty, a relationship to it.

Participation in violent sports, especially those with a potential for injury, reinforces and naturalises notions of masculinity that value physical dominance. It is worth noting the popularity of many recent sporting heroes, for example, Vinnie Jones, Mike Tyson and Paul Gascoigne, who continue to remain within the public eye even though they have ended their sporting careers. Their sporting performances throughout their playing days were aggressive and dirty and adopted a 'win at all costs' approach to their particular events, often risking injury—whether to themselves or to their opponents. Their aggressive displays on the field were valorised by the media creating celebrity 'bad boy' personalities which were popular even with audiences unfamiliar with the specific sports they played (Whannel 2002). Throughout this process the sports commentator and the spectator are complicit in the creation of the sporting hero by condoning and expecting use of aggression in sporting contexts, particularly, for example during international contests (Whannel 1992).

Physical displays which result in injury provide evidence of masculine performances away from the field. Young, White and McTeer (1994) show how sporting injuries are seen as battle scars. They link the declining significance of male physicality in the sphere of work to the symbolic importance of strength and force in other social arenas, such as fitness and sport behaviour. As such it has become acceptable to play sport in an intensely confrontational manner. Young, White and McTeer's study provides a useful comparison to the interviews provided later in this book as they also interview men about sport and body practices. In their case they were able to interview sixteen current and former athletes and ask questions relating to how they entered into sport and the extent of parental influence. They found that the general response to injury and pain was to ignore or carry on until they were physically unable to do otherwise. The injury itself caused a greater effect to self-esteem and sense of masculinity rather than the physical pain or disability. Interestingly, all the respondents found incapacitation difficult to deal with as it was considered that the injury was a sign of weakness and a barrier to them being able to assert or display their masculinity to its full extent. There was a feeling that incapacity rendered them 'less than' male.

What becomes apparent is that the men in Young et al.'s (1994) study regarded their bodies as a central component in the formulation of their understanding of masculine performance and also how they were seen by others. The men's relationship with their bodies also highlights the importance of the physical body in the way that it is experienced and used as an expression of identity. At the same time, there is a 'taken for granted' acceptance of the body where the men accept physical pain and injury as an everyday part of their 'masculine' lifestyle. However, this is not to suggest that management of pain is the sole preserve of men, rather the men learn to 'perform' the management of pain in a particular way. As Pickard (2007) describes in her accounts of young female dancers, pain and injury are constantly present, but

within the gendered discourse of ballet, outward signs of pain are masked in an endeavour to present effortless 'feminine' grace.

Having argued that sport remains a predominantly male social space, I want to explore the types of masculinities found within it and the specific versions which are considered appropriate and inappropriate for participation.

MASCULINITIES IN SPORT

McKay, Messner and Sabo (2000) provide an overview of current research into men and sport. They argue that critical studies of masculinities and sport should continue to embrace feminist theory and take into account the knowledge that constructions of masculinity are interwoven with constructions of femininity. One of the problems, for them, however, of recent critical feminist work on men's experiences of sport has been the overemphasis on the negative outcomes resulting from participation, for example, violence, misogyny and homophobia. This focus has led to a distinction between 'men's sports' and 'women's sports' where male sport is viewed as overly competitive and aggressive in comparison to the more playful, less competitive realm of women's sports. McKay et al. suggest that studies in sport have focused too much on how conservative sport structures reproduce existing inequalities without acknowledging the diversity of sporting activities and their potential for disruption and resistance. They write

The focus on 'difference' among women (or among men) and on multiple systems of inequality does not mean ignoring gender. It means starting with the recognition that gender tends to vary in salience in different times and at different social locations.

(McKay et al. 2000: 10)

Messner (1992) argues that, what he calls, dominant masculinity promotes an attitude in which the body is used as a weapon or a tool to achieve goals. Domination of the body and the bodies of others becomes important, not only those of opponents but also team-mates, women, ethnic minorities and gay men. He suggests that in sport there is a covert intimacy—a form of doing together rather than mutual talk about inner feelings. However, De Garis (2000) suggests that this presumption of masculinity in sport causes problems, particularly in relation to expressing emotions. Instead of 'covert intimacy', De Garis believes there is a 'somatic intimacy'. In his study of a boxing club he found that bodily actions and intimacy encountered in the 'safe' environment of the gym provided the appropriate place "to express intimacy because the textual representations of boxing as masculine and violent deter allegations of weakness or femininity." (De Garis 2000: 97)

Interestingly, De Garis found that the primary axis for verbal intimacy was age, not gender. The study is useful in that it acknowledges the

problems in addressing the various masculinities within sport but it does not fully address the issue that there is still a particular notion of masculinity which is identified or looked for, which in turn becomes the focus. De Garis argues that the intimate relationships formed between men within the social space of sport (in this case the boxing changing room) reveals greater sharing of personal emotions than is often given credit, especially if applied along with other social factors, such as age. However, because of the focus on boxing and the emphasis within the sport upon physical aggression, his example appears to reaffirm the notion that men are unable to express emotion unless they prove that they are masculine in the first place and, consequently, the expression of feminine traits is still considered unmanly. In this case, displays in the boxing ring prove heterosexual masculinity in the same way that it is acceptable for a football player to cry after losing a highly competitive football match (Whannel 2002). At the heart of this is the underlying conflict between masculinity and the understanding of subordinated femininity. In the case of the crying football player, an un-masculine display of emotion is counteracted by the prior performances seen on the pitch and the general social context of football being male territory. There is the implication that 'proper' masculinity equates with heterosexuality and, consequently, that sporting prowess equates with heterosexual masculinity. Thus, in terms of sport, the feminine serves to establish what is not expected in sporting performances. Presumably, following Butler (1993), the notion that men inhabit 'failed' forms of heterosexual masculinity suggests that we would expect to see them having to negotiate this in some way. Therefore, the accounts of older men and gay men are particularly useful as they could be considered 'outside' conventional sport because they are seen as weaker versions of masculinity but are still able to take part in competitive sport. Thus, comparisons can be made about whether the competitive structures of sport and certain expected bodily performances prevail over other factors such as age and sexuality or vice-versa.

An additional criticism of De Garis's is that he is very much part of the field he is studying. He is a keen boxer and wrestler and it appears at times that he is trying to defend boxing as a legitimate sport. In 1985, Frances Heidensohn talked of the 'vicarious identification' in much of traditional male-based sociology. She was referring more specifically to the sociology of crime and deviance, but as I mentioned previously, this could also be applied to the sociology of sport in which much research has been gathered by men about sports they identify with. It could also be claimed that there is often a sense of reverence in the way many men write about sport in general. My initial focus was upon the body and I attempted to use sport as a means to gain access to the lives of other men. It was during the early stages of my research I began to realise that sport occupied a far greater part in men's lives than I had originally thought. However, although much of the research I conducted was within a specific sport (tennis), I did not set out to

champion its cause. There remain too many conflicting issues which maintain, for me, a love hate relationship. Tennis, like many other organised sports, is still riddled with discriminatory practices not only in terms of age, class, gender, race and disability, but also in its continued reinforcement of a narrow version of masculinity based on aggression, competitiveness and intolerance.

Many sociological studies of sport also tend to focus on the serious or professional male athlete, someone whose career is based on physical performance (for example; Messner 1990, 1992, Klein 2000, Young, White and McTeer 1994). Often there is a distinction between the player and the spectator or supporter, who has to experience the sport vicariously through the exploits of the player. This excludes the accounts of the majority of other men (and women) who may participate in sport at varying levels and where sport is not a career or means of livelihood, but rather an aspect of their lives which is nevertheless extremely important. The amateur or social sports player, in comparison to the professional player, participates in a voluntary capacity and has less to gain in terms of economic capital, but often the enthusiasm is greater than that of the professional. Whereas much research focuses upon male dominated sports such as football and rugby (Williams 1994, Taylor 1995, Nauright, 1996, Finn 2000, Wagg 2003) broader research has indicated that sports such as tennis and swimming remain more popular as participatory pursuits regardless of gender and age than football and rugby (Bennett, et al. 1999).

Young et al. (1994) also note the irony that athletes are considered to possess the ideal male body. For it is ultimately gained during the self-destructive pursuit of sporting activity through neglect of pain and injury by pushing the body to excess and more often than not administering drugs to enhance performance or mask injury. Not only are young men pressured into conforming to the ideals promoted by traditional mainstream sport, but more recent cultural changes in the representation of the body, particularly through consumerism (Featherstone 1991, Mort 1996), have contributed to a greater expectation for the presentation of particular 'types' of body. Hence the growth of commercial industries based on social pursuits related to the quest for an ideal body and the increased demand for products related to tanning, cosmetic surgery and dieting. Much of the research which focuses on this area concentrates on the pressures experienced by women to achieve the ideal body, for example, Wolf, 1990; Bordo, 1990; Black and Sharma, 2001. However, it is important to look at this in a wider context as pressure can be seen to be exerted on both sexes and particularly the young. For the young person there is a greater social pressure to be part of the youth scene, which, for example, relates heavily to the (dance) club scene. In this environment, semi-naked dancing for both males and females is virtually compulsory and a particular version of body performance is learned together with an awareness of how to display the body in an appropriate fashion (Grogan 1999).

Apart from being a social space which is considered a male territory; contemporary, organised sport also requires from its participants a particular orientation towards the body based upon discipline and regulatory practices.

SPORT AND DISCIPLINED BODIES

Heikkala (1993) regards sport as a prime example of the production of disciplined bodies. He primarily focuses on the professional sports person, but the association with the amateur enthusiast and the popularity of sport and leisure as a pastime for a majority of the population places greater value on these ideas. Heikkala draws upon Foucault (1977, 1986) and applies the idea that athletes are subjects, not only of external authority, such as those exerted by sporting governing bodies, but also through 'their own understanding and reflection relative to the ways they fulfil the plans' (Heikkala 1993: 401). These techniques of the self allow individuals to perform operations on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being in order to transform their identities within these practices and in turn achieve happiness and/or perfection. This relates to sport well in that although it is evident there is external control and power enforced by governing authorities, there are other factors within the process. Sport is not always compulsory, particularly outside of school there is a voluntary element. People do have an element of choice in joining a tennis club or enrolling at a leisure club in the same way that going to a night-club is seen as an individual choice. As Heikkala explains:

Sport is not forced labour; it must and does include a strong voluntary flavour. Significantly, the will to do better must also carry a strong internalized feeling of a 'need' of discipline and conformity to the practices necessary for achieving the desired goal.

(Heikkala 1993: 401)

The recognition that there are other factors which influence participation in sport is important. Theoretical perspectives which concentrate solely upon the historical processes in relation to external institutionalised power structures do not fully account for social practices which are not completely compulsory. This particularly applies to those who take part in sport for many reasons other than financial reward. For Heikkala, taking part in sport means, for the athlete, accommodating a will to do better or become perfect, which in turn carries a strong sense of a need for discipline. As well as applying an interpretation of Foucault, Heikkala employs Nietzsche's (1990) concept of 'bad conscience'. Bad conscience is a consequence of normalising techniques and is the instrument of control either internal or external. In the case of the athlete, becoming better or achieving perfection can be demonstrated through victories. Thus, plans are made to make

sure that training regimes and subsequent sporting performances are moving in the right direction towards the goals set. Bad conscience acts as a form of guilt, causing the athlete to reflect upon the negative aspects of not achieving their goals. As Heikkala suggests, it is 'no wonder athletes easily overtrain after a compulsory period of rest, which may have resulted from illness or injury. A bad conscience drives them to catch up with the planned training program.' (Heikkala 1993: 401)

These disciplinary practices cause the athlete to mount a quest for, what Heikkala, considers an unobtainable goal and at the same time is potentially both physically and psychologically damaging. Competition, in terms of success or failure, contributes to this process, causing a constant assessment of perceived progress.

Evidence suggests that such arguments apply to sports at a broader social level, especially if taking into consideration the voluntary nature of the activity and the absence of material rewards. More recent works by Pronger (2002) and Markula and Pringle (2006) have explored further the notion of how the body is subjected to disciplinary gaze. Pronger describes a form of 'body fascism' born out of discourses of fitness and a techno-scientific vision of the body which is contemplated mechanically, somewhat like that of a car being moulded into a desired shape. The individual body can be seen to be contemplated as other, but shaped through formulations of a range of competing and complementary discourses such as health, fitness, identity, consumption, desire—and interlaced with social understandings of gender, age, race and religion. Thus, although individual identities are shaped through a complex matrix of social discourses, patterns can be identified within specific socio-historical settings. Consequently, Pronger is able to articulate a 'technology of physical fitness' which describes a certain contemplation of and orientation towards the body within a specific period in time.

SPORT AND SEXUALITY

The social construction of sexuality is one area in which Foucault (1986) specifically addresses the regulation of the body and the restraints placed upon it. Sexuality provides an instructive example of the social processes which impose upon the physical body and is considered essential in any exploration of sport the body and gender. Particularly in sport, the physical assertion of one's sexuality through socially determined constructions of masculinity is constantly put to the test and for the gay sports player there is often the potential for a conflicting sense of identity. Segal suggests that 'the fine line between "true" masculinity (which is heterosexual) and its opposite (which is not) have been increasingly transgressed' (Segal 1997: 150) by the gay community in its assimilation of hegemonic masculinity. She sees this in the way many gay men have adopted a 'super-macho'

style based on traditional images of the heterosexual male. This has seen increased outward bodily performances, such as body-building and macho posturing and the growth of gay sports seeking to emulate heterosexual sports. For example, towards the end of the twentieth century in England there emerged a number of gay sports groups, such as the Kings Cross Stealers (a gay male rugby club), which started to compete in mainstream leagues. The problem with this, as Segal correctly points out, is that the valuation of this form of masculinity as a powerful identity is reinforced rather than challenged. This is an area which I explore further in Chapter 7 when I assess the position of the gay male sports player in terms of his role within the context of a 'gay' sports club.

Sport powerfully interacts with discourses of sexuality. The popular understanding of the professional sportsman is one of athleticism, strength, virility and attractiveness. This is promoted as the ideal form of masculinity, not only for men to aspire to, but for women to find attractive. The athlete's image is constructed through a discourse of physical and bodily performance. Most professional sports, particularly football, boxing and rugby, are highly physical, often involving contact with other men and there is generally a practical requirement to be physically strong. Often, particularly within the United Kingdom and North America, there are also expectations for exhibitions of hegemonic masculinity, on and off the field, such as excessive drinking and brawling. Sport, therefore, provides not only a site for learning social codes relating to gender but can be considered a prime site where hegemonic masculinities are made and remade. Consequently, sport is a significant part of a social arena in which masculinities and femininities are constructed, learned and structured in relations of domination and subordination (Butler 1993).

In contemporary 'western' history, sport has been considered as a place where the young man learns about the values of competition, valour, gentlemanly behaviour and how to treat those who do not (or should not) possess sporting prowess, in particular, women, gays, the disabled and the old (Park 1987). According to Park, however, the emphasis upon specific masculine performances produces conflict in later social relations during adolescence when the young-male sports player may have to confront sports women or gay sportsmen. The implication is that there is little accommodation for, or acceptance of, alternative gender or sexuality within mainstream sports unless they resemble expected forms. Probyn (2000) uses the example of Ian Roberts, the Australian professional rugby player who 'came out' in public (albeit during the latter stages of his career). On the one hand Roberts was heralded by the gay community as a 'normal' and athletic man who happened to be gay. On the other hand, Probyn notes how Roberts' body was used as a beard for his gayness which for a time was employed as a means to hide the possible shame of being gay. He was large, white, physically strong, working class and played in the position of the forward which is typically the role of muscle in the side and not known for being

sophisticated. It is interesting to consider whether this understanding of shame derives from not being 'masculine' enough. In the case of Roberts, any slur of 'gayness' upon his masculine identity was overshadowed by his ability to perform outward displays of hegemonic masculinity. As such, within sport, the social fear of displaying what is considered to be subordinated masculinity contributes to the continued presence of a hegemonic masculinity informed by heterosexuality.

Probyn relates shame to competitive drive, which in turn highlights the significance of sport's relationship to the body. This is particularly evident within sport where the physical body is positioned as a central means through which social identity is presented. For instance, Probyn identifies the way in which shame and the body often go hand in hand. She suggests that 'it is perhaps more intriguing that sociological accounts of sport in the main refuse to enter into the dynamics of competition, and the bodily experience of shame that so often accompanies sport' (Probyn 2000: 20). The argument expressed here is that competition, or the social value placed upon competition, creates an environment where there is a constant need for individuals to contemplate their bodies in relation to other bodies. This is particularly evident within sporting practices where the body is central to participation. This not only applies to competitive sport, but also to everyday activities such as the use of a public gym or swimming pool. Probyn cites the locker room as a prime example. By applying the notion of shame, Probyn provides the example of how an individual is constantly directed towards contemplating his or her body, either consciously or unconsciously, in terms of successful performances on the field or in comparison to other types of body (for example more muscular or slimmer) in the locker room. Sport, therefore, provides a key component in reinforcing the importance of corporeal power relations. This can, in turn, be directed to gender relations and the continued acceptance of masculine assertiveness and aggressiveness as being socially acceptable. Thus, Ian Roberts, was accepted because his masculinity was not compromised by 'gayness'. His physical and bodily displays are predominantly grounded in western, heterosexual understandings of male performance and the male body. He is left with little to be 'ashamed' of and, in turn, normative presentation of his body negates any shame to be derived from being gay.

Consequently, sport provides a useful setting for exploring masculine identity and understanding of the body. My research draws upon some of these ideas, especially in relation to men and their ability to participate in sport. Responses from both gay and straight men highlight the extent to which the body is central in presenting a normative version of masculinity. Although marginalized in terms of mainstream sport, gay men who participate in gay sports are still influenced by traditional bodily performance-based ideals. This causes conflict with the inclusive aims generally promoted by alternative sport. O'Neill and Hird (2001) describe the problems faced by gay, disabled men within the gay community. The men O'Neill interviewed were discriminated against to a greater extent within the gay 'scene' and in general they

considered other able bodied gay men were less welcoming because of their fixation with the body beautiful. O'Neill's work provides further justification for the focus on gay men's experience of their bodies. Interestingly, the men O'Neill interviewed were keen to identify with being gay rather than disabled, which may suggest that stigmatisation of the body is considered socially more injurious in comparison to subordinate sexuality.

A gay sports group or association, it could be reasonably assumed, is established because of an understanding of collective subordinated sexuality. But in terms of a collective identity, a gay sports club has conflicting ideals. On the one hand, it has been set up to provide an environment away from the oppressive heterosexuality found in general sports clubs. Whilst, on the other hand, the club is based around competitive sport and adopts traditional sporting procedures.

Pronger (2000) suggests the emancipatory power that appeared initially within the Gay and Lesbian community, particularly in its approach to sport, has been quelled in recent years through the attempts to 'normalise' and become part of mainstream sport. This is particularly relevant to the themes in my research as it is in these attempts to adopt 'normal' sport practices that hegemonic masculine performances are often adopted and accepted. Although Pronger acknowledges advances in the cause of Lesbian and Gay movement, in making it more visible and transforming sport from its history of systematic oppression, he suggests there are still only a few high profile openly gay athletes and that there has been no scholarly research that shows mainstream sport to be a significantly welcome environment for sexual minorities.

I suggest that the progress of L and G community sports, seen in the light of the socially transformative ambitions of some of the historical streams of the G and L movement, has been more about dominant socio-cultural systems (including sports) appeasing, co-opting, indeed diffusing the transformative possibilities of the sexual margins than it has been about increasing human freedom.

(Pronger 2000: 225)

Importantly, Pronger demonstrates how the possibility of challenging discriminatory practices, both within sport and other social spaces, is limited by certain power systems which tend to maintain unfair positions of power. In sport, homosexuality has traditionally been organised as negatively and prohibitively other to mainstream (heterosexual) sport. In gay community sport, particularly in North America, a liberal approach has been adopted which seeks to provide access for lesbians and gays to the mainstream rather than confront or challenge its core ideals. Pronger cites the Gay Games as a prime example of an 'inclusion' approach. For him, gay sports culture is the very model of liberal, inclusive lesbian and gay politics and aspirations. Consequently, it is a very popular form of mainstream gay culture. This expresses dominant gay liberal philosophy where lesbians and

gays are positioned as similar to anybody else, for example, in that they shop, eat, have families and play sports. Gay sports, it follows from this line of reasoning, proves normality in the same way that being a successful business person or doctor proves gay normality. Because of this many gay sports organisations seek legitimisation from traditional sports authorities, for example, the gay tennis group in my sample adhere to the Lawn Tennis Associations regulations, instead of attempting to formulate practices which accommodate the needs of those wanting to take part.

Although Pronger believes that gay sports have provided lesbian and gay people the opportunity to enjoy sports in an inclusive and safe environment, ultimately it has made these people conform to the established norms, particularly those based on oppressive male heterosexual codes. Speaking on a broader level, Segal agrees when she suggests that 'it is now a commonplace perception that gay men have more in common with straight men than gay women, and vice versa' (Segal 1990: 149).

The conflict of interests for the amateur gay male sports player provides an important aspect for consideration. Especially when taking into account the extent to which the promotion and display of a particular form of masculinity, through bodily practices, reinforces the dominant version of masculinity to the detriment of others. This discrimination in sport can be experienced by gay men, women and many heterosexual men alike. By including this aspect, I have explored whether there is potential to be found in the transformative aspects of subordinated, or alternative, sporting practice (such as a gay tennis club) and the extent to which subordinated groups have the ability to challenge current discriminatory practices evident within mainstream sport. This is also why I have attempted assess whether some of the ideas proposed by Butler (1993) in relation to queer acts and performativity, if read in terms of bodily practices and ethnographic research, could be applied to orthodox sport in order to highlight and challenge the discriminatory normative practices which currently prevail. Thus, for instance, within gay sports, is there potential to be found in the acts which 'queer' the performances rather than reinforce the normative?

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate how sport occupies an integral, and complex, position within contemporary culture. From a historical perspective, sport has emerged into its current form as both a powerful institution within broader political contexts as well as a social space which continues to be considered male territory. Consequently, sport is a social space where certain expected expressions of masculinity are made and remade to the extent that representations of alternative or 'failed' masculinity are marginalized. The prioritisation of specific performances of masculinity results in the continued discrimination of women, but also those men considered unable to present the appropriate displays. During this process it becomes evident that the body, gender and sexuality are central factors in the construction of contemporary understandings of sport. As such, it is necessary to explore these themes further.