

**WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF GENDER AND  
SEXUALITY WITHIN FOOTBALL CONTEXTS IN  
ENGLAND AND WALES.**

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# CONTENTS.

Contents pages.	i
Abstract.	v
Dedication.	vii
Acknowledgements.	viii
Presentations and publications.	ix

## **Chapter One.**

### **Introduction to researching women who play football.**

Introduction.	1
Personal rationale.	1
Academic rationale.	5
Aim of the research.	9
Objectives.	9
Research questions.	9
Structure of thesis.	10

## **Chapter Two.**

### **Review of theoretical approaches and research.**

Introduction.	14
The sociology of sport and leisure.	16
Feminism and the sociology of sport and leisure.	20
Feminist methodologies in and sport and leisure.	27
Theories of gender.	31
Sport and femininity and masculinity.	41
Theories of [lesbian] sexuality.	47
Summary.	56

## **Chapter Three.**

### **Feminist epistemology and methodology.**

Introduction.	58
Knowledge as political.	60

Feminist epistemology.	64
Women's experience.	66
'Race'.	72
Sexuality.	75
Women's ways of knowing.	78
Objectivity.	78
The epistemic sphere.	82
Reflexivity.	87
Women's knowledge.	88
Relativism.	89
Feminist Knowledge.	91
Summary.	92

#### **Chapter Four.**

##### **Researching women who play football.**

Introduction.	96
Feminist methods of inquiry.	96
Quantitative research - the questionnaire.	100
Qualitative research - the interviews.	107
Summary.	119

#### **Chapter Five.**

##### **The normalisation and routinisation of football in the lives of women who play.**

Introduction.	121
Football and male centred theory.	122
Hidden from history - women and football.	125
The present state of play.	129
Women who play football.	131
The women's first experiences of football.	132
Footballing memories.	136
The centrality of football.	141
Women who play and their family and friends.	145
Summary.	148



## **Chapter Six.**

### **Gender relations in football contexts.**

Introduction.	151
Power relations and poststructuralism.	152
Social, discursive and material practices.	155
Schooling and disciplining girls [not] to play.	157
The football fields: formalising the position of women.	163
<i>On the pitch: the official control of the game.</i>	164
<i>Over-seeing play: the spectator and media gaze.</i>	167
Women's experiential diversity and shifting locations on the field of play.	173
Summary.	180

## **Chapter Seven.**

### **The [hetero]sexual peremptory in football.**

Introduction.	183
Sexuality.	184
Football's sexual peremptory.	188
Lesbian [non] presence and [non] visibility.	193
Football's dykespaces.	201
Compulsory heterosexuality?	204
Summary.	210

## **Chapter Eight.**

### **[Not] to look like a woman; footballers, lesbians, tomboys and butches.**

Introduction.	213
Constructing gender and sexuality.	214
[Not] to look like a women.	218
Gender, sexuality and the construction of the sexed body.	231
Summary.	240

## **Chapter Nine.**

### **Summary and conclusions.**

Introduction.	243
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A personal account of the research odyssey.	244
The contribution to feminist sport sociology.	247
<i>Empirical.</i>	247
<i>Epistemological and methodological.</i>	249
<i>Theoretical.</i>	256
Further and future research.	260
<b>Bibliography.</b>	263
<b>Appendices.</b>	
Appendix I - The questionnaire.	287
Appendix II - The results for question 17 on the questionnaire.	290
Appendix III – The interview participants.	291
Appendix IV - The interview letter.	293
Appendix V - The interview guide.	295
Appendix VI – Sample transcript.	397

## ABSTRACT.

Football is not a woman's game, it's not a pastime for milksops and sissies, it's a man's game" Trevor Ford, 1957.

As the above quotation indicates football provides a site for the functioning of gender and sexuality. This thesis offers a detailed analysis of women's experiences of football, gender and sexuality.

The research consists of 437 completed questionnaires and 14 in-depth semi-structured interviews. Over half the women taking part in the questionnaire research have played for over 15 years. Of the 14 women interviewed (aged between 20-43 yrs.), 11 started playing when they were girls (under 14 yrs.). The findings demonstrate that informal play and the spaces within playgrounds and housing estates are central to the women's initial involvement. 75% of the questionnaire participants commit between 4-6 hours a week to playing and for the women interviewed playing exists as a normalised and routinised aspect of their lives.

That said, the findings expose the gender relations in football. The women have both shared and non-shared experience of the multi-layered policing of the football fields by the education system, officials, spectators, the media and through self-surveillance. The analysis illustrates how power is exercised and transmitted to discursively regulate gender and football. In addition through an exploration of football's sexual peremptory it is evident that hegemonic heterosexual relations to power are both reinforced and subverted. Lesbian presence and visibility inverts the sexual 'norm' and dykescapes represent, albeit transient, re-articulations of sexuality. Through an analysis of women's footballing bodies the research elucidates the inter-relationship between gender and sexuality. The findings indicate the regulatory practices that discipline women's corporeality and the analysis considers the possibilities female masculinity offers for a re-materialisation of gender and the sexed body.

The contribution this thesis offers is to the field of sports sociology. The research reflects an engagement with feminist epistemology and methodology and the analysis draws on poststructuralist theory. Herein lies a particular and located footballing epistemology.

## **DEDICATION.**

This piece of work is dedicated to Judy White at a very significant time in both our lives. And to my parents who both left school at 16 years of age. I could not have completed this thesis without them.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.**

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My friends and lovers, especially Helen - who have also lived through a very long and difficult process. Without them I would have been unable to smile.

## **PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS.**

### **Presentations.**

Caudwell, J. (1997) 'Late nineteenth century and early twentieth century images of the female footballer: Sites of resistance; gender and sexuality', paper presented at Women, Policy and Politics 14-17 July 1997, University of London, England.

Caudwell, J. (1997) 'Sex and politics: Resistance and acceptance in women's football', paper presented at Leisure, Culture and Commerce 9-11 September 1997, Roehampton Institution, London, England.

Caudwell, J. (1998) 'Women who play football: Is there a space for lesbian gender?', paper presented at Gendered Space: Women's Choices and Constraints 14-16 July 1998, University of Hull, England.

Caudwell, J. (1998) 'Sportswomen and sexuality: exclusive design of the self?', paper presented at The Big Ghetto - Gender, Sexuality and Leisure 16-20 July, 1998, Leeds Metropolitan University, England.

Caudwell, J. (1998) 'The cultural arena of women's football in the UK: A sports space for lesbian gender?', paper presented at Queer Games? Theories, Politics, Sports 29-31 July 1998, Amsterdam, Holland.

Caudwell, J., Scraton, S. and Watson, B. (2000) 'Centring women's leisure experiences in the context of difference and exclusion', paper presented at Leisure Centres and Peripheries 11-13 July, 2000, Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland.

Scraton, S. and Caudwell, J. (2000) 'Embodying masculinity? The experiences of women footballers in the UK', paper presented at Pre Olympic Scientific Congress 7-13 September 2000, Brisbane, Australia.

### **Publications.**

Caudwell, J. (1998) 'Sex and Politics: Sites of resistance in women's football', in C. Aitchison and F. Jordan (eds) *Gender, space and identity. Leisure, culture and commerce*. Eastbourne: LSA publication (no. 63), pp. 151- 161.

Caudwell, J. (1999) 'Women's football in the United Kingdom: Theorising gender and unpacking the butch lesbian image', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 390-402.

Caudwell, J. (2000) 'Football in the UK: Women, tomboys, butches and lesbians', in S. Scraton and B. Watson (eds) *Sport, leisure and gendered spaces*. Eastbourne: LSA publication (no. 67), pp. 95-110.

### **Book review.**

Caudwell, J. (1999) 'Halberstam, J. (1998) *Female masculinity*. London: Duke', *Sexualities*, Vol. 2, No. 4; pp. 506-508.



# **Chapter One.**

## **Introduction to researching women who play football.**

### **Introduction.**

In this chapter I provide a preface to the thesis. I discuss the personal and academic rationale behind the research, and make transparent my research aims and objectives. I present the five research questions that have directed the documentation of the research findings, and highlight how these have been addressed in relation to the thesis structure.

### **Personal rationale.**

A brief autobiography is significant because firstly it illustrates the experiences that have shaped my present location and desire to complete this research project. By offering a personal account I situate myself at the onset of the thesis. That said, my autobiography is not static, it is ongoing and implicit to the development of the thesis. However, I choose to de-prioritise my personal voice during the course of the thesis, because it is the empirical material and theoretical analysis of this material that I wish to promote. I do return to a personal account in the final chapter – chapter nine. Secondly, the presentation of a brief autobiography at this stage makes transparent my position as an interpreter and writer of the research material.<sup>1</sup> I develop this second point more fully in chapter four where I consider my position as a researcher within a feminist research project.

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<sup>1</sup> I am a white middle-class woman aged 35 and this location situates me within the social structures of power in relation to 'race', class and gender. I am also a lesbian and this situates me differently in relation to sexuality.

A mapping of significant personal experiences is axiomatic to feminist research and this is how I begin my account. My memories of my childhood bring into focus significant issues surrounding physical activity, one's sex and gender. For a while, when I was very young, I believed it was possible to choose your sex, by choosing your clothes and lifestyle. I was often mistaken for a boy and remember my Nan telling someone in a shop, who had 'mistaken' my identity, that I would 'make a good boy'. Therefore, I believed it was possible to construct your sex. I soon realised this was viewed as ludicrous, however I continued to choose my clothes and a physically active lifestyle. As with many young active girls, I was labelled a 'tomboy', which I felt comfortable with as it made allowances for my 'non-feminine' behaviour. As a teenager, still unsure and frustrated with prescribed gender 'norms', I formalised my physical activity. I joined clubs, in particular the local rowing and hockey clubs. This suggests a certain class background. However, the hockey was a result of enthusiastic PE teachers at the comprehensive school I attended, and the rowing reflects living near the River Severn. That said, I can not deny my 'middle classness'. Through this formalised activity I learnt how to be skilful, strong and fit. In addition, I learnt more about gender 'norms', in particular heterosexual femininity.

I left home and went to college - Borough Road,<sup>2</sup> and on completion of my degree, went to Loughborough University, distinguished for sporting excellence. As a young woman, I was able and willing to take part in sport. I rowed and played hockey to a good standard. During this time, issues surrounding gender and increasingly sexuality drew my attention. Through playing hockey I became aware of a lesbian presence, despite most players concealing their sexuality. In short, I understood heterosexuality as 'compulsory' and gender inequalities in relation to opportunity within these sports as 'natural'. Above all, and significant to this discussion, I was largely non-critical of this gender and sexual 'logic' I experienced. This is in spite of

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<sup>2</sup> Previously a male PE college and now part of Brunel University.

my childhood ability to challenge sex by successfully being 'non-feminine'. In many ways this thesis remains faithful to these early memories. Some years later, I am now able and willing to be critical of sport in relation to the social construction of gender and sexuality.

After leaving University, I decided to join a football club. I lived in East London and worked for both Barking and Dagenham, and Newham local authorities. My involvement in public sport and leisure provision changed my understanding of sport. For example, I became increasingly aware of gender issues surrounding equal access and opportunity to participation. In addition, for the first time, I was playing a sport in an all-woman environment. Unlike hockey and rowing, active involvement in football tends to be separate from men. My team mates were mostly 'working class' lesbians. This coincided with my own partial "coming out"; I disclosed my sexuality to some close friends and team mates, but not to my family or in the workplace. Some of the players openly displayed their [lesbian] sexuality while others remained deep in the "closet".<sup>3</sup> At this time, I became aware of the ambivalent space sport, in particular football, provides for lesbians. In this thesis I explore issues surrounding footballing space and the disclosure of sexuality.

At the same time as playing football I sometimes played hockey and maintained contact with hockey friends. I can remember playing hockey at a festival and another lesbian player (hockey) asking sourly 'why do you wear those dykey football shorts?' I then realised that to be a 'dyke' within hockey culture was vilified and maligned. The point is that 'dyke' was known and identifiable but largely abhorred. In comparison, within the arena of football individual presentation of sexuality seemed unproblematic. In fact, the whole culture was different; we played in shorts, we got muddy, sometimes we swore at the referee, we did not always shower and we never sat and ate sandwiches

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<sup>3</sup> In chapter seven I discuss in detail issues surrounding the disclosure and visibility of lesbian sexuality. Through a consideration of the process of disclosure I problematise the notions "out" and "closet".

and drank cups of tea after a game. Clearly class distinctions and cultural capital play an influential role in differentiating sports' culture. At that time it seemed to be a 'dyke' within hockey was undesirable. This reflects a particular social construction of gender and sexuality within a specific sports culture. Here I focus on the functioning of gender and sexuality in football in England and Wales.

Another defining moment relevant to this work has been the intersection of my sporting life and my lesbian politics. My understanding of lesbianism has been influenced by an increased awareness of sexual politics. This has occurred sometimes within sporting circles, but mostly outside within groups of friends and later through a return to University.<sup>4</sup> With my non-sporting friends, my location as a 'sportsdyke' marks me in a particular way. I have often wondered if my physicality positions me as 'butch'. I am aware of the figure of the butch as she functions within lesbian history and culture. In addition, I am aware of the unarticulated butch bogey woman of sport (Cahn, 1994). I can remember being called 'baby butch' by a lover who was familiar with lesbian bar culture and working class butch-femme culture. For some time I was shocked and distressed. I pretended it did not bother me. However, it did, and this thesis goes some way to explaining my own anxiety surrounding the figure of the butch, in particular her existence within football culture.

In writing this thesis I have adopted an inductive approach and have been led by the research material. However, my personal rationale has undeniably directed the focus of inquiry. The following account is specific to my personal, social and educational experience and it frames the way in which I document the lived experiences of women who play football. In particular, I explore the issues surrounding gender and sexuality I have grown up with. My focus on gender and sport is from a critical perspective. For me, a critical engagement with gender is not possible without a consideration of sexuality. This strong

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<sup>4</sup> I started as a full time PhD student at University of North London in October 1996. During my first 18 months I completed a Higher Education Certificate in Women's Studies.

link between gender and sexuality is most evident if one considers the social construction of heterosexual femininity. In this research project it is the regulation of heterosexual femininity and the disciplining of an embodied 'female masculinity' (Halberstam, 1998)<sup>5</sup> that illustrates the value of critically discussing both gender and sexuality.

### **Academic rationale.**

Football has a long history that is well documented within both popular literature (fiction and non-fiction) and academically rigorous texts.<sup>6</sup> In the main, this work positions football as exclusively male. More specifically, since the 1970s, the academic study of football considers men's involvement in the game from historical, sociological and cultural perspectives. Thus marking the socio-cultural history and contemporary of football as male. Therefore, the knowledge we have of the game is distinctly male in that it is largely by men on men. That said, there is some evidence of the documentation of women's involvement in the game.<sup>7</sup> However, no academically rigorous, large scale, in-depth work has been carried out exclusively on women who play. This thesis represents such a project and is, as a consequence, an original endeavour.

Throughout the thesis, I avoid reference to 'football' and 'women's football'. This is because I refuse to continue to mark the game as male and women's involvement as 'the other'. In this way I challenge the 'football imaginary' by making visible women's everyday lived experiences of playing. The focus on, and documentation of women's experiences of playing reflects an empirical feminist project. The emphasis on the women's accounts contributes to the

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<sup>5</sup> The focus on 'female masculinity' and sexuality has developed largely because of the field of study. That said, I acknowledge lesbian and bisexual femininity, in particular the work on the 'femme'. See for example; Harris and Crocker (1997); Hemmings (1998) and Nestle (1989).

<sup>6</sup> See for example: Finn and Giulianotti (2000); Giulianotti and Williams (1994); Sugden and Tomlinson (1994) and; Tomlinson (1983) <sup>6</sup> See for example: Duke and Crolley, 1996; Lopez (1997); Newsham (1997); Scraton et al., (1996) and; Williams and Woodhouse (1991).

<sup>7</sup> See for example: Duke and Crolley, 1996; Lopez (1997); Newsham (1997); Scraton et al., (1996) and; Williams and Woodhouse (1991).

strength of the thesis. This prioritising of the empirical findings to drive the theoretical debates is particularly significant to the application of poststructuralist theory to the research findings. Such an application is unique within sports studies. In short, through an engagement with the lived experiences of the women on a micro-social level I offer an analysis that seeks to diminish the dependence on rigid categories of gender and sexuality by deconstructing them.

Feminism in its many forms has played a significant part in shaping our understanding of gender and women's sexuality. Since the 1980s the feminist intervention in the sociology of sport has exposed the power relations of gender within sporting context. In particular, Liberal feminists have fought hard for equity and inclusion through legal and social reform; and critical sports feminists have exposed the ideological functioning of patriarchy, sexism and male/masculine hegemony in sport. Both feminist activism and academic critique have to some extent eroded the structural, ideological and material constraints facing women in sport. This is evidenced in women's, now legitimate, participation in sports previously considered male preserves.<sup>8</sup> For example, large numbers of women in this country are actively involved in football and rugby. Here I document the experiences of women playing a sport traditionally viewed as the preserve of white working-class men and boys. This construct impacts on the women's experiences, and yet the research findings indicate that the women taking part in the research are willing and able to 'play on'. Through a critical feminist analysis, I expose the functioning of gender relations and sexual relations, as well as the power relations of 'race', ethnicity, and class. I highlight the many ways in which the women experience playing football. Thus I provide an original contribution to the existing body of feminist knowledge on women's experience of sport.

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<sup>8</sup> There is evidence that women have boxed (Hargreaves, 1997) and played football (Parratt, 1989) in the past but not to the same extent as the present.

Women's participation in sport and in particular traditional 'male sports', should not be discussed solely in relation to notions of homogeneity and grand theories of oppression. A corollary of the improvements in access and opportunity for women to participate in sport is the further development of sport social theory. As mentioned earlier, I advocate a feminist poststructuralist approach to the study of sport. According to Butler and Scott (1992), poststructuralist theories are;

[U]seful to the extent that they generate analyses, critiques, and political interventions, and open up a political imaginary for feminism that points the way beyond some of the impasses by which it has been constrained (p. xiii).

This thesis maps and highlights some of the emerging theoretical debates within social theory in relation to feminist structuralism and feminist poststructuralism. In particular it engages with the work by Judith Butler. Some sport feminists have adopted a Foucauldian approach to the analysis of women's experience of sport,<sup>9</sup> and yet there is little evidence of a Butlerian approach. Here I provide an original analysis of sport, and gender and sexuality by engaging with some of Butler's (1990, 1993a) theoretical concepts, for example: heterosexual hegemony; the citation of gender and the process of 'girling the girl'; abject bodies and sex as discursive.

Important theoretical debates run the course of this thesis. The feminist engagement with standpoint theory and poststructuralism is accompanied by a problematising of the sex/gender distinction and the structure/agency and essentialist/constructionist dimensions. Gender theory is central to the account. Through an exploration of existing feminist theory on gender (chapter two), I introduce the feminist poststructuralist critique of the sex/gender distinction. This critique emerges as most significant to the deconstruction of sexuality and the sexed body in the final two analysis chapters (seven and eight). In chapter two and three I discuss notions of essentialism and universalism in relation to

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<sup>9</sup> See for example: Duncan (1994), Rail and Harvey (1995), and Veri (1999).

sexuality and feminist epistemology. This discussion reflects an engagement with the feminist debates surrounding identity politics and experiential diversity. I do not focus on, or resolve the constructionist/essentialist debate here, however I do adopt a social constructionist reading of gender and sexuality. In addition, and through the research material, I offer an argument to support an approach that insists on the social construction of the sexed body.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, I engage with notions of structure and agency. I problematise the structure/agency dimension and through a poststructuralist interpretation of power I adopt a Butlerian/Foucauldian approach to understanding the functioning of gender and sexuality.

This problematising of key theoretical concepts is central to the poststructuralist position I adopt. In particular, I provide a discursive theoretical analysis by refusing to accept structure/agency and constructionism/essentialism as stable binary opposites. My deployment of poststructuralist theory is reflected in this critique of binary logic. Such an approach is relatively 'new' to our understanding of women and sport.

Not all of the ideas presented in this thesis are entirely consummated. The research and accompanying analysis raises important issues for study and I discuss further and future research in the final chapter. My own conceptual development is apparent during the course of the thesis and I reflect on this more thoroughly through a return to a personal account in chapter nine. More specifically, in chapter four I use reflexivity to demonstrate how my location as a researcher has affected the process of knowledge production this thesis represents. The research is inductive and the findings drive the theoretical debates considered. The empirical material reflects the everyday lived experiences of the marginalised in a contemporary sporting context. Finally, in considering women's experiential diversity as it relates to football I focus on

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<sup>10</sup> That said, I remain aware of the blurred boundaries that exist between essentialist and anti-essentialist theoretical positions (Fuss, 1989).



the women's personal narrative. Such an approach is axiomatic to feminist politics.

### **Aim of the research.**

To explore and document the everyday lived experiences of women who play football and to analyse the functioning of gender and sexuality within football culture in England and Wales.

### **Objectives:**

- To contribute original empirical material to the sociology of sport on the social construction of gender, sexuality and the sexed body within football culture in England and Wales.
- To contextualise the research in relation to the feminist debates surrounding the production of knowledge.
- To document and explore the women's different experiences of playing.
- To establish football as normal and routine for the women taking part in the research.
- To demonstrate how power functions within the gender relations matrix for the women taking part in the research.
- To expose the functioning of hegemonic heterosexuality and the challenges to 'compulsory heterosexuality' within football contexts through a consideration of the intricacies and complexities of socially constructed sexuality.
- To highlight how the body as it is discursively produced and reproduced is positioned as central to our understanding of gender and sexuality.

### **Research questions.**

- What is the position of football in the lives of women who play?

- How central is gender to the experience of women footballers?
- How do issues surrounding sexuality impact on women who play football?
- In what ways do gender and sexuality function together within football culture?
- How can both gender and sexuality be theorised within the cultural arena of football?

### **Structure of the thesis.**

In writing this thesis I offer an account that begins with a review of existing theoretical approaches and literature relevant to sport, gender and sexuality. This review addresses key aspects of sport's sociology, as well as gender theory and sexual politics. In chapter three, I detail the key debates within feminist epistemology and methodology. This is followed by a discussion on the methodological issues specific to this thesis. The research findings appear in four separate, but inter-related analysis chapters. This material is organised in accordance with the five research questions outlined above. In all, I attempt a cross-disciplinary approach. Although this sometimes makes it difficult to pursue a particular focus, the enduring theme in this thesis is gender and how it impacts on the women players.

Chapter two offers an overview of some of the key theoretical shifts in the sociology of sport. I explore the contributions made by structuralist and poststructuralist writers with a specific focus on a feminist analysis. My account of women who play football is informed by this existing theory. The chapter problematises the concept of the sex/gender distinction and focuses on the social construction of gender and sexuality. The sexed body as it is located within sports culture is also considered within this chapter. During the course of the thesis, the sexed body has emerged as significant to an understanding of gender and sexuality. In the final analysis chapter I argue for an exploration of our understanding of the sexed body in order to offer a new way to theorise gender and sexuality.

Chapter three starts by establishing knowledge production as a feminist political issue. Through a discussion on women's experience, women's ways of knowing and women's knowledge I identify, define and problematise 'feminist epistemology'. In relation to women who play football, I argue for a feminist contribution to knowledge production and explore the ways women's experience can be used to challenge existing knowledge claims. During this discussion I consider the value of both standpoint theory and situated knowledge as a way to offer a feminist epistemology of the marginalised.

In chapter four I engage with the methodological issues relevant to this project and I consider the strengths and weaknesses of the research methodology. I advocate the significance of a critically reflexive approach to understanding power within the research process and highlight how my position as a researcher impacts on the production of knowledge. I argue that the power relations are not fixed and move beyond the researched-researcher couplet.

Chapters five, six, seven and eight offer discussion and analysis of the research material. I draw upon the empirical and anecdotal findings and discuss key issues in relation to the theoretical debate set out in chapters two, three and four. In chapter five I engage with the first research question. I expose the existing theory on football as male centric and document the centrality of football in the women's lives. I highlight the women's ongoing active involvement in the game through a consideration of their childhood experiences and the use of informal spaces to play. The consideration of existing literature and critique of footballing epistemologies as male centric and the inclusion of the women's experiences of regular participation illustrate the importance of feminist standpoint theory in the production of new knowledge. That is, I make visible previously ignored or omitted accounts of women's experiences of playing. At the same time the chapter demonstrates how the women actively fashion their participation in the game and the various practices they adopt in order to play.

Chapter six seeks to address the second research question. I discuss and analyse the impact of gender relations on the women's opportunity and access to football. Through a consideration of power as circulatory and exercised I offer a poststructuralist interpretation of the women's experiences. Moreover, I expose the complexity of power relations through a consideration of the material, social and discursive practices that impact on the women's experiences of participation. In particular, I expose the operation of disciplinary power within 'schooling' and on the 'football fields'. I use the term 'schooling' to offer an analysis of the education process. And 'football fields' refers to a range of formal sites where gender relations effect the women's participation. In addition this chapter continues to open the way for a consideration of 'race', ethnicity, class and sexuality through a consideration of some of the women's located accounts. The emphasis on the women's location within the network of social relations seeks to expose the women's experiential diversity. This focus supports the production of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991). I continue this epistemological approach to knowledge production in chapter seven by highlighting how the intricate functioning of sexual relations impacts on the individual women. I illustrate how sexuality is socially constructed within a matrix that favours heterosexuality and show how heterosexuality is protected and reinforced. In addition, I expose the challenges to this arrangement within football contexts. In this way I highlight the practices that regulate footballing sexualities and address the third research question.

Finally, chapter eight continues to explore gender and sexuality. Here I engage with the fourth and fifth research questions. Through a review of the research findings, I show how sexuality is collapsed into our understanding of gender. This discussion reflects a theoretical engagement with corporeality and offers an analysis that contemplates the social construction of the sexed body.

Chapter nine concludes this thesis by summarising the empirical, epistemological and methodological, and theoretical contributions that the research has made to an understanding of the everyday lived experiences of

women who play football. I reflect on my own journey through the research process and consider future directions for further research and footballing sites/sights for theoretical engagement.

## **Chapter Two.**

### **Review of theoretical approaches and research.**

#### **Introduction.**

Having decided that the cultural arena of women's football offers a fascinating site for the exploration of the functioning of gender and sexuality, I want to assess published material that considers sport, leisure, women, gender and sexuality. Although the research topic of this thesis focuses on women who play football and this places the study within the sociology of sport, I am aware that some women players define their participation in football as active leisure. Therefore, there is some reference to previous literature within leisure studies. In addition, the emphasis on both gender and sexuality also shifts the work into other social science fields, for instance feminist studies, gender studies, lesbian studies and queer studies. This inclusion of other disciplines inevitably means a review of literature which is not always specifically concerned with sport. This chapter offers a cross-disciplinary approach to the study of women who play football. An academically rigorous exploration of the literature linking sport, women, gender and sexuality will not only establish the existing body of knowledge, it also offers an analysis that can be used to recognise the boundaries and gaps that emerge. Thus, positioning this project in relation to the existing material *and* illuminating its intended originality.

This review of theoretical approaches and research begins by offering an overview of the existing material within the sociology of sport and leisure, and shows how a focus on women has developed. It provides the context for the in-depth discussions that take place in the analysis chapters. The review includes a consideration of feminist work on women's active involvement in sport and leisure. In particular, the critical feminist engagement with gender relations and the functioning of masculinity and femininity. Within sports sociology,

this theorising continues apace. In addition to this work, there exists a relatively small but increasing number of feminists whose analysis moves beyond gender per se and incorporate class, 'race' and ethnicity, and sexuality as they function for women participating in sport. Some of this work is also considered in this chapter.

The first part of the review documents the corollary of the feminist intervention in the sociology of sport and leisure, namely a critical analysis of gender. This provides an introduction to issues that are further explored in chapters five and six. For example, I make visible the women's experiences of playing and explore processes that regulate this active involvement. During the review I demonstrate how gender is now being theorised by some feminists from a poststructuralist perspective and how such analysis is slowly beginning to emerge within the sport and leisure literature.<sup>11</sup>

Following on from the discussion on gender in this chapter I consider theories of sexuality focusing on the essentialist/constructionist debate. I explore more fully the complex relationship between gender and sexuality, and show how theories of gender have been collapsed into theories of sexuality. This is evident in the analysis and discussion offered in chapter seven. In addition, this review introduces some of the existing work within sport and leisure on sexuality.

Paradoxically, by considering gender and sexuality separately, I offer an introduction to their complex inter-relationship. I develop discussion on their inter-relationship in detail when I focus on issues surrounding corporeality and women's footballing bodies in chapter eight. These issues have received limited scrutiny within the sports sociological literature.<sup>12</sup> Here I offer an in-depth contribution to this existing literature.

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<sup>11</sup> For example see Sykes, H. (1996) 'Constr(i)(u)cting lesbian identities in physical education : Feminist and poststructural approaches to researching sexuality', *Quest* Vol.48 : pp.459-469.

<sup>12</sup> For example see Cahn, S. (1994) *Coming on strong. Gender and sexuality in twentieth-century women's sport*. London : Harvard University Press.

It is not possible to establish which academic component of the review is most relevant to this project, or which can be positioned as central. All are of significance. It is the synthesis of these bodies of knowledge that contributes to the originality of this study. The following discussion on existing theoretical approaches and research intends to offer an analysis of how sport, gender and sexuality are linked and how they can be further connected through an analysis of 'women who play football'. In all, the review considers the theoretical boundaries of existing material and reveals the theoretical gaps this study intends to fill.

### **The sociology of sport and leisure.**

I argue that an overview of the growth and development of social theory as it relates to sport and leisure is important in order to appreciate the contemporary dialogue between structuralist and poststructuralist accounts. Here I offer a deliberately truncated version of the significant theoretical shifts.

Ann Hall (1990) suggests the first major theoretical paradigm influencing the sociology of sport in North America was positivist. She identifies the middle of the 1960s as the period when this approach was most popular. Positivism adopts a 'scientific' approach to the study of the social world, in particular deductive theoretical systems.

Within this view, society, and by implication sport, is best studied using a systems model whereby each interrelated part is seen as somehow contributing to the smooth operation of the whole (Hall, 1990, p:228).

This positivist approach lends itself to a functionalist interpretation of society. It is argued (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994) that research into sport and leisure during the late 1960s and early 1970s was greatly influenced by 'functionalist concerns and methodological assumptions' (p:5). That is, research focused on



how sport and leisure served to maintain the status quo via consensus and shared values and beliefs. Within this research agenda, research questions relate to social structure, social organisation and social order. Typically, sport and leisure are analysed by considering how they “fit” into social life and how they contribute to the stability and social progress of a community (Coakley, 1994). In other words there is no critical analysis as to why certain social groups fulfil or perform certain social roles. Such a short fall opened the way for the application of a more critical analysis of sport and leisure. For example, Marxist analysis developed as a means to account for the conflicting interests of various groups. Brohm (1976) offers an example of a Marxist interpretation of sport here;

Apart from the act of labour, the dominant and fundamental way man [sic] relates to his body in state capitalist society is through sport - inasmuch as it is through the model of sport that the body is understood in practice, collectively hallucinated, fantasised, imagined and individually experienced as an object, an instrument, a technical means to an end, a reified factor of output and productivity, in short, as a machine with the job of producing the maximum work and energy (p: 5).

The emphasis on productivity evident in the work of Brohm (1976) positions sport and leisure as a tool of oppression. In sharp contrast to the functionalist accounts, sport and leisure are used to exploit and coerce the less powerful. Gruneau (1993) describes the analysis given by Brohm as representative of the theories of sport and leisure offered by ‘radical’ Western scholars drawing from German ‘critical theory’ (p: 93). Jarvie and Maguire (1994) identify this work as Classical Marxism. Such analysis sought to provide a ‘materialist understanding of the development of sport and leisure’ and offer a ‘critique of sport and leisure under capitalism’ (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994, p: 104). However, this type of analysis focuses exclusively on class and fails to consider other relations of power such as those based on ethnicity, gender and sexuality. As Gruneau (1993) pithily points out, ‘the problem was that modern sport seemed to involve aspects of domination that existed independently of capital and class’ (p: 94).

Jennifer Hargreaves (1994) in her analysis of neo Marxist approaches, structuralist Marxism and cultural Marxism outlines the nuances apparent in the Marxist analysis of sport and leisure. In particular, she identifies the determinism evident in the economic and reproductive theories of the first two approaches. In response to the focus on economic and political structures, and the apparent lack of consideration of human agency and cultural processes, some Marxists turned to the work of Antonio Gramsci and his notion of hegemony. Indeed, theories of hegemony developed as central to cultural Marxist perspectives. Hegemonic theory describes the ways in which the dominant class or group achieves consensus through controlling the cultural, ideological and institutional construction of common sense beliefs. Within this cultural Marxist analysis, domination by those in power is seen as persuasive as opposed to forceful or coercive. Jennifer Hargreaves (1994) considers the Marxist shift in emphasis to a more cultural reading of power, as an 'attempt to explain the complexities of the relationship between freedom and constraint' (p:22). John Hargreaves (1986) argues for the acknowledgement that sport and leisure 'as an element in culture' represents a site where manipulation and control (false consciousness) coexist with resistance (consciousness). Jarvis and Maguire (1994) capture this idea of cultural resistance and domination in their chapter aptly entitled 'Culture as a war of position and a way of life'.

This turn to cultural Marxism reflects the influence of a developing 'cultural studies', in particular the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies during the 1980s (Hall, 1990). Ann Hall (1996) views the introduction of a more cultural analysis of sport and leisure as an attempt to move beyond the existing monocausal class analysis. This challenge to the analytical reliance on structural oppression and constraint, as is evidenced in the grand theories of both functionalism and classical Marxism, represents the emergence of notions of agency. Gruneau (1993) argues that 'it was necessary to develop a more adequate understanding of human agency' (p: 96) because as Hall (1990) notes, sport and leisure are 'forms of cultural production and as

such they are creations of human agency, able to be transformed' (p: 211). This shift in emphasis to culture and agency is important and significant. It represents the initial move from the social to the cultural and the further development of the structure-agency dimension within the sociology of sport and leisure.

This new focus on human agency allowed a move beyond not only a class analysis of sport and leisure, but also an engagement with the concept agency. Structuralists keen to embrace processes of resistance and empowerment, rely on the structure/agency dichotomy to help explain individual freedom and choice, thus contesting absolute oppression and control. Such an approach is evidenced in feminist work on empowerment and women's involvement in sport and leisure (Gilroy, 1989; Jones, 199; Wearing, 1996). Here agency is the resistance to structures of control and women are viewed as viable subjects vested with the power to determine individual action. Moreover, power is appropriated by individuals to contest, destabilize and transform the restrictions imposed by social institutions and practices.

For poststructuralists power is interpreted as exercised and not possessed (Foucault, 1975). As a result, notions of freedom and constraint lose their demarcation and power relations are viewed as constantly in tension. Individual action is regulated and disciplined (Foucault, 1975), and exists within a particular power matrix or power regime (Butler, 1993a). In chapters six and seven I explore the dynamic functioning of power within gender and sexual relations. And in chapter eight I continue to pursue a poststructuralist interpretation of power when I offer an analysis of corporeality. This discussion engages explicitly with bodily sites as expressions of inter-related freedom *and* constraint, and implicitly with corporeal "agency". In short, poststructuralists posit notions of shifting power, and the importance of the local and the specific. In this way grand theory and meta-narrative are rejected. Poststructuralist accounts challenge the structuralist notion of pure freedom of choice. For instance whilst some poststructuralists accept notions of resistance

they contend absolute freedom. For example, and in relation to corporeal “agency”, the body ‘is figured as a surface and the scene of a cultural inscription’ (Butler, 1990, p. 129). That is the body is never free from social and cultural markings, thus freedom and constraint are not independent.

To return to issues surrounding gender, the feminist intervention in the field developed after these initial shifts in sports social theory. For instance, the early tenets of second wave feminist political thought; socialist, liberal and radical were not immediately evident within the theorising on women’s experiences of sport and leisure. The application of a feminist analysis to sport and leisure occurred sometime after the emergence of second wave feminist politics (late 1960s). Jennifer Hargreaves (1994) believes this delay in feminist interest in sport and leisure reflects the initial legal and political thrust of the ‘women’s movement’, ‘rather than on cultural issues such as sports and leisure’ (p.25). The idea that feminist political thought developed a cultural interest later in the early 1980s, thus impacting on the work within sport and leisure, fits with the notion that the cultural studies influence occurred in the mid to late 1980s. It is this backdrop that contextualises the theoretical debates presented in this thesis

### **Feminism and the sociology of sport and leisure.**

Commentators view the late 1970s and early 1980s as the time when feminism really began to influence the sociology of sport and leisure in the UK (Hall, 1990; Henderson, 1990; Therberge and Birrell, 1994). Jennifer Hargreaves (1994) describes the intervention as taking place in two stages. She identifies North America, and sport per se, as the site where the movement first established itself in the 1970s. Secondly, during the 1980s when the movement gained momentum in the UK, here the focus was on leisure (p.23). The theorising *on* women involved in sport and leisure, *by* women sociologists during this era adopts one of two basic approaches:

a) inequality as a result of ‘sex role’ socialisation and stereotyping.

b) inequality as a result of relations of power and subordination.

The first approach fits within a functionalist paradigm i.e. notions of role, and is largely redundant in contemporary research and theory. However, the focus on relations of power continues to provide an important starting place for research on women's experiences of sport and leisure.

The early feminist writing on women and sport tended to focus on 'sex role' and 'role theory' (Day, 1990). Within this approach 'male role' and 'female role' are viewed as 'different but equal'. This analysis merges with liberal feminist political thought in its acknowledgement of the unique aspects of women and the politics of entitlement. Karla Henderson (1990) claims that the 'majority of studies of leisure which connote a feminist perspective have alluded to a liberal view' (p.234). For instance, in North America, Nancy Therberge and Susan Birrell (1994) believe the prominent research within the work on 'sex roles' was research on 'role conflict'. 'Role conflict' theory suggests that contradictions between femininity and athleticism are sufficiently extreme to prevent women from participating. Those women who do resolve this conflict and decide to participate enter into a strategy of hyper femininity whereby they make use of markers of femininity such as makeup, clothing, boyfriends, husbands, to symbolically 'apologise for their involvement'. In addition 'sex roles' serve to confine and contain women within 'feminine appropriate' sports, for example tennis, gymnastics and swimming. 'Role theory' can be seen to position women's involvement in physical activity in relation to men's involvement. In 'role theory' men's relationship to sport, and 'masculine appropriate' sports are considered as the norm whereas women's involvement is viewed to deviate and is positioned as the 'other'. In this approach sport's ideology is not critiqued, it is women who are seen as the 'problem'. In addition there is no critical engagement with the concept sexual differences and the constructs 'men's sport' and 'women's sport'. The research

starts from a male model of sport and adds women to this existing model.<sup>13</sup> In a similar way, Liberal feminists work with the *existing* structures of provision and policy. Sandra Harding (1987) describes this type of feminist research as 'feminist empiricism'. Although the research is on, and by women and in this sense feminist, the results add to the existing framework of knowledge (epistemology) which is malecentric. Christine Di Stefano (1990) argues that,

Feminist empiricism corresponds quite neatly with rationalism. It identifies sexism and androcentrism as *social biases* which are correctable by stricter adherence to the existing norms of scientific inquiry. (p. 73).

Within the field of leisure studies in the UK, Rosemary Deem (1986) refers to four sociological approaches to leisure. She is critical of theory she believes had the initial influence within the field; the 'leisure studies' perspective. This analysis positions leisure 'as though it were a male or unisex phenomenon' (p:8). This is similar to the maxim providing the foundation for the work on 'sex roles' and 'role conflict'. Sue McIntosh (1981), through her feminist critique of Stanley Parker's (1976) time and activity dimensions, challenges Parker on this premise. She shows how early concepts of leisure and definitions of leisure do not apply to women, thus rendering the analysis as male theory. The second approach, 'leisure and capitalism', goes some way towards a more theoretical and critical analysis, however it *still* 'starts with the 'male as norm' premise' (p:10). 'The non-feminist perspective on women's lifestyles' offers a similar analysis to the work in the USA. Within such a research approach women are visible, however the focus is descriptive and not critical. Finally the intervention of feminist critique is evident in the 'feminist perspective'. In the mid 1980s, this perspective was in its infancy and the early work of Green, Hebron and Woodward (1985), Dixey and Talbot (1982) and Deem's own work (1986) are cited as feminist. In a later piece, Deem (1995) suggests that;

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<sup>13</sup> During the course of the thesis I take up this point more fully. I challenge the notion of a sex/gender distinction and contest sexual difference through an engagement with the practices and discourses that socially construct and regulate the sexed body.

Almost all the work on the history of leisure has concerned itself with how men have spent their leisure time and what connections there have been between that and their main form of work or employment (p:256).

One implication of this male centred analysis has been a lack of regard for women's involvement in leisure activities and a complete oversight of what constitutes 'work'. Theory based on this kind of research practice ignores, omits and distorts the experiences of women. Ann Oakley (1981) refers to the 'sociological invisibility of women' and her work with housewives and mothers during the 1970s offered a feminist challenge to the existing sexist practices within sociology. The struggle to position domestic labour within the definition 'work' not only deflated the valorised position of men's work, it also affected the debates within the sociology of leisure. Jennifer Hargreaves (1989) applies a similar critique to leisure and sport theory, arguing that since most analyses have been produced 'by men and are predominantly about *male* leisure and *male* sport (...) women in them have been marginalised or even rendered invisible' (pp. 131). This point is particularly relevant to an analysis of the existing literature on football and in chapter five I critique the existing knowledge we have on football as male centred theory. I adopt a feminist standpoint methodology to make visible women's involvement and experiences of football.

Rosemary Deem (1995) suggests leisure for 'many women is different from that experienced by most men' (p.257). She believes it is the feminist analysis of the impact of men and children on women's leisure and the exploration of issues surrounding [hetero] sexuality, which have challenged the conventional notions of leisure. In other words, the concept leisure derived from a male interpretation of men's experience. The documentation of women's experiences challenges this construct. Deem argues (1995) that work by feminist writers (Deem, 1986; Fasting, 1990; Green, Hebron and Woodward, 1990; Scraton, 1986; Wimbush and Talbot, 1988) has exposed the gendered ideological construct of leisure. This work has not added to the existing body

of knowledge. Instead it has contributed new knowledge through an engagement with feminist standpoint methodology. This new knowledge makes visible women's experiences in relation to leisure and positions the construct leisure as the 'problem'.<sup>14</sup>

The challenge to, and analysis of, how leisure has been defined moves feminist research away from 'feminist empiricism' and existing epistemological frameworks, and shifts it towards Harding's (1987) second research position identified as 'feminist standpoint'. This position implies that there are specific feminist ways of knowing, which challenge dominant epistemologies. In short, it is standpoint theory that places the experiences and perspectives of oppressed groups at the core of enquiry. Later in this thesis I engage with the concept feminist standpoint. I identify and define standpoint theory in detail in chapter three. In chapter five I highlight the value of standpoint theory through a documentation of the women's experiences of playing. However, I have also problematised standpoint theory and critiqued its universal and hierarchical characteristics.

The idea of a shift from 'feminist empiricism' to 'feminist standpoint' suggests clear boundaries in the literature. However this is not the case. Commentators, such as Dewar (1991) and Hall (1996), have described the change of emphasis in a slightly different way, they refer to categoric, distributive and relational research, thus identifying three levels of analysis. Firstly, 'categoric' which focuses on 'quantifying and empirically studying' differences in performance and ability based on sex differences. Secondly, 'distributive' which examines resource distribution and opportunity/access. Thirdly, 'relational' which analyses sport/leisure as an historic, sociocultural construct, 'defined to serve the needs of powerful groups in society' and concentrates on the experiences of individuals (p:11). The first two positions fail to consider a critical analysis of power. Yevonne Smith (1992) is disapproving of such a shortfall. She

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<sup>14</sup> In this thesis I document the women's experiences of playing. Through an analysis of this material I offer new knowledge that challenges existing footballing epistemologies.



illustrates the limited analysis offered when discussing women of “color” and sport, and identifies the need for an analysis of social structures and power relations as they relate to ‘race’ and ethnicity as well as gender. The third approach confronts power relations and explores both structure and agency. For Smith (1992) the inclusion of agency represents an analysis from the perspective of the individual and this is particularly relevant;

[Relational research] focuses on how women of color make sense of their own experiences and what strategies they employ as a result of their awareness of the power relations produced in society and sport. Relational research values social realities and personal and cultural experiences. (p:244)

A relational approach provides a critical interpretation of issues surrounding gender and gender relations as they relate to women’s experience of sport and leisure. During the course of this thesis I make use of standpoint theory as a relational approach to exposing the gender and sexual relations in football. The majority of existing literature on women’s position within sport reflects this theoretical approach. Therefore, I offer an original contribution to existing feminist sporting epistemologies.

As the above discussion indicates the feminist intervention in the sociology of sport occurred over time and ‘the 1990s mark a period of developing theoretical sophistication in feminist sports sociology’ (Hargreaves, 1994, p: 25-26). By starting analysis from the standpoint of women, research has recognised gender as a fundamental category of analysis. However, this ‘developing theoretical sophistication’ has not been free of critical appraisal. Recent debate within feminist research and thought has challenged the implications of a ‘feminist standpoint’. Standpoint theory, when applied to the cultural, economic, political and social position of women, tends to assume a unitary category “woman”. Early feminist debates engaging with notions of patriarchy have at times positioned women as a ‘class’. Such a perspective has been criticised for universalising women’s experiences. Alison Dewar (1993)

has been critical of the way standpoint theory has been used in sport to suggest 'the existence of "generic women" with generic experiences of oppression in sport' (p:220). She is unsure of the way forward, but accepts some feminist scholars have turned to the notion of 'feminist postmodernism' as a way to theorise the multiple subjectivities and pluralities evident within women's sport and leisure experience. These feminist epistemological and methodological debates are highlighted in chapter three. In particular, I offer a discussion on situated knowledges and poststructuralist epistemologies. In chapters six, seven and eight I demonstrate the value of a feminist poststructuralist approach to understanding gender and sexuality within football contexts. In this way I make use of feminist poststructuralism as a methodological and epistemological tool to construct knowledge.

In summary, the increasing feminist intervention in the sociology of sport and leisure over the last 25 years, has shifted the emphasis of study away from women and sport and leisure to a more sophisticated critique of issues surrounding gender relations.<sup>15</sup> Karla Henderson (1991 and 1994) identifies this change in focus when she tracks leisure research from the late 1960s to the present. She claims the following five stages reflect the form of scholarly activity: invisible (womanless) scholarship; compensatory (add women and stir) scholarship; dichotomous (sex) differences scholarship; feminist (women-centered) scholarship; and gender scholarship. More recently, there has been an acknowledgement of the significance of the intersections gender has with 'race' and ethnicity (Scruton and Watson, 1998; Smith, 1992) and sexuality (Cahn, 1994; Clarke, 1997; Griffin, 1998; Sykes, 1996). As yet it is unclear as to whether these 'new' issues indicate a further refining of feminist standpoint theory or a shift towards Harding's (1993) notion of 'feminist postmodern epistemology'.

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<sup>15</sup> As mentioned earlier, Deem (1986) identifies four stages to this shift in leisure studies; leisure studies, leisure and capital, non-feminist perspective and feminist perspective. Dewar (1991) and Hall (1996) refer to categoric, distributive and relational as a way to distinguish the work in sports studies.

This thesis offers a contribution to these prevailing theoretical developments. In the first instance it demonstrates the value of feminist standpoint epistemology. Through an analysis of the empirical material I make visible the women's everyday experiences of playing thus chapter five provides previously omitted accounts. I move on to extend existing theoretical developments by engaging with feminist poststructuralism. Through a rigorous interrogate of gender and sexuality in chapters six, seven and eight I demonstrate the value of feminist poststructuralism. Thus indicating a shift into a new theoretical dimension – feminist poststructuralism. My use of feminist poststructuralism as opposed to feminist postmodernism reflects my belief that poststructuralist theory has more to offer this research project in relation to an excavation of the social construction of gender and sexuality.<sup>16</sup>

### **Feminist methodologies in the field of sport and leisure.**

Literature has emerged in the UK that brings together feminist political thought and the research process as it relates specifically to women and sport.<sup>17</sup> This shift towards a feminist research culture within sport and leisure reflects the impact of the emergence of a distinctly feminist methodology. The debates within feminist methodology not only reflect the feminist critique of existing research practice and method but also scrutinise the epistemological and ontological dimensions of the research process. Although this concern with method and methodology is apparent within sport and leisure research, the specific focus on the epistemological and ontological debates is not evident to the same extent as within 'mainstream' feminism. For example, research that considers feminist methodology (Grace, 1997; Scraton, 1997; Sky 1994) and feminist method (Flintoff, 1997; Humberstone, 1997) as it relates to sport and

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<sup>16</sup> For example Foucault's work (1976, 1984a, 1984b) on the history of sexualities and Butler's work (1990, 1993a, 1993b) on gender. Both are prominent poststructuralists commenting on the construction of gender and sexuality.

<sup>17</sup> Clarke, G. and Humberstone, B. (eds)(1997) *Researching women and sport*. London: Macmillan.

leisure, represents a body of literature that tends to focus on the research process. Away from this genre there is limited material within sport and leisure that explores the philosophical debates surrounding epistemological and ontological issues. Heather Sykes does however, in her analysis of lesbian identities in physical education, unpack the ontological issues surrounding the 'assumptions about lesbian identity' (1996; p: 460) and the discursive figure of "the closet" (1998). Later I engage with these points more fully; and I consider the epistemological and ontological issues as they relate to the production of knowledge on women's experience of gender within the context of football. In particular in chapter eight I address the final research question through a consideration of new ways to theorise the conflation of gender and sexuality. In this way I offer an original contribution to the feminist work on methodology within sports studies.

For some time now, feminists have attended to and been critical of existing research practices within the social sciences. For instance, Shulamit Reinharz (1983) has presented an argument that critiques 1970s social science research culture as conventional/patriarchal (p: 170-173).<sup>18</sup> Mary Maynard (1994) has described the same research culture, as inaccurate, linear and atomistic. If we consider the research focus in sport and leisure during the 1970s, for example sex role theory, then Maynard's critique appears to be justified. That is, the work on women failed to take account of the social construction of gender and lacked a critical engagement with the construct 'sport'. This shortfall renders the work atomistic because only some aspects are considered. There is a lack of analysis that incorporates a broader critical and relational approach to gender.

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<sup>18</sup> Ann Oakley (1981), Angela McRobbie (1982) and Renate Klein (1983), to name a few, support this critique, arguing that the quest to validate and legitimise research findings has led to what can be described as a non-feminist, sanitised approach which distorts, ignores and omits women's experience of the social world.

The application of Maynard's critique of 1970s research culture to the early work on women and sport demonstrates a critique of research, which has been positioned as 'feminist'. As feminist political thought has developed there has been an accompanying expansion in feminist theorising of the research process and 'ways of finding out'. Brenda Grace (1997) refers to the tensions between and within the various feminist perspectives and she believes this dialogue reflects 'the increasing willingness of feminists to critically engage with their own theory and practice' (p.21). Feminist empiricism has been critiqued for maintaining a positivist base and not challenging notions of social realism (Grace, 1997). In this sense feminist empiricism can be positioned within Reinharz's (1983) 'conventional research'. By adhering to the criteria of 'objectivity' the research is "context stripping" (Reinharz, 1983:p.166), and the reported findings serve to devalue the experiences of the researched. Here objectivity is critiqued as fallacy since the reported findings are viewed as wrong or false. In addition, the research is not "situation embedded" (p:169). In contrast feminist standpoint theory focuses on the importance of social location. For example, the work by Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1983) on feminist praxis supports the feminist adage 'the personal is political'. By advocating that the lived experiences of women be positioned as central and linking the personal to the political, Stanley and Wise explore the social, economic and political contexts. Therefore, women's experience is importantly located in relation to 'their position as a less powerful social group than men' (Grace, 1997: p22). In short, feminist standpoint theory attempts to 'see' things in context. Barbara Du Bois (1983) supports such an approach by positing the need to 'understand and explain our eventful, complex reality within and as part of its matrix' (p: 111). Grace (1997) concludes that 'standpoint epistemology operates from the assumption that material conditions shape and limit an individual's understanding of life' (p.22).

As the debates within feminist methodology have developed, there has been an accompanying focus on the representiveness of feminist standpoint epistemology (I continue to engage with this debate in the next chapter). For

example, some of the early feminist work on women and leisure in the UK (Deem, 1986 and 1987; Wimbush and Talbot, 1988), almost exclusively documents the experiences of white, heterosexual women and can be criticised for not representing the experiences of lesbians and black women. In this instance feminist standpoint theory can be criticised for offering 'unidimensional notions and categories of oppression' (Dewar, 1993: p. 212). Alison Dewar (1993) is very clear about the dangers and risks surrounding the theorising of 'woman's' oppression and by implication research from a feminist standpoint.

There has been a tendency to put dominant groups within feminism at the centre and begin analyses from there. What I mean is that academic feminism has largely reflected the interests and experiences of white, middle class, anglophone, heterosexual, thin, able-bodied, and Christian-raised women. The hegemony of these dominant perspectives within academic feminism has helped to create and promote notions of an essential and generic "womanness" (p:212).

In short, Dewar (1993) suggests that much of the sports feminist research does not document the diverse voices of all women.

Feminist research in the field of sport and leisure in the UK (Clarke, 1997; Deem, 1986; Dixey and Talbot, 1982; Fletcher, 1984; Flintoff, 1997; Green, Hebron and Woodward, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994; Humberstone, 1997; Scraton, 1986 and 1997; Wimbush and Talbot, 1988) represents work that has spanned two decades. The engagement with feminist research politics during this period has shifted as debate surrounding what constitutes feminist research has grown and developed. As I have discussed earlier, the feminist work that reflects 'feminist empiricism' and 'feminist standpoint' theory can also be positioned alongside 'categoric', 'distributive' and 'relational' perspectives. It is standpoint theory and a relational approach to research, which appear to have contributed the most significant insights into women's experiences of sport and leisure to date. However, it is evident that oppression experienced by, for example, black women and lesbians, is not wholly gendered. The inclusion of

feminist research on women of “color” (Smith, 1992, Scraton and Watson, 1998) and lesbians (Cahn, 1994; Clarke, 1997; Dewar, 1993; Griffin, 1998; Lenskyj, 1986; Sykes, 1996) is indicative of the challenge to notions of an exclusively gendered standpoint and the gendering of relational approaches. Feminist work within sport and leisure now appears to be grappling with diversity and difference as they relate to the issue of gender. That said, the bulk of the work continues to position the notion of gender as fundamental with difference and diversity now being included. This ‘additive’ approach refines ‘feminist standpoint’ theory and remains very much positioned within a largely structuralist analysis. In contrast, work that challenges the very notion of gender as ‘base’ reflects a poststructuralist approach. To date the poststructuralist debates have not produced a substantial body of literature within feminist research on women’s experience of sport and leisure. This thesis represents an original engagement with feminist poststructuralism in the way it attends to women’s footballing bodies. More specifically, I explore the inter-relationships between structure and agency, and gender, sexuality and the sexed body.

### **Theories of gender.**

Simone de Beauvoir’s pioneering text ‘The second sex’ (1949) offers an analysis of womanhood, sex, and gender which works from the premise that ‘one is not born but rather becomes a woman’ (1972: p.295). De Beauvoir’s work is one of the most significant influences on “second wave” feminist thought on the sex/gender relation (Hughes and Witz, 1997). ‘The second sex’ articulates a theory that places gender as a social construct and social process, thus marking it distinct from sex. In addition, de Beauvoir’s challenge ‘categorically refuses the idea of a biological or anatomical “destiny” of any kind’ (Moi, 1994; p. 162). In other words, working from the premise that gender is socially constructed she questions the very notion of femininity. In de Beauvoir’s analysis she argues that women are constructed in relation to men, as the “Other”. That is, women are marked as feminine whereas men remain

‘unmarked’. However, masculinity within patriarchal society, is eulogised as a ‘disembodied universality’ (Butler, 1990: p.12). It is disembodied masculinity that constitutes patriarchy. This construct is achieved through the power structures of oppression whereby ‘women have been subjected to men economically, socially and politically’ (Hughes and Witz, 1997: p. 49). It is this analysis of the social construction of gender and the system of patriarchy that appears most prominently in early feminist political thought.<sup>19</sup>

The formulation of the sex/gender distinction, made popular by Ann Oakley (1972), developed alongside a critical feminist theory of gender characteristic of early 1970s structuralist theory. The feminist analysis of the sex/gender relation exposed the arrangement by which the sexed body, that is biological sex, receives a gender inscription. Theorising focused on how gender is culturally and socially constructed to mark women as feminine and men as masculine in a way that functions in favour of an overarching patriarchal system. The critical analysis of women’s position within society culminated in several theories of patriarchy. For instance, radical feminists tend to identify men and traits of masculinity as central to women’s oppression, whereas socialist feminists advocated a “dual systems” theory. Within this analysis, the social relations of the sex/gender distinction are positioned in relation to the structures of both patriarchy and capitalism. Despite the nuances, all approaches tend to theorise sex and gender as very much aligned. Gender is viewed as a social construct. However women and femininity, and men and masculinity, are viewed as synonymous. For example, some radical feminists demanded a celebration of woman-culture and fought for a ‘new’ pro-woman system. Influenced by the politics of Mary Daly’s work ‘Gyn/ecology: The metaethics of radical feminism’ (1978), Bonnie Beck’s (1980) work on sport reflects such radical feminist thought:

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<sup>19</sup> In chapter eight I return to the notion of a sex/gender distinction and demonstrate how the arrangement is collapsed through an engagement with notions of the lesbian body (Wittig, 1981) and butch body (Halberstam, 1998).



ManSport is a creature of the Patriarchy and as such reflects the dominant values of both patriarchy and capitalism. As such, ManSport is male-dominated and for-profit. WomanSport (there used to be such a thing, that is, play days, sports days, telegraph com-tests) was of WomanBorn and reflected a union of players, a striving for joy in the com-test well played, an activity for everyWoman and everyWoman in an activity. The question to be asked then is, "Does NowSport reflect the best of both ManSport and WomanSport?" The answer is no! I will show in this article how WomanSport has been co-opted by the Patriarchy and what the consequences of this are for Sister-Players (p:300).

The focus on the sex/gender distinction during the 1970s and 1980s within both feminism and sport and leisure sociology not only centred critical attention on patriarchy, it also allowed for an unpacking of gender relations. Issues surrounding control and domination, marginalisation, trivialisation and objectification have developed as important sites for theorising women's experience of sport.

For example, Lois Bryson (1987) believes the marginalisation and trivialisation of women's sport experience reflects the functioning of masculine hegemony. She suggests that sport as an institution, an ideology and a culture is embedded within patriarchy and serves, in the same way as 'business and employment' (p. 358), to subordinate women to men, hence maintaining the gender order. Similarly, Mariah Burton Nelson (1994), in her book *'The stronger women get the more men love football'* offers an extensive contribution to the project of elucidating the process of sexism in sport. Such accounts of women's experience of marginalisation and trivialisation illustrate the mechanisms of control and domination that underpin male hegemony in sport. In particular, the media is identified by both writers as patriarchal, sexist and an integral component of male hegemony.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> There is a significant amount of feminist work on the role of the media in relation to the production, reproduction and maintenance of gender relations and the gender order within sport, see for example Creedon, (1994); Duncan, (1993); Duncan and Hasbrook, (1988); and Halbert and Latimer, (1994).

Nancy Therberge (1985) claims the relationship between sport and leisure and gender relations is very clear, in particular 'sport as a male preserve has contributed to the oppression of women through the objectification and domination of their physicality and sexuality' (p.193). Bennett et al. (1987) also refer to the objectification of women when they stress that 'sport, play, and games are media for the dualistic social construction of female-as-object and for male as subject, as owner of himself' (p.370). Therberge's analysis of the process of gender differentiation focuses on the contribution sport makes to women's experience of inequality. Similarly, Susan Shaw (1994) demonstrates how leisure is both constrained and constraining for women. She illustrates how women's leisure is defined in relation to men's as the 'other' and how inequality is legitimised by way of "gender logic". Leisure as an activity perpetuates this relation as Shaw demonstrates 'it can be constraining through the reinforcement of traditional gender relations' (p.8). Ken Dempsey's study (1990) on leisure activities in a rural community continues to show how 'women are expected to use their domestic skills both privately and publicly to facilitate men's pursuit of glory and community status and to applaud their achievements' (p.35). Karla Henderson (1990) argues that this inequality in women's leisure experience, compared to men's, results from male privilege. Male domination and women's oppression are shown to be 'embodied in the inequality that exists in women's leisure lives when compared to the leisure lives of men' (p.236).

Such analyses of sport and leisure, and gender theoretically positions debate within feminist structuralism. Much has been achieved from theorising in this way, not least the illumination of the inequality and the asymmetry in sport and leisure experience apparent between women and men. However, the corollary of gender relational theory is a belief in sex difference. More recently, work has challenged the definitional underpinnings of both gender and sex, and by implication the sex/gender distinction and sex difference. Feminist poststructuralists offer this challenge.

Within the 'social sciences' generally, theoretical developments since the 1980s have been increasingly influenced by the work of Michel Foucault (1975, 1976, 1984a, 1984b) and an emerging poststructuralist interpretation of power. Gender analysis within sport and leisure studies remain largely unmarked by these theoretical shifts. That said, Cheryl Cole (1994) does discuss the impact of the work of Michel Foucault on feminist cultural studies and its application to sport and the corporeal within sport and leisure. Cole suggests the 'increasingly uneven and destabilized discursive formation structure around the problematic of gender' (p.7) can best be theorised from a position, which considers ontologies of sport, gender and the body. This poststructuralist feminist engagement within the sociology of sport as evidenced in Cole's work is relatively sparse.

The poststructuralist intervention in gender theory has shifted debate away from a relational to a discursive analysis. Within a discursive analysis the sex/gender distinction and relation are viewed as problematic (Hood-Williams, 1996; Hood-Williams and Harrison, 1998) and 'troubling' (Butler, 1990). Such a discursive approach often positions the body as a significant site for theorising <sup>21</sup> (Butler, 1993). This focus on the body is not entirely original. For example, the feminist focus on women's bodies has been central to a feminist politics of struggle for reproductive rights and against the objectification of women. For poststructuralist the body emerges as significant within theoretical debate on the social construction of gender, sexuality and sex. I explore this current theorising on the body in more detail in chapter eight, specifically in relation to the conflation of gender and sexuality within sport contexts.

In the meantime, work that focuses on gender from a poststructuralist perspective challenges the critical structuralist reading of gender evident within theories of patriarchy, the sex/gender distinction and sexual difference.

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<sup>21</sup> I adopt such an approach in chapters seven and eight.

Poststructuralist accounts of power destabilise and dislocate the structuralist centralising of grand theory. Poststructuralist cultural commentators have theorised configurations of power in a variety of ways, for example Bourdieu's *habitus* and Foucault's *panopticon*, and have worked from the local, everyday and ordinary. Here I focus on poststructuralist feminist readings of gender. In this instance, the emphasis within poststructuralist analysis is taken as the deconstruction of categories and its effect on ontologies of gender and the body as they relate to women and football. In particular, I refer to Judith Butler's (1990, 1992, 1993a, 1993b) work on corporeal style and gender as 'repeated stylisation of the body' (p.33). During this account of gender I also refer to her work on 'Bodies that matter' (1993a) and draw upon the notion of 'girling the girl'. However, 'bodies that matter' and abject bodies, are considered in more detail during reference to the masculine and feminine in sport below.

Butler (1990) sets out to challenge the feminist representation of women and the accompanying structuralist account of gender evident within feminist theoretical notions of the category 'woman'; the sex/gender distinction; and sex difference. She initiates this challenge by firstly accepting that; 'for feminist theory, the development of a language that fully or adequately represented women has seemed necessary to foster the political visibility of women' (p.1). Thus alluding to the significance of strategic essentialism and traditional standpoint theory. However, the 'trouble', according to Butler (1990), with adopting a strategy that essentialises and promotes an identity is that it is both representationally and ontologically flawed. She is not alone in her critique of feminist identity politics on the basis of representation. For instance, both bell hooks (1984) and Sara Ahmed (1998) offer strong arguments that critique and challenge second wave feminist theorising and concomitant notions of the category 'woman'. Moreover, Ahmed argues that '[b]y recognising that definitions of 'woman' are exclusive rather than inclusive, Black feminism challenges forms of essentialism embedded in the assumption that feminism simply speaks for all women' (p.90). In this way

Ahmed supports Butler's claim that strategy that essentialises identity is representationally flawed.

In addition to issues surrounding representation, Butler (1990) argues that there is a need to explore the ontological and engage with debate on what gender 'is'. This requires a philosophical enquiry, in particular a metaphysics of substance. For Butler (1990) existing ontologies of sex and gender evident within feminist politics only function within, and serve to perpetuate, the relational system. In a similar vein Ahmed (1998) claims that a stable notion of 'woman' ignores the policing of the boundaries that contain those inside and outside, thus 'the stability of woman is an effect of power relations, an effect of those who have the power to define' (p: 90). Previously feminists have positioned gender as a set of relations. Butler asks – 'Is the construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations?' (p: 5).

This relational or contextual point of view suggests that what the person "is", and, indeed, what gender "is", is always relative to the constructed gender relations in which it is determined. As a shifting and contextual phenomenon, gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations (Butler, 1990 : p.10).

In 'Gender Trouble', Butler starts her analysis with the concern for meaning and definition. This ontological theme runs the course of the text, however she shifts focus as she examines at length gender inscription and signification. In this sense, 'gender remains her category of analysis' (Hughes and Witz, 1997: p. 53). However, Butler's reading of gender is both complex and complicated. She theorises gender, 'as we know it today'; she challenges the anchoring of gender on the sexed body; and she questions the privileged positioning of the heterosexual matrix within which gender and the sexed body function. It would be impossible to offer a complete account of her work. Instead however, I will focus on her notion that *both* sex and gender are discursive, malleable and open to change, and how this challenges the seemingly obdurate marking

of women as feminine. This line of focus is most relevant to the discussions I engage with later in the thesis.

Sex, as in the sexed body, has traditionally been theorised as within the biological realm and gender as the affect of culture, thus distinct. Both assume a dimorphism that is the system by which we are ascribed woman/man, feminine/masculine is a binarism or dualism. Butler (1990) works to deconstruct these “naturalised” axioms. Her deconstruction initially questions our understanding and definition of the terms and importantly moves on to challenge the rigidity and stability of sex and gender. She establishes that gender is fictitious, but becomes set and ‘naturalised’ by a series of imitations (Butler, 1993b). Butler argues that femininity and masculinity are copies of copies, however the configurations of the feminine and the masculine are legitimated and validated as authentic through a power field she identifies as the heterosexual matrix. Her thesis intentionally positions gender as performance, ‘as an ‘act’ a ‘style’, an ‘effect’, a ‘fabrication... without ontological status’, a ‘dramatic and contingent construction of meaning’ (Hood-Williams and Harrison, 1998: p. 74). This performance is positioned within a ‘regime of heterosexuality’. Therefore, it is the hyperbolic of the heterosexual peremptory that produces and then maintains gender as obdurate. I move on to demonstrate this process within the context of sport in the next section. Butler (1990) argues for a deconstruction of gender and the co-dependent relationship between sex and gender.

The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one (p.6).

Such an anti-foundationalist approach offers a poststructuralist and discursive account of sex and gender, and it is this approach which has evoked hostility.

Butler (1990) has received most criticism for her notion of gender as performance and her neglect of materiality as it relates to structures and relations of power. In response to critics Butler (1993a) moves on to further theorise the constructs of gender, sex and sexuality in her text 'Bodies that matter' (1993a). By deploying the term 'matter' Butler alludes to materiality thus advocating an inclusion of the material as it relates to corporeality.

What will, I hope, become clear in what follows is that the regulatory norms of "sex" work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative (p. 2).

In this text Butler (1993a) refers to the process of "girling the girl". She believes that once it is proclaimed "it's a girl", the "girl" is 'brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender' (p.7). The symbolic power of "girling", 'governs the formation of corporeally enacted femininity' (p.232). In this sense gender is not performed, sex is, and both are maintained through heterosexual hegemonic discourse. "Girl" represents the 'sign, understood as gender imperative' (p.237). The "girl" is produced through the expectation that she will embody specific ideals of femininity and is 'compelled to "cite" the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject' (p.232). Performing gender therefore produces the sexed body and sex is also constructed. In chapter eight I highlight how this discursive process operates within the context of football. Abject bodies or bodies that *don't* matter are those which fail to or can not masquerade this citation of gender norm. For example, in this research the footballing butch. The gendered materiality of the body is thus positioned within a power matrix, for Butler this matrix is the regime of heterosexuality.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Butler's arguments emerge as relevant to the discussion in chapters seven and eight on gender, sexuality and the sexed body as experienced by the women players.

Both structuralist and poststructuralist theorising of the sex/gender system position the relation as problematic. The feminist structuralist reading of gender centralises it within the critique of patriarchy and male hegemony, whereas the poststructuralist reading of gender emphasises the role of heterosexual hegemony and the relative instability of femininity and masculinity. Within structuralist theory sex and gender are viewed as distinct and, it is the 'idea of sex' which propels the sex/gender regime. Poststructuralists, however argue there is no sex/gender distinction, and that *both* sex and gender are discursive, that is, sex difference is socially constructed through language and meaning. In particular, Butler argues for the de-naturalising of sex and gender by showing that it is gender norms which produce the sexed body as the base for gender performance i.e. 'girling the girl'. Here Butler shows how gender invents itself.

Although both start from embodied notions of femininity and masculinity, structuralist and poststructuralist perspectives theorise gender in different ways. However, within the critical analysis of patriarchy disembodied masculinity is theorised as a power structure of domination. Poststructuralist analysis begins to theorise gender subversion, and challenges the existing notions of an oppositional dimorphic corporeal. In particular, Judith Butler argues for a disembodiment of *femininity* and masculinity, and corporeal alternatives that break both the sex - gender alignment and, sex/gender dualism. In this way her theoretical approach to gender opens the way for a theorising of 'female masculinity', an issue not yet fully unpacked by feminist sport sociologists.

Feminist sport and leisure theorists interested in gender have tended to apply a structuralist perspective to women's experience of sport and leisure. The gendered relations to power are held as accountable for women's experience of constraint. However, there is no existing body of literature that makes direct links between feminist poststructuralist theory and women's experience of sport and leisure, for example a Butlerian approach. Analysis of femininity and



masculinity within sport and leisure tends to position discussion within the system of sexual difference. For instance, gender theory that observes the existence of codified sex 'norms' as they appear within sport and leisure, and a critique of the valorisation of men and masculinity within this realm. However, more recently there has been a focus on women and embodied masculinity (Aoki, 1996; Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1997; St Martin and Gavey 1996). The existence of female masculinity, and also hyper-femininity, within sports provides a site for a poststructuralist analysis of the relationship between gender and sex. For example, in relation to women who body build, how does more or less femininity impact on the construction of sex? In many ways the women bodybuilders construct both hyper-masculinity and hyper-femininity. In this way, they offer confusing reproductions of gender and the sexed body. Interestingly, it is the construction of hyper-femininity that is revealed as inauthentic.<sup>23</sup>

### **Sport and femininity and masculinity.**

It has been argued that the sociology of sport and physical activity, as it has developed over the last 30 years, reflects an analytical and theoretical shift from the sociology of men's sport to a focus on gender (Hall, 1990; Whitson, 1990). The corollary of this focus is the feminist analysis of women's experience within sport's gender relations. However, more recently this focus on gender relations has incorporated an analysis of men and masculinity (for example see Anderson, 1999; Baker and Todd, 1997; Messner and Sabo, 1990; Spracklen, 1995; Whannel, 1998; Wheaton, 1998). To date, commentators have considered femininity and masculinity almost exclusively as components of sex/gender distinction and sex difference, gender relations and masculine hegemony. It is worth noting here that within such analyses the body has remained an important anchor and site for discussion. Increasingly, the

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<sup>23</sup> Holmlund (1997) argues, in her critique of the "Pumping Iron" films, that it is women bodybuilders' *femininity* that is interrogated by the codes of competition and scrutinised by the media.

nuances contained within the 'categories' femininity and masculinity are being intentionally documented. By introducing gender as multiple, commentators are beginning to question the paucity of the existing gender classification. This is particularly evident within the writing on masculinities (Boyd, 1997; Whannel, 1998; Wheaton, 1998). However, there is limited in-depth analysis that explores gender transitivity. There is literature that attempts to dispel 'the myth of masculinisation of the female athlete' (Fasting and Scraton, 1997), however there is no existing literature within sport sociology that offers a detailed analysis and/or unpacks gender variance. This thesis attends to this omission.

In comparison, work on gender continues apace within cultural studies, in particular queer theory. For example, Judith Halberstam (1998) offers one of the few accounts that fully explores 'female masculinity'. Halberstam argues that her book is a serious and committed attempt 'to mak[ing] masculinity safe for women and girls' (p.268). By 'safe', Halberstam means functional. She challenges the notion that masculinity in girls and women is abhorrent and pathological. The relevance of her work here is the contribution it makes to a discussion on the embodiment of gender. In particular, the butch and the tomboy as they appear within sporting contexts.

Especially within sport, and also within active leisure, the feminine and masculine have been theorised from a position that privileges notions of embodiment and corporeality.

It may be suggested that masculinizing and feminizing practices associated with the body are at the heart of the social construction of masculinity and femininity and that this is precisely why sport matters in the total structure of gender relations (Whitson, 1990; p.23/24).

The impact of physical activity on the 'outer' body can be very visible: firm, lean, taut, muscular bodies. The exercising body functions within a particular economic environment and in 'Western' society the commodification of both

sport and active leisure and the body, is more than apparent. Flintoff, Scraton and Bramham (1995) claim 'the media and cultural industries sustain icons of the powerful body for each gender: the masculine muscular body and the feminine toned body' (p.93). In fact, the notion of a 'feminine toned body' arguably collapses the traditional feminine/masculine distinction, as women with muscle challenge the 'tenuous equation established between masculinity, muscularity, and men' (Holmlund, 1997; p.154). Barbara Creed (1995) argues;

The active female body disturbs cultural definitions of gender and collapses the inside/outside boundary that constitutes the social division into female and male. (p.91)

Women sculpturing a muscular body not only challenge male ownership of 'muscle', in addition traditional notions of what it means to be feminine and masculine are called into question. Jennifer Hargreaves (1997) cites Susan Bordo's (1990) contention that 'in recent years the athletic and muscular image of femininity, although quite solid and bulky looking, has become highly desirable' (p.40). Leena St Martin and Nicola Gavey (1996) also refer to Susan Bordo's (1993) acclaim that 'a slim body is no longer sufficient, the normative feminine ideal must be muscularly developed as well' (p. 46). The theoretical shift towards documenting the trends in women's exercising bodies and embodied masculinity (Aoki, 1996; Bordo, 1990 and 1993; Butler, 1990 and 1993; Halberstam, 1997) appears to have developed in more depth outside of sport and leisure sociology.

Traditionally sport and active leisure have tended to reify and naturalise the conventional gender 'categories' of femininity and masculinity; this has been particularly so within the physical education system (see for example Scraton, 1987, 1992; Parker, 1996). Research has tended to focus on how femininity and masculinity have been socially constructed and hyperbolised within sport culture and ideology (Whitson, 1990; Bryson, 1987). Thus illustrating that gender and sex difference are regulated through practices that serve to codify and make femininity and masculinity inexorable. The work of Susan Birrell

and Cheryl Cole (1990) is relevant here. Their study explores 'the implications of the entrance of Renee Richards, a constructed-female transsexual, into the women's professional tennis circuit' (p.1). Birrell and Cole argue that 'sport functions as a major site for the naturalization of sex and gender differences' (p.18). They show how transsexualism disturbs the neat, 'logical' and 'naturalised' notions surrounding sex, gender, identity and the body. They argue that the treatment of Renee Richards not only reveals the social construction of gender, 'but the social construction of the sex-gender connection' (p.18). They show how sport ideology produces a narrative that gives meaning to gender and notions of 'naturalised' sex. That said, their analysis stops short of a critique of the sex-gender connection and sex difference. It is apparent that they do not engage with the idea that 'men's' sport and 'women's' sport, as based on sex difference, are the product of gendered presumption not the base. In other words a critique of how 'men's' sport and 'women's' sport are constructed on the foundation that sexual difference is pre-given.

As a result of attempts by players and feminist activists to transgress the gendered borders so apparent in sport and active leisure, women now take part in physical activity once deemed inappropriate, for example, football, rugby, and boxing. In many ways, women's expanding involvement in sport and active leisure generally, and the move to activities previously defined as male and therefore masculine, impacts on "naturalised" notions of femininity and masculinity. Such shifts also affect the currency of the conventional gender distinction traditional to sport and active leisure. Discussions in later chapters demonstrate this point more fully. Specific analysis that addresses these issues is most evident within the literature on women bodybuilders.

Feminists (Holmlund, 1997; Kuhn, 1995; St Martin and Gavey, 1996), sociologists (Aoki, 1996), and those writing from within sport studies (Hall, 1996; Pugh, 1995) have made efforts to theorise women bodybuilders. The relevance here of such work is the unavoidable focus on embodied notions of

gender and ideas surrounding the abject body *qua* femininity/masculinity. Here the ideology of inappropriateness is based on “naturalised” muscularity as it relates to the feminine and masculine.

The question of ‘female muscle’ however may only be ‘in’ the ‘right’ aesthetic context and on the ‘right’ body. This has proven to be a crucial point in the possible acceptance of women in non-traditional sports (Pugh, 1995: p.80).

Sport and leisure feminists clearly challenge gendered notions as they relate to women’s freedom and constraint in sport and leisure. However, there has been limited feminist scrutiny of new concepts of femininity; femininity as plural or disavowed femininity/masculinity, apart from the existing work on women bodybuilders. The work on women bodybuilders is interesting in the sense that it cannot help but focus on the feminine and masculine. Specific questions that are raised by the existence of women choosing to build an overtly muscular body include; are women ‘rejecting femininity in favour of masculinity?’ (Pugh, 1995; p.80); does the body become ‘so extremely muscular that it can only be seen as “masculine”’ (Kuhn, 1995; p.67); that is ‘she looks like a man’ (Aoki, 1996); and ‘in what other sport could a female competitor be expected to limit her achievement for fear of losing her proper gender?’ (Ian, cited in Hall, 1996; p.62). These questions are relevant to other sports and activities, for example football, rugby, and boxing, and reflect the issues surrounding the powerful social construction of gender that occurs within sport and active leisure. Here Judith Halberstam (1998) offers a personal rendition, which serves to illuminate the point;

When I was thirteen, I wanted a punching bag and boxing gloves for my birthday (...) I was told that boxing was not appropriate for a girl my age and that I should pick out something more feminine (...) Unfortunately, many more prohibitions were to follow with precisely this rationale. Soon it was soccer that was no longer appropriate for a girl “my age” (p. 267)

Through her analysis of boxing Halberstam shows how female masculinity is abhorred and stigmatized to such an extent that women who participate 'attempt to turn the gaze away from their potential masculinity' (p.270). Jennifer Hargreaves (1997) also provides an analysis of boxing as a site where women feel obliged to assert their femininity. She cites Deirdre Gogarty; 'I used to hang a punch bag in the cupboard and bang away at it when no-one was around, (...) because I was afraid people would think I was weird and unfeminine' (p. 45). Similarly, Nancy Theberg (1991) argues that the potential for resistance to conventional gender categories offered bodybuilders is subverted – 'female bodybuilders are marked as unquestionably feminine and heterosexual; muscle is reshaped as "flex appeal" (p. 130). Clearly the corporeal 'masculinization' of women incites notions of women's exercising bodies as abject bodies. Interestingly but not surprisingly given the focus of her work, Halberstam reads this relationship between the body and gender thus; 'female-bodied people, must be forced into these abject genders' (p.273). Clearly these debates are relevant to a discussion on women who play football.

Sport and active leisure have an overwhelming regulatory influence on femininity and masculinity and gendered body motif. Femininity and masculinity are constructed in relation to sex, and sport and active leisure codify both sex and gender as is evidenced in the work on Renee Richards. Judith Butler (1993a) poses an important question and one that I return to in chapters seven and eight.

Given this understanding of construction as constitutive constraint, is it still possible to raise the critical question of how such constraints not only produce the domain of intelligible bodies, but produce as well a domain of unthinkable, abject, unliveable bodies?(p.xi).

In addition to the relevance of the notion – 'constitutive constraint' to gender theory, Butler's question offers a poignant introduction to the next section, which considers sexuality in relation to the 'domain of intelligible bodies'.

### Theories of [lesbian] sexuality.

Sexuality is described mostly in either essentialist terms, that is it is fixed and a result of genetics/instincts, or that it is shaped, controlled and subject to social, economic and political terms, thus constructed.

[C]onstructionists are concerned above all with the *production* and *organization* of difference, and they therefore reject the idea that any essential or natural givens precede the processes of social determination. (...) For the essentialist, the natural provides the raw material and determinative starting point for the practices and laws of the social (Fuss, 1989, p. 3).

Here I map some aspects of sexual theory. I deliberately focus on lesbian sexuality because the 'lesbian label' is frequently applied to women who play football, thus I provide the context for further discussion in succeeding chapters.<sup>24</sup> I highlight the theoretical arguments that have contributed to our understanding of lesbian sexuality, namely, the essentialist/constructionist debate. In particular, I expose the inextricable links between gender and sexuality and highlight the currency of the body within theories of sexuality. This discussion provides the preamble to some of the theoretical claims I make in the final analysis chapter of the thesis.

Those writing from a social construction perspective (Foucault, 1976, 1984a, 1984b; Richardson, 1992; Sedgwick, 1990; Vance, 1992; Weeks, 1977, 1985, 1991; Wilton, 1995) tend to identify the church and the medical profession during the nineteenth century as significant in shaping our understanding of 'modern' sexuality. The shift from the ecclesiastical to the medical control of sexuality reflects a move from 'notions of sin to notions of sickness' (Wilton, 1995: p.67). Under the gaze of the male medical profession women were defined in relation to white, middle class, male notions of sexuality (Somerville, 1998). Working class women and black women suffered abusive

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<sup>24</sup> In relation to constructions of heterosexuality see Jackson (1995 & 1996); Maynard and Purvis (1995) and Richardson (1996).

medical scrutiny, for example the brutal treatment of Saartjie Baartman (later re-named Sarah Bartman),<sup>25</sup> and, women prostitutes and lesbians endured extensive anatomical 'research' in order to establish the size of for example, their nipples, clitoris, labia and other body parts. Hence the notion of 'Darwin's ear' as a way to identify women prostitutes. In the late nineteenth century, the aesthetic and scientific iconography depicted the sexuality of the Hottentot (black woman) and prostitute as corrupt, unclean and diseased, pathological and in need of controlling (Gilman, 1992). Social Darwinism, embraced by the medical profession, sought to codify and classify women's sexuality through corporeal dimensions. Thus, the Victorian medical-moral epoch produced normative definitions that served to contain women's (hetero)sexuality.

Women's sexuality continued to be medicalised through sexology and psychoanalysis. The discourses produced from within these scientific paradigms established sexuality as innate, although anything other than heterosexuality was pathologised. Through classification systems the notion of a fixed sexual identity emerged as fundamental to an understanding of sexuality. Heterosexuality was positioned as 'normal' and homosexuality was problematised. As Tamsin Wilton (1995) argues lesbian sexuality was tacked on to 'an inadequate model of homosexuality' (p. 69). In short, lesbians were understood in terms of gender variance.<sup>26</sup> Barbara Creed (1995) posits that there is one dominant view of lesbianism which is, a lesbian is really 'a man trapped in a women's body' (p.88). In particular she highlights how Freudian theory 'attributes lesbianism not to a woman's own specifically female desires but to her desire to be a man' (p.94).<sup>27</sup> Creed (1995) concludes that lesbianism

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<sup>25</sup> Saartjie Baartman was enslaved in 1810 aged 21 years. The medical profession reduced her to her sexual parts; buttocks and genitalia, and she was 'exhibited' as a display of 'lower race/primitive' female sexuality (Gilman, 1992). The brutal treatment of Saartjie Baartman demonstrates Rosi Braidotti's (1996) point that women's bodies are controlled and disciplined through scientific discourses that are racialized and genderized.

<sup>26</sup> In chapter eight, I discuss more fully how sexology defined and codified lesbian sexuality.

<sup>27</sup> Clearly this particular interpretation of Freudian theory is open to critical scrutiny.



continues to be understood in this way. This point emerges as relevant to the discussions on sexuality in chapter seven.

The theoretical principles that developed from sexology and psychoanalysis are based on essentialist concepts of gender and the sexed body. Historically, some individuals and groups have embraced the notion of a sexual essence as a way to demand equal treatment in relation to human rights. For example, Radclyffe Hall accepted the public announcement of her 'congenital inversion' as it meant she was saved from the association of 'wilful wickedness' (BBC2, *Changing experiences of women*, 1982). Thus, sexuality could be understood as a manifestation of inner biology; individuals are 'born that way'. However, within social construction theory, such essentialist theoretical doctrines are contested and exposed as being shaped by the social, political and economic issues specific to the era. For example, Foucault's (1976) Malthusian couple represent;

*A socialization of procreative behaviour: an economic socialisation via all the incitements and restrictions, the "social" and fiscal measures brought to bear on the fertility of couples; a political socialisation achieved through the "responsibilization" of couples with regard to the social body as a whole. (p.104-105)*

Evidently, the conjugal family and reproduction were socially, politically and economically constructed as 'natural' and 'normal'. In effect, this was achieved through complicated discursive practices that pathologised 'homosexuality'.

At this point it is worth considering the complexity of the essentialist/constructionist binarism. It is interesting to note that the constructionist perspective relies on an historical account of the essentialist mapping of sexuality. Furthermore, essentialism is implicit to constructionism as without categories of identity, constructionists are unable to discuss those at the centre and those at the peripheries, or those inside and outside the

dominant. That said, it is evident that essentialist notions do not appear in a social, political, and economic vacuum. In this way, is it that social construction relies on essentialism, and essentialist rhetoric is inherently constructionist? Diana Fuss (1989) contests the essentialist/constructionist polarity in her consideration of 'the "risk" of essence', and her critique of the work of Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray. She questions the stability and impermeability of the opposition and argues;

In my mind, it is difficult to see how constructionism can *be* constructionism without a fundamental dependency on essentialism. (...) [T]here is no essence to essentialism, that essence *as* irreducible has been *constructed* to be irreducible (p. 4).

Fuss (1989) illustrates her argument through an analysis of 'Monique Wittig's anti-essentialist materialism' and 'Luce Irigaray's language of essence'. Appropriately here, both pieces of work focus on women's sexuality.<sup>28</sup> In the first instance, Fuss considers Wittig's proposition that "lesbians are not women". Wittig argues that categories such as "man" and "woman" are politically constructed through "the straight mind". This social construct omits lesbianism, thus Wittig advocates that lesbians are not women. Fuss argues that Wittig's construction of lesbianism 'as an unchanging, ahistorical, natural category poses one instance where we can see how essentialism inheres in anti-essentialism' (p. 45). Thus, Fuss claims that constructionism 'when pushed to its extremes, risks collapsing into its opposite - essentialism' (p.40), and vice versa. For example, in relation to Irigaray's celebration of women's erogenous zones as a challenge to Lacanian phallocentrism, Fuss argues the language used by Irigaray, represents a specific construction of women's bodies. Irigaray's concept of the "two lips" and concomitant metaphorical reference to gendered social relations and feminist politics, presents an essentialist corporeal reading of woman. However, Fuss suggests that the Irigarayan re-

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<sup>28</sup> I return to the work of both authors in chapter eight when I consider the sexed body as a social construct.

creating and re-metaphorizing of the body is 'profoundly intricicated with the grammar and logic of social constructionism' (1989, p: 53).<sup>29</sup>

As is evidenced in the arguments offered by Fuss (1989, 1994), the essentialist/constructionist dualism is contested. Her interrogation exposes slippage in the stability of the opposition. Thus, 'degrees of social construction' (Vance, 1992, p. 134) and '*kinds* of essentialism' (Fuss, 1989, p.4) emerge as more useful theoretical concepts. In particular, the notion of 'strategic essentialism' (Fuss, 1989, p.4). In many ways, identity politics within both the women's movement and the lesbian and gay movement take up the notion of strategic essentialism. As such strategic essentialism has both theoretical and political currency. For example, strategic essentialism is useful since it makes visible "woman's" shared oppressions. More specifically, in chapters five and six I document the women's continuities of footballing experience in relation to control, constraint and exclusion. Thus supporting the value of strategic essentialism to this research project.

Through classification systems, sexology contributed to the process of identity formation. Weeks (1991) makes use of Foucault's notion of "reverse affirmation" to illustrate 'the paradox of the sexological endeavour' (p. 75). He argues that sexual minorities effectively appropriate "identity" as resistance. In chapter seven I highlight the ways some lesbian players create dykespaces to resist compulsory heterosexuality within the context of football. Significantly there is a difference between self-definition and categorisation.

Naming can be an affirmative act of self definition, labelling and categorisation are acts of those in power directed at those with less power (Crawford, 1992, p. 43).

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<sup>29</sup> Here I use the work of Diana Fuss (1989) on Monique Wittig's 'anti-essentialist materialism', and Luce Irigaray's 'language of essence', to tease out the issues surrounding the essentialist/constructionist dichotomy. I use the arguments presented by Fuss as an example to show how the binary opposite can be collapsed and is therefore problematic.

Clearly, notions of a sexual essence emerge as useful in the politicising of sexual identity by the sexually marginal. For example, the feminist and lesbian movements both developed theories of women's sexuality that relied on a theoretical engagement with essentialist rhetoric. In particular, the socialist feminist proposition that 'women' form an exploited 'class' and the radical lesbian assertion that "political lesbianism" was the strategy necessary for women's liberation. Such theoretical and political engagements with notions of essentialism represent strategic manoeuvres. Strategic essentialism has impacted on the feminist theorising of lesbian sexuality. In particular, Diane Richardson (1992) argues that 'two main stereotypes of lesbians emerge' (p.191); the sexualised and the desexualised.<sup>30</sup>

In relation to sexualised lesbianism, women's sexuality continues to be understood through the terms set out by the male medical model of sexology. Sexual activity contradicts the view that women are 'passive' and 'responsive'. Sexually active lesbians are understood as a paler version of either heterosexual or gay male sexuality. Theoretically, to be sexually active equates with maleness. Richardson (1992) cites such an assumption;

[E]arlier this century Lang put forward the hypothesis that female homosexuals were genetically male, albeit having 'lost all morphological sex characteristics except their chromosome formula' (Lang, 1940) (p. 192).

Here we see an essentialist reading of sexually active lesbians. The continuation of this view is the claim that lesbian sex is therefore an imitation of heterosexual sex, since one of the women is 'pseudo-man'. In particular, this reference to 'role playing' constructs butch-femme relationships as

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<sup>30</sup> In chapter seven I highlight how notions of an essential lesbian sexuality impact on the women's experiences of playing football. For instance, in relation to the sexualised there exists the perception of lesbian as sexual predator and converter, and in a very different way some teams promote lesbian sexual identity to create what I have referred to as 'dykescares'.

mimicking heterosexuality. Such an analysis is not only produced through a heterosexual gendered lens but within some strands of radical feminism.<sup>31</sup>

In comparison, there has been a refusal to accept lesbians as sexually active. In particular, psychoanalytic accounts tend to focus on the emotional rather than the sexual as a way to understand lesbian relationships (Richardson, 1992). Some feminists have also adopted this approach. For example, Lillian Faderman's (1981) exploration of 'romantic friends', and Adrienne Rich's (1984) adoption of the concept 'woman-identified women', as a way to validate her 'lesbian continuum', and include all women. Within radical feminism, the desexualising of lesbianism appears to have worked to strategically position women's political identity as pre-eminent. In this way an essential (de)sexual identity has been constructed.

The lesbian sex wars of the 1980s represent the conflict within the lesbian community surrounding the sexualised-desexualised debate. Interestingly sexology initially coded lesbianism as sexual, albeit deviant. In many ways, early "second wave" feminism theorised lesbianism in political terms as opposed to the sexual. More recently, and in association with an emerging queer movement lesbianism is again being understood as sexual.<sup>32</sup> The queer movement relies on both politics and activism to destabilise notions of heterosexuality as "natural". Queer theory has appropriated a social constructionist understanding of sexuality to expose the existing sexual regime as monolithic and heterosexist. Instead, queer politics demands a celebration of multiple sexualities. By adopting social constructionism and the theoretically rigorous arguments presented by writers such as Foucault (1976 1984a and 1984b), McIntosh (1968) and Vance (1992), queer theory contests notions of an essential sexuality. In the next chapter I continue to explore queer theory and demonstrate how sexual difference is theorised as non-hierarchical thus

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<sup>31</sup> See for example Sheila Jeffreys (1993).

<sup>32</sup> Prior to the emergence of queer theory some writers, for example Newton (1991) and Nestle (1989), advocated lesbian sexuality as active.

destabilising the structures of sexual power relations. It is evident that through an understanding of sexuality as socially constructed queer politics and activism are able to interrogate and critique prevailing discourses of sexuality. However, queer activism also relies on essentialist notions of identity to assert an 'in your face' visibility. Here again we see the political deployment of strategic essentialism.

The contemporary political and scientific rhetoric continues to reify sexuality in essentialist terms. For example, in the early 1990s scientists in USA claimed they had discovered a chromosomal 'abnormality' in gay men. Thus, advocating a genetic predisposition to homosexuality and the invention of the 'gay gene'. It is assumed that a predetermined sexual orientation represents a "core of truth" in any person and yet the research failed to take account of a lesbian gene, heterosexual women's gene and a heterosexual men's gene. By its omissions, the research reflects the 'sexual script' of the era (Udis-Kessler, 1989). In the UK, the Conservative Government's 1986 Local Government Act continues to position lesbian and gay sexuality, and lesbian and gay families as 'pretend'. Clause 28 has not yet been repealed (summer 2001). Both of these current examples provide evidence of how an essential sexuality is socially, politically and legally constructed in favour of heterosexuality.

The above account offers a brief overview of the essentialist and constructionist theoretical positions on lesbian sexuality. As is evidenced the oppositional relationship is often difficult to discern. It would appear that at times there is a collapsing of the stable binary and it may be more useful to refer to an inter-relationship. In the quest to expose sexual relations, the social constructionist project has been most influential. This is most evident within the feminist literature on sport.

Helen Lenskyj (1986) is one of the first sports feminists to examine the social construction of sexuality through physical activity and sport. In particular, her radical feminist approach exposes the social and physical practices that 'pose

formidable barriers both to full female participation to develop and define sport in women-centered terms' (1990, p. 235). In addition to this critique of sport as constructed through heteropatriarchal ideology and institutions, lesbian feminists have elucidated the social construction of homophobia. For example, Gill Clarke (1995) elucidates the contemporary social, cultural and political contexts lesbian PE teachers must survive. She identifies the numerous strategies lesbian teachers adopt as a way to conceal their sexuality within a hostile social and political environment. Similarly, Pat Griffin (1992, 1998) explores the many ways homophobia is manifested and impacts on women in sport generally. Specifically, the media has been identified as a particular site where homophobia is produced and reproduced (Burroughs, Ashburn and Seebohm, 1995; Wright and Clarke 1999).

Poststructuralist feminists have continued the focus on sport and physical activity as a medium for the social construction of heterosexual femininity and homophobia. Heather Sykes (1996, 1998), through a queer feminist analysis of "lesbian identity" and "the closet", argues against essentialist notions of sexuality. She successfully identifies heteronormative and heteropatriarchal practices that serve to define lesbian sexuality in sport. In a similar way, Maria Veri (1999) makes use of Foucauldian notions of discipline and discourse to contend 'the power of this oppressive discourse [homophobia] by interrogating the social construction of homophobia and utilizing that knowledge in order to institutionalise counter-discourses of sexuality' (p. 355). In all, there is a burgeoning literature that focuses on the social construction of lesbian sexuality in and through sport. The lesbian player/athlete appears as a site where this theorising is most prolific and this research project contributes to these existing and ongoing debates.

It is the interrogation of the processes that construct sexuality, including a questioning of the origins of essentialist theory, which contribute most to an understanding of sexuality and the sexual relations in sport. These processes are complex and intricate. The above account offers an introduction by way of

a brief exploring of some of the key issues and themes. I continue to engage with some of these issues and themes when I analyse the research material concerned with sexuality (chapters seven and eight).

### **Summary.**

This review covers a range of theoretical approaches and literature. It introduces and offers an overview of key debates and work relevant to a discussion on women's experiences within sport. Ironically, it does not explicitly attend to women's experience of football. This is because extensive theoretically rigorous work does not exist. However, it does provide the context for such work by presenting, and engaging with principle theoretical concepts.

The review plots the developments in social theory as they relate to the study of sport, with a specific focus on the feminist analysis of gender. I introduce and explore some of the developments in feminist methodology relevant to a discussion on sport and leisure. I highlight and critique the feminist contributions from feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint positions (I continue these discussions in chapter three), and I move on to scrutinise gender theory. Through a discussion on the feminist analysis of gender I introduce the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1992, 1993a and 1993b) and explore the poststructuralist analysis of gender, sexuality and sex. I problematise the sex/gender distinction and through a Butlerian approach contend sex difference. This is followed by an overview of the existing work on femininity and masculinity in the sport's literature, specifically a consideration of the corporeal dimorphism gender assumes. The brief consideration of theories of lesbian sexuality introduces the association between gender and sexuality, and the sexed body. In addition, I highlight the theoretical debates surrounding the essentialist/constructionist dichotomy as a way to make visible the existing theoretical dialogue on sexuality and the sexed body. Moreover, I provide the specific context and theoretical underpinnings for the discussions that follow.



In all, this chapter establishes the context for a study on women who play football. The account introduces a breadth of material and at the same time maintains a focus on key theoretical issues surrounding gender. The succeeding chapters further develop the ideas presented here by offering specific and detailed analysis of the research process and the research material.

## **Chapter Three.**

### **Feminist epistemology and methodology.**

#### **Introduction.**

This chapter explores some of the feminist issues surrounding both the theory of knowledge and the theory and analysis of research. Feminist epistemological and methodological debates are well developed and here I engage with this burgeoning theory. In the following discussion I consider some relevant key concepts, namely feminist standpoint epistemology, feminist postmodern and poststructuralist epistemology, objectivity, reflexivity and relativism. At times during the discussion, I position myself as a researcher and consider my own research. However, a more in-depth analysis of the research process particular to this project follows in chapter four.

My research reflects a commitment to researching women from a feminist perspective. As with other feminist research projects (see Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Ribbens and Edwards, 1998; Roberts, 1981) and more specifically feminist research within the sociology of sport (see Clarke and Humberstone, 1997) my research raises methodological issues that became central to the research itself. My engagement with feminist methodological debate reflects firstly a commitment to research underpinned by a feminist research ethic and secondly a critical evaluation of feminist epistemology.

Initially, my work was driven by a desire to find out more about women involved in sport, specifically football; a game traditionally constructed and defined as male but one which has exploded in popularity with women and girls since the early 1990s. This aim still exists and yet sometimes it appears lost within the confusing conceptual struggles I have with what counts as knowledge. My work contributes to a body of feminist literature within the

sociology of sport and by association I offer an interpretation that contributes to our understanding of women's involvement in sport from a feminist perspective. This appears quite straightforward and yet at times I wonder how I can legitimate this contribution and validate my own research as knowledge. This concern is not always based on feelings of fraud commonly experienced by women working within the academy (Skeggs, 1995), although I do and have felt this on numerous occasions. Over a period of time these feelings have lessened in intensity mainly as a result of the support women colleagues have provided and the logical belief that the success of my research proposal and annual reports provide a litmus test. Yet I still feel ambivalent about this formal recognition. During moments of reflection I question how this legitimating process is constructed to determine what constitutes a "contribution to knowledge". Clearly my research has been officially validated as having the potential to meet the knowledge requirements for a Ph.D. And so, what is meant by knowledge - is there such a definitive, arbitrary category?

I explore this question here and my engagement with some of the feminist debates has paradoxically abated and augmented my concerns. What follows reflects my reading of what is significant within feminist thought and debate on epistemology. The intention is to construct an ontology of knowledge with which to frame my research material. I set out to achieve this by focusing on knowledge as a political terrain; the feminist advocacy of a distinctly feminist epistemology; and the debates surrounding "women's experience", "women's ways of knowing" and "women's knowledge". Beverley Skeggs (1995) as it relates to research aptly describes this process of engagement with theory and debate here

When we begin research we always enter into and are positioned by already established debates; to gain credibility and legitimacy we may feel we have to enter into these debates. We are recruited by the dominant discourses, which we may adapt, transform and/or resist. This need not be seen to be a waste of time, but rather as a way of acquiring theoretical skills and of passing through different formations of knowledge in an attempt to develop our own (pp. 9/10).

In short, the debates I now engage with reflect my own conceptual dilemmas, namely, what constitutes knowledge, how is knowledge produced and validated, and, the position of the researcher within these processes.

### **Knowledge as political.**

Knowledge represents what we know. It is concerned with learning and knowing. That is what we have information about, what we are aware of and what we understand. In addition, Gunew (1990) argues that 'knowledge could be described in territorial terms: knowledge as it has been legitimised within certain institutions, notably the education system' (p.14). Although acquiring knowledge and producing meaning is not confined to educational institutions, the idea of institutionalised knowledge and authorised learning does provide what I believe to be an appropriate and relevant example given my current location and concerns to validate my own research as knowledge. Unsurprisingly, given the focus of her work, Virginia Woolf (1929) offers an eloquent and lucid account, which supports Gunew's notion of territorial knowledge.

Nor did I first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here: the gravel is the place for me. (p: 5/6)

Here 'the turf' and 'the gravel is the place for me' (within the setting of a university) offer jurisdictionary metaphors which support Gunew's argument that knowledge can be viewed in territorial terms. It is clear from past feminist accounts documenting women's position within educational institutions, such as those offered by Virginia Woolf, and also Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir, that the academy was controlled and dominated by men. More contemporary feminist writers argue that this is still the case.

Thus in the dual sense in which universities are run, that of allocating material resources and deciding on the central issues of the curriculum, it is men, and masculine interests, which prevail. Despite the fact that half the 'consumers' (as students are now termed) are female, the curriculum in many universities remains tuned to the person as male, and the core individual of western liberal higher education as the male citizen (Evans, 1997; pp. 46).

Men occupy a position, or as Gunew (1990) suggests; the territory, which without a doubt influences the construction of "learned discourse" and "public discourse". In this way, knowledge is political because it is produced in the interests of particular groups. From a feminist perspective the male production and ownership of knowledge is obviously a profoundly political issue.<sup>33</sup>

Since the 17th century, "Western" intellectual traditions, especially science and philosophy, have been greatly influenced by the Enlightenment movement. This movement embodies enlightenment theory, a theory that sets out to transform abstract versions of knowledge into "truth" by advocating that definitive knowledge is only possible if adequate and peremptory conditions are established. Knowledge is therefore constructed on an "absolute foundation" which comprises the conditions of objectivity and value neutrality (Code, 1993). Consequently the Enlightenment paradigm "naturalised" what can be known *and* who can be a "knower". From the basic position of foundationalism, various epistemological assumptions were constructed as "true". These included the following:

- (i) Reality has an objective structure or nature unaffected by or independent of either human understandings of or perspectives on it (realism).
- (ii) The structure or nature of reality in principle is accessible to human understanding or knowledge (objectivism).

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<sup>33</sup> In the previous chapter I illustrate how the feminist intervention in the sociology of sport and leisure exposes the existing discourse as male knowledge. More specifically, in chapter five I highlight football's existing male centred theory. In this way I am applying Gunew's territorial argument to sport sociology.

- (iii) The principle human faculty for attaining knowledge of reality is reason (rationalism), sometimes in conjunction with the senses (empiricism).
- (iv) The faculties of reason and sensation are potentially the same for all human beings, regardless of their culture or class, race or sex (universalism).

(Adapted from Jaggar and Bordo, 1989: p.3).

These epistemological assumptions reflect both the principle of “absolute foundation”, that is realism and objectivism and, the notion of “rational man”, that is rationalism and universalism. Since the Enlightenment period, these principles have underpinned philosophical thought and traditional epistemology affecting the construction of knowledge and epistemic agency, that is the knowing subject. Feminists have taken specific issue with the notions of absolutism, universalism and the epistemic agent. However, the extent to which feminists have challenged each of these has varied (Hekman, 1990), and this becomes evident as I continue the discussion in this chapter.

Since the 1980s, feminists have engaged with epistemological debate (Alcoff and Potter, 1993) and there is a burgeoning body of literature (Maynard and Purvis, 1994) which seeks to politicise issues surrounding knowledge. For instance, Lorraine Code (1993) posits that since the legacy of Enlightenment is reflected in theories of modernity, the positivist-empiricist orientation continues to ‘sustain a belief that universally necessary and sufficient conditions can indeed be found’ (p.16). Through the very apt use of a trope; “*S*-knows-that-*p*” she highlights the contrasting aims underpinning traditional notions of “*S*-knows-that-*p*” with her idea of an “epistemology of everyday lives”. In her account Code shows how “*S*” (“knower”) is traditionally positioned ‘to transcend particularity and contingency’ (p.16) and can be replaced without any impact on “*S*-knows-that-*p*”. “*p*”, under the assumptions set out by the Enlightenment model, is positioned as “true” and “fact”. Code argues that “*S*-knows-that-*p*” epistemologies are ‘dangerous’ (p.43) on the basis that: it is an ‘illusion that knowing is universal’ and; that there is

insufficient attention paid to "S". Indeed, she argues that there has to be as much attention paid to "S" as there is to "p" (Alcoff and Potter, 1993: p.4 & 5).

Generally, the feminist intervention in epistemology has had the effect of focusing political analysis on Code's concept "S". I think this has been done in two ways: firstly by offering a critique of traditional notions of "S" by challenging the assumption that the rational subject is male and; secondly, by providing radical alternatives and including "S" within epistemological debate, for example the process of reflexivity.<sup>34</sup> With reference to the first point, feminist accounts have been critical of the way in which the Enlightenment movement reflects the interests of those in dominant economic, political and social positions. For example, Elizabeth Grosz (1993) argues that the construction of knowledge, and consequently knowledge per se, is sexist, androcentric and phallogentric. She shows that this is a result of male hegemony and argues for a positioning of the female in epistemological debate in order to subvert, dislocate and transform traditional epistemologies (Alcoff and Potter, 1993: p.10). Clearly, here, Enlightenment theory and some theories of modernity have been identified as a distinctly male mode of thought and one that reinforces male domination and power. Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, (1993) support this view through their feminist analysis of the "personal is political". Thus making links with Code's 'epistemology of everyday lives'. They argue that traditional epistemology has subjugated women's experience of the social world, thus situating women in politically limiting positions. In particular, feminists believe that the foundationalist principle of universalism implies the centrality of a dominant, privileged group and ignores the different 'voices' of marginalised groups. For example, Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff (1993) argue that traditional epistemology discredits the perspectives of non-privileged groups, and more specifically 'has reduced much of women's knowledge to the status of "old wives' tales"' (Alcoff and Potter, 1993: p. 11). In addition, Liz Stanley (1991) recognises the political and ideological status of

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<sup>34</sup> I offer a detailed explanation of reflexivity during the discussion on feminist epistemology below.

knowledge and strongly advocates that feminists should be concerned with “knowledge making”. In a concerted effort to reform and transform traditional male theories of knowledge, feminists (Harding, 1987; Hartsock, 1983; Hill Collins, 1991; Jaggar, 1989; Stanley and Wise, 1993) have engaged with notions of a feminist epistemology. The intention is to create a less partial and less distorted representation of the world, and, concomitantly, to highlight how no single view can be fully representative.

### **Feminist Epistemology.**

The inclusion of epistemology within feminist debates on research is of great significance since it involves a discussion on the politics of knowledge and the modes of the production of that knowledge. The history of feminist epistemological debate denotes a commitment ‘to the struggle of women to have their understanding of the world legitimated’ (Alcoff and Potter, 1993:p 2). Also evident within this struggle, is the feminist commitment to the emancipatory aim of enabling women’s political engagement in the construction of knowledge (Ramazanoglu, 1989). Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (1993) articulate a general feminist view when they argue that women have been effectively excluded by the impact on the production of knowledge of “social status” and the “sexed body” of the knower (p.2). Similarly, Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires (1997) suggest that much of the early feminist work on epistemology was ‘taken up with establishing and exploring the extent to which traditional epistemologies worked to systematically exclude the possibility that women could be the agents of knowledge’ (p.142). From a critical perspective, feminists have shown that under the model of Enlightenment it has been male knowledge which has been legitimated and valorised (Harding, 1987; Hartsock 1983; Jaggar, 1989; Stanley and Wise, 1993). In addition to this critical project there has been the increased feminist engagement with an assertive project (Kemp and Squires, 1997), that is the development of a specifically feminist epistemology.



By challenging the traditional notion of “rational *man*” as epistemic agent, feminist critique has opened the way for a radical rethinking of not only who can be positioned as “*S*”, returning to Code’s important formula, additionally there has been significant critical rhetoric around the role of “*S*”. For instance, Alison Jaggar (1989) challenges the epistemic ideology of Western rationalism through her analysis of the place of emotion in feminist epistemology. Jaggar shows how traditional epistemology views emotion as ‘alien invaders that must be repelled by a stricter application of scientific method’ (p. 156). She argues that this process of eradicating all traces of emotion from traditional ways of knowledge production effectively undermines women’s epistemic authority. In her own work, Jane Tompkins (1989) makes reference to the impact of Jaggar’s analysis.

The idea that the conventions defining legitimate sources of knowledge overlapped with the conventions defining appropriate gender behaviour (male) came to me as a blinding insight. I saw that I had been socialized from birth to feel and act in ways that automatically excluded me from participating in the culture’s most valued activities (p.46).

It is the feminist response to this exclusion that has inspired attempts to develop distinctively feminist theories of knowledge. For example Sandra Harding (1991) positions the feminist political need to carve out conceptual space for *specifically* feminist epistemologies as priority. How feminists have aimed to achieve this has varied. For instance: Hartsock (1983) argues for a materialist feminist analysis; Jaggar (1989) posits a theory based on the inclusion of human emotion; Code (1993) advocates taking subjectivity into account; Grosz (1993) suggests a corporeal approach that positions the female body as the location of knowledge. Clearly all accounts are informed by feminist politics and focus on radical alternatives to traditional notions surrounding “rationality” and the construct “*S*”. And yet there is no general consensus as to the ways to develop a distinctly or specifically feminist epistemology. However, if we accept that the feminist engagement with epistemological debate focuses discussion on the politics of knowledge and the

production of knowledge, then it is possible to identify constituents of feminist epistemology. Alcoff and Potter (1993) identify “women’s experience”, “women’s ways of knowing” and “women’s knowledge” (p. 1) as central to feminist epistemology. I now use these ideas as three ways through which to discuss the development of feminist epistemology further. I intend to critically evaluate all three as conceptual tools used to develop and establish a distinctly feminist epistemology. I identify all three as problematic, however my discussion demonstrates how I have found it easier to resolve tensions surrounding “women’s experience” and “women’s ways of knowing” compared to the more troublesome idea that there exists “women’s knowledge”.

### **Women’s experience.**

The central positioning of “women’s experience” within my research project is typical of feminist practice. It allows for a focusing on the researched and researcher within the process of knowledge production. If we accept that the women taking part in my research have continuities and discontinuities of experience (Bhavnani, 1994) then this makes theorising experience complex and nuanced. The theoretical discussion that follows highlights the complexities of “women’s experience” and focuses on how feminist theory has engaged with these nuances.

Research from a feminist perspective is clearly underpinned by feminist political thought and the relationship between feminist political thought and “women’s experience” is very transparent within feminism. As Beverley Skeggs notes (1995),

Experience is the basis of feminism in the sense that feminism began the moment women started talking to each other about their experiences in a very simple way. And it was the perceived disjunction between individual women’s experiences and the (few) representations offered

by traditional disciplines that provided the spark for feminist research (p;15).

By accepting women's experience as valid, feminists are able to develop theory that is grounded in the everyday practicalities of women's lives. Thus supporting Code's advocacy of an 'epistemology of everyday lives'. For instance, documenting women's experience of exclusion and oppression provides important knowledge of how social relations of power impact on women. In this sense, the focus on women's experience within feminist research methodology makes explicit links with standpoint and relational theoretical approaches.

Standpoint theory posits the importance of starting analysis from the perspectives of marginalised people. Hegel's consideration of the master/slave relationship from the standpoint of the slave and Marx's analysis of capitalist society from the standpoint of the proletariat, both reflect knowledge projects which seek to offer a critical account of the differing relations to power. Nancy Hartsock (1983) takes up the Marxist notion of the proletarian standpoint and claims that because 'it provides a way to reveal the perverseness and inhumanity of human relations, a standpoint forms the basis for moving beyond these relations' (p.159). She argues that analysis from a feminist standpoint exposes the real material relations between men and women and the 'contradiction between the systematically differing structure of male and female life activity in Western cultures' (p.159).

In addition, Patricia Hill Collins (1991) through her analysis of the alternative ways African-American women have produced knowledge, shows how a distinctive black women's standpoint exists. Although Hill Collins is keen to assert a black women's standpoint she is also wary of claiming that black women have a more accurate view of oppression, thus addressing issues surrounding relativism. Her anxiety is with standpoint's implicit proposition that oppression can be quantified and compared and 'that the more subordinate

the group, the purer the vision of oppression' (p.200). Hill Collins argues that in this sense standpoint theory is in fact positivistic. She suggests this is the result of 'the origins of standpoint approaches in Marxist social theory' (p. 200) and Western dichotomous thinking central to the Enlightenment quest for 'truth'.

Poststructuralists also expose the legacy that standpoint has inherited from Enlightenment. For example, Rosi Braidotti (1994) warns of articulating feminist forms of knowledge that are caught in a 'mimetic relationship to dominant scientific discourse'. Christine Di Stefano (1990) argues that although feminist standpoint attempts anti-rationalism she claims that 'the figure of the differentiated female subject' (p. 77) is preserved within notions of gender difference. In this way she exposes how gender power relations remain in tact via dualistic or oppositional ways of thinking that ignore the multi-layered network of social relations. In addition, poststructuralists question grand narrative and the existence of 'some sort of truth' (Flax, 1992, p. 447). For example, Fraser and Nicholson, (1990) argue that standpoint theory is an illegitimate means to access the 'truth', since meta-narrative is viewed as 'no longer credible' (p. 22). That said, feminists continue to work with the approach as a way to offer 'better' knowledge. For example, through her construction of an Afrocentric feminist epistemology Hill Collins challenges 'the content of what currently passes as truth' and 'the process of arriving at that truth' (p.206). In this way feminist standpoint does strive towards "successor science" status (Harding, 1993).

Sandra Harding's (1993) rethinking of standpoint epistemology makes some important connections with Donna Haraway's (1991) argument for 'situated knowledge' in that both writers expose the shortfall of leaving unexamined the context of discovery. However, situated knowledge offers a more rigorous approach in relation to the specific context in which women live. In this way it links more closely with Code's 'epistemology of everyday lives'. In short, both

standpoint and situated knowledges are located. However, situated knowledge is importantly understood as partial.

Standpoint theory and situated knowledges offer feminists a legitimate way to centre women's experience within the process of knowledge production. Harding (1993) illustrates the importance of such a focus;

- (i) Knowledge claims are always socially situated.
- (ii) Traditional knowledge claims reflect the interests of dominant groups, that is those at the 'top' set the limits on what persons at the 'bottom' can understand.
- (iii) The experiences and lives of those at the 'bottom' have been devalued and ignored; they are not visible, but *can* provide starting points for thought.
- (iv) Feminist standpoint starts from the lives of marginalised people, namely women as a way to epistemologically valorise a previously discredited perspective of knowledge.

(Adapted from Harding, 1993; p.54)

My research draws on the experience of women who play football as a way to understand women's relationship to football. By asking women who play about their past and present football related experiences, I am able to draw upon empirical data to establish a body of knowledge which contributes to the field of feminist sports sociology. Until recently the sports sociology literature failed to take account of the everyday lived experiences of women who play. The knowledge we have of football is almost exclusively male (see for example Fishwick, 1989; Tomlinson, 1983; Walvin, 1994), women's perspectives have been effectively marginalised and made invisible.<sup>35</sup> Clearly, standpoint theory offers a way to valorise the footballing experiences of women. However, I feel this project goes beyond "successor science" status in relation to gender, as I

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<sup>35</sup> I demonstrate this point more fully in chapter five.

also want to explore the functioning of class, 'race', ethnicity and in particular sexuality within this socio-cultural arena. Thus providing located accounts albeit partial, which represent situated knowledges of women's experience of playing.

Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1993) advocate a feminist social science which seeks to find out 'what it is that we know and what it is that we experience' (p.164). They suggest that as women we need to 'reclaim, name and rename our experiences and our knowledge of the social world' (p. 164). This belief in situating women's experience as central to the production of knowledge is reflected in the research approach promoted by Stanley and Wise (1993) which is 'with, by and for' women. Such an approach seeks to capture women's personal experience and involves starting analysis from the perspective of women's lives (Harding, 1991: p.106). Here, the intent is to create a body of knowledge that represents women's experience of oppression and domination based on gender relations. Modern feminist writers adopt feminist standpoint theory as a way to expose structures of inequality. As I have mentioned above, this approach can easily be applied to the experiences of the women I have interviewed. We could anticipate that their experience of playing what has largely been defined as a traditional male sport, would reflect wider gendered relations of power, in particular, male hegemony within sport's culture.<sup>36</sup> However, the women are not a homogenous group and we might also imagine that they have varied and diverse football related experiences, thus their experiences are 'situated' in relation to their particular location within the multi-layered network of power relations.

Poststructuralist feminists reject standpoint theory and are 'critical of universalistic grand theories' (Maynard, 1994; p. 19). Instead, the focus is on the fractured and fragmented nature of 'womanhood' as well as the ubiquity of power. Feminist poststructuralists challenge the construction of meaning and

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<sup>36</sup> I explore this point more fully in chapter six.

advocate a deconstruction of rigid categories. Chris Weedon (1992 and 1999) argues that the poststructuralist developments in the theory of language, subjectivity and power offer theoretically rigorous means to address the specificities of women's experience and understand how power relations structure society. In particular, 'differences in subjectivity and different degrees of coherence between subject positions' (1992: p. 9). By moving away from single, overarching grand narrative and meta-discourses of women's oppression, poststructuralism legitimates the 'plural, local and immanent' (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990: pp. 23). In this way, feminists writing from a poststructuralist perspective, for example Weedon, make some links with Haraway's concept of situated knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the epistemological debates within feminist thought on the use of experience as a way of knowing (see for example Grant, 1987; Hammersley, 1992), the consistent positioning of "experience" as an important constituent of feminist research and feminist epistemology over the last two decades cannot be disputed. For example, Michele Barrett (1987) notes that 'the category of experience is heavily valorised in popular feminist discourse' (p.51), and more recently Avtar Brah (1996) posits that 'experience has been a key concept within feminism' (p.115). However, the idea that there is an authentic women's experience is problematic as clearly gender is not necessarily the sole or primary axis of oppression. Other "markings" such as 'race', ethnicity, sexuality, class and disability also function within the social relations matrix criss-crossing women's experience. In order to identify and fully explore the theoretical problematics associated with the concept "women's experience" I now offer a brief discussion on issues surrounding 'race' and sexuality. This account illustrates how the socially ascribed characteristics of 'race' and sexuality impact on women's experience, thus supporting the need to take into account the experiences of the marginalised and illuminating the tensions

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<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, Weedon (1999) argues that Haraway's notion of situated knowledges is an attempt to give standpoint theory a postmodern inflection.

which exist when “experience” is taken as a vehicle to assert a distinctly feminist epistemology.

### ***‘Race’***

Feminist theory and political thought has justifiably been criticised for implicitly and explicitly documenting the situation and experience of white middle class women but without an accompanying analysis and critique of whiteness. Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar (1997), through their analysis of the family, sexuality and the women’s peace movement, show how ‘Black women’s experience is very different from that of white women’ (p.55). They describe mainstream feminist theory as ‘imperial feminism’ and argue that it ‘does not speak to the experiences of Black women’ (p. 54). In her analysis of ‘the boundaries of sisterhood’, Hazel Carby (1984) also discusses how ‘feminist theory in Britain is almost wholly Eurocentric’ she argues that white feminists have ignored the experiences and struggles of black women. Heidi Mirza (1982) suggests that during the 1980s Black British feminists, such as Amos, Parmar and Carby, challenged both the exclusion of black women’s experience and white feminist authority. In her analysis and critique of ‘imperial feminism’ Mirza notes;

...racial power within the white feminist production of knowledge about gender relations was never problematized. Whiteness was a ‘given’ social position. (...) knowledge about social relations was experiential. The central drive of the feminist project was to reveal hitherto obscured realities (...) Black women’s experience was invisible, or if made visible spoken for and constructed through the authoritative, imperial voice of whiteness (p. 9 -10).

Moreover, Ruth Frankenberg (1993) calls for the deconstruction of white experiences and an investigation of the white self. She argues that feminism needs to address whiteness and ethnocentrism in order to displace white from its central, unmarked and undefined position. Similarly bell hooks (1991) and Vron Ware (1992) argue that it is important that white women consider the



racialised context of their own experience. The deconstruction of whiteness not only exposes whiteness as a 'given' social position it also prevents the assumption that race is experienced only by black, South Asian and Asian women.

Black British feminists have provided a valuable challenge to our understanding of "women's experience". By documenting the situation and experience of women, Black British feminists have highlighted omissions and assumptions surrounding the homogeneity of women's experience. Critical writings have exposed 'whiteness' and its relationship to the concept women's experience within feminist theory. In addition, Black British feminists have elucidated the problem of universalising 'black women's experience' through a recognition and inclusion of diversity.

In her book *'Cartographies of Diaspora'*, Brah (1996) proclaims 'this book, in many ways, is an attempt to think through the opacity of experience' (p.11). She argues that there is 'no simple one-to-one correspondence between collective experience and personal biography' (p. 89). By mapping a history of the dispersion of people from their places of origin, she shows how the categories "Black" and "Asian" are contested sites and how the experiences within and between these groups in post war Britain are not transparent but 'kaleidoscopic'. In other words, dynamic configurations that momentarily display uniform shape and form. She argues that experiences are shifting and not static, and continuous and discontinuous. That is, experiences are shared and not shared according to an individual's particular location at a given moment.

Brah (1996) theorises difference and diversity in a way that includes both identity (the idea of continuities of experience and shared characteristics) and subjectivity (the idea that experiences reflect discontinuities according to women's particular location within complex and shifting social relations). This theorising is through a framework that highlights the role of social

construction. For instance, she argues 'the self that narrates is already a modality of narration of such economic, political and cultural discourses and practices' (p.129). From this premise Brah argues that experience 'is no guarantor of some essential authenticity' (p.9). She is careful to avoid essentialising the experience of Asian women and Muslim women, and calls for a deconstruction of the concepts "Asian women" and "Muslim women" in British discourse (p.131). Here, in addition to this concern to promote the non-fixed multiplicity of experience, Brah also highlights the positioning of experience as a discursive space, within a landscape which is also 'produced, appropriated, disrupted and contested' (p.130), here the landscape is "British discourse".<sup>38</sup>

Brah remains mindful of the tenuous relationship between individual and collective experience and the impact of 'everyday cultural and political practices' (p.117) on what we experience. That said, she is prepared to acknowledge that the power dynamics of social relations do assume fixed patterns of specific social differentiation. At this point there exists shared experiences and continuities in experience, and it is possible to apply feminist standpoint theory in order to produce new knowledge. However, this configuration may change because experience is shifting and discontinuities exist. Haraway's (1991) work on situated knowledges then becomes important as a way to capture women's particular and located accounts. Clearly Brah's analysis of experience offers a complex and nuanced framework through which to understand and incorporate women's experience in feminist epistemology.

The significance of Brah's analysis is that it moves beyond the debate on the essentialist/constructionist binarism. Like Hill Collins, she argues that 'difference is not always a marker of hierarchy and oppression' (p.126) and places both 'gendered' and 'raced' experience as useful in identifying the myriad configurations of social relations to power.

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<sup>38</sup> In chapter seven I demonstrate how the principles of these arguments are relevant to a discussion on football's sexual peremptory.

## *Sexuality*

Similar discussions exist around sexuality and questions concerning difference. The feminist debate has been stretched and pulled by a feminist political history, which has at times included antagonistic relations between heterosexual women and lesbians. The epitome of this conflict took place during the late 1970s and early 1980s when several organisations, activist groups and academic forums divided as a result of unresolved issues surrounding sexuality. Despite these schisms it is generally accepted within feminist politics that sexuality is not simply some natural experience. In accordance with Kate Millett's 'Sexual Politics' (1972) it is widely acknowledged that "women's experience" is socially and culturally traversed by sexuality. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s the debate on experience as it relates to women and sexuality also includes bisexual theory (early 1990s) and queer theory (late 1980s). Both offer a challenge to the rigid categorisation of heterosexual and lesbian experience.

Women's experience of heterosexual relations have been widely documented, in particular women's experience of reproduction, domesticity (see for example work by Ann Oakley), abuse and violence (see for example work by Liz Kelly). There exists a body of knowledge that represents feminist research and contributes to the debate problematising women's experience of heterosexuality. For example, Stevi Jackson (1996) is aware of 'the need to analyse heterosexuality critically, to explore the ways in which it is implicated in the subordination of women' (p.21) and she acknowledges the existing positioning of women's experience within this analysis.

Recent analysis of heterosexuality, whether attacking it (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1993: Kitzinger, 1994) or defending it (Holloway, 1993; Segal, 1994), have tended to focus on sexual experience and practice, particularly on desire and pleasure (1995; p.20).

Feminists keen to document the experiences of lesbians<sup>39</sup> have also focused on sexual experience and practice. Traditionally this has occurred through an identity politics, which promotes lesbianism as stable, unified and identifiable. More contemporary commentators have also promoted notions of identity for example Sally Munt's (1998b) work on lesbian experience presents and makes visible the perspectives of "outlawed" sexual minorities. The adoption of identity politics as a strategy to make discernible the experience of lesbians has on one level been successful in as much as it has enabled the further carving of a theoretical space within feminist thought for lesbian politics. However on another level the notion of identity politics frequently agitates debate around essentialist/constructionist understandings of sexuality. For instance, to advocate a lesbian standpoint reifies women's experience within feminist knowledge that is based on notions of unity, that is that all lesbians have a common experience of being lesbian. To advocate an authentic experience or specific sexual identity would in effect create an arbitrary and exclusionary approach to sexuality and one I wish to avoid. That said, I do acknowledge the role of strategic essentialism (Fuss, 1989) in politicising the experiences of the sexually marginalised.

The recent emergence of bisexual theory and queer theory appears to offer an approach that moves beyond the oppositional binaries: heterosexual/homosexual; essentialist/constructionist, and the concomitant concept of difference as hierarchical.

Queer theory has accrued multiple meanings, from a merely useful shorthand way to speak of all gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered experiences to a theoretical sensibility that pivots on transgression or permanent rebellion. I take as central to Queer theory its challenge to what has been the dominant foundational concept of both homophobic and affirmative homosexual theory: the assumption of a unified homosexual identity. I interpret Queer theory as contesting this foundation and therefore the very telos of Western homosexual politics (Seidman, 1996: p. 11)

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<sup>39</sup> See for example work by Sheila Jeffreys, Celia Kitzenger and Sue Wilkinson.

Many aspects of queer theory connect with aspects of poststructuralist theory. In particular the analysis of the history of power and knowledge in relation to disciplinary practices. For example, Foucault (1976) and Sedgwick (1990) argue that institutional practices and discourses produce a “normative language” and this discourse serves to reinforce the regime of [hetero]sexuality. Through an excavation of the history of sexuality both writers expose the mechanisms that regulate sexuality and produce rigid sexual categories. Similarly, queer theory deconstructs the existing regime of [hetero] sexuality and aims to transform existing obdurate notions of sexuality through an analysis of difference, multiplicity and contestable meaning.

As with Brah’s analysis of race, queer theory allows for the theorising of sexuality in a way that captures the diversity of women’s experience. The notion of identity has been useful to a centralising of both ‘black’ women and lesbian experience, however identity politics are problematic since they assume a constant commonality. In comparison, the reference to ‘subjectivities’ evident in the work of Brah (1996), Haraway (1991) and queer theory offers a useful alternative. In contrast to identity and standpoint theory, situated knowledges and knowledges of the marginalised can be accessed through the notion of subjectivity. That is, we hold certain subject positions at given moments and this defines our subjectivity. An interrogation of these particular locations can expose new knowledge in relation to women’s lived experiences. Such a challenge to feminist standpoint epistemology makes visible the diversity within the category “women”. Women’s experience continues to be theorised from a position that takes into account structures of power, while acknowledging that difference is not always positioned as oppositional and /or hierarchical.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> In chapters six, seven and eight I adopt an approach which makes visible the different experiences of the women in relation to gender and sexuality. In this way, I support situated knowledge as a means to produce feminist epistemology from the standpoint of the marginalised.

Constructing a body of knowledge that is produced through feminist research constitutes an important challenge to the unmarked partiality of traditional white, middle class, male theory. Knowledge bases within the social sciences are largely 'grounded in men's experience and relationships' and 'are largely appropriated by men as their "territory"' (Smith, 1990; p. 13). Clearly documenting "women's experience" through an analysis of the marginalised, provides a critical challenge to traditional epistemologies and the ownership of knowledge.

### **Women's ways of knowing.**

By taking subjectivity into account feminists (Code, 1993; Harding, 1991; Stanley and Wise, 1993) acknowledge the significant impact of the "knower" on the production of knowledge. Traditionally the "knower", positioned as "S" in the equation "S-knows-that-p", has assumed a homogeneity that has been undertheorized (Dalmiya and Alcoff, 1993). By acknowledging that 'differing social positions generate variable constructions of reality and afford different perspectives on the world' (Code, 1993: p.39) feminists accept the influence of the "knower" and the impact of this influence on the production of knowledge, that is the "knows-that-p" process. In fact, Sandra Harding (1991) argues that by accepting and acknowledging the influence of the "knower" it renders the production of knowledge more "objective" rather than in the traditional way, less objective and more subjective. She posits that it is this "social-situatedness" which marks the process of knowledge production as more transparent and suggests that this in fact is "strong objectivity".

### ***Objectivity.***

Feminist debates surrounding the concept objectivity are important to a discussion on women's ways of knowing since objectivity has traditionally been positioned as central to the process of discovery. Traditional ways of

knowing have relied heavily on the concept of a disembodied “scientific objectivity”. The scientific ideological canon has positioned objectivity as an inescapable component in the manufacturing of knowledge. Donna Haraway (1991) is critical of such positivist objectivity, and advocates that

Feminists don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence, a story that loses track of its mediations just where someone might be held responsible for something, and unlimited instrumental power (p187).

She argues that feminists should demand a better account of the world and advocates ‘a feminist version of objectivity’ (p.186). Haraway’s challenge to what can count as knowledge critiques the policing and codification processes often reflected by the concept objectivity and evident within existing scientific practice. She believes ‘debates about objectivity matter’ (p.188), as they are central to this challenge. She calls for ‘a doctrine of embodied objectivity that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects: feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*’ (p. 188).

Although Haraway continues to use the term “objectivity” she constructs a very different meaning, one which is concerned with ‘seeing from the standpoints of the subjugated in order to see well’ (p.192). She insists on an understanding of objectivity as active not inert, and places it as part of a paradigm which is open, ‘contestable and contested’ (p. 196). In a similar way she also reconfigures the concept of rationality, arguing that it is in fact ‘power-sensitive conversation’ (p.196). Such a theory of objectivity is complex. By manoeuvring within the existing framework of traditional ways of knowing, Haraway offers a version which places the “object” of knowledge as an active agent and the process of knowing as a particular interpretation. This approach seeks the local and partial perspectives of the subjugated which are situated within the larger ‘webs of knowledge and power’ (p.194). In many ways this appreciation of the particular as it is positioned within a larger social matrix makes links with Brah’s (1996) assertion that ‘the self that narrates is already a modality of

narration of such economic, political and cultural discourses and practices' (p.129).

Haraway's focus on partiality seeks to avoid absolute relativism as she advocates the importance of connecting and linking, thus producing webs, the different intonations to form 'a collective subject position' (p.196). Through her notion of kaleidoscopic figurations of experience, Brah (1996) also acknowledges the importance of conflating 'collective experience and personal biography' (p. 89). Similarly Lynn Nelson's proposition that 'communities are the primary epistemological agents' (1993; p.123) suggests a combining of the individual and the collective. What is provided then is 'webbed accounts' (Haraway, 1988, p. 290) and it is this joining of partial views that constitutes situated knowledges – 'Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular' (Haraway, 1988, p. 292).

Haraway's treatment of objectivity as malleable, and her emphasis on firstly partiality followed by collectivity, and secondly, critical translation, which acknowledges the positioning and accountability of the researcher, offer a distinct way of "finding out".

So, like many other feminists, I want to argue for a doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing (p. 191/2).

Her feminist overhauling of objectivity presents a specific challenge to traditional ways of knowing without losing sight of the tools already available. Her desire not to lose too much of what already exists is partly bound up with a need to expose 'the specificities and the highly permeable boundaries of meanings in discourse on science' (p.197). In other words to unveil the fallacy of objectivity, *and* an ambivalence towards the postmodern project.



The strong programme in the sociology of knowledge joins with the lovely and nasty tools of semiology and deconstruction to insist on the rhetorical nature of truth, including scientific truth (p185).

By adopting the analytic power of existing authoritative accounts Haraway hopes to decode and recode; 'as coding trickster' (p.201), our understanding by working with what we already know.

Kum-Kum Bhavnani (1994) argues that it is Haraway's three elements of "feminist objectivity": partiality, positioning and accountability that allow an important 'retaining sense of the material or "real" world' (p.28). Bhavnani, in her work with young people and politics, adapts these three elements. She reads partiality as difference, positioning as micropolitics and accountability as reinscription.

It is these three questions - are the researched reinscribed into prevailing notions of powerlessness? are the micropolitics of the research relationships discussed? And how are questions of difference engaged with? - which I suggest flow from Haraway's discussion of feminist objectivity (...) (p.30).

Bhavnani discusses the 'non-shared experiences and accounts such as those of racism, culture and gender' (p36) offered by the young people in her research. Her interview material supports Haraway's notion of partiality and discontinuities of experience. In addition, Bhavnani asserts the 'study did point to many continuities of experience' (p.30).

Bhavnani acknowledges that the 'researcher is positioned in a particular relationship of power in relation to the researched' (p.34) and argues for an analysis of the micropolitics of the research situation. She identifies that within her own research encounter 'race, gender and class, as well as age of the interviewer and interviewee' (p.34) were in play on both sides. By making these micropolitical processes transparent Bhavnani supports Harding's (1991) "strong objectivity" and Haraway's (1991) "feminist objectivity".

During the interviews on politics, Bhavnani was keen to avoid re-inscribing the 'researched into dominant representations - namely, that young working class people are social victims' (p.33). Similarly, her analysis of the interviews set out to elude the 'dominant representations which reinscribe inequality' (p.29). In this way Bhavnani feels she is accountable and argues that this accountability is 'not only to specific individuals, but also to the overall projects of feminisms' (p.29). As with the commitment to an analysis of micropolitics, Bhavnani is aware that socially ascribed characteristics such as class, gender and race carry 'hierarchical loadings' (p.34) and she makes a challenge to structural domination and subordination by offering the "partial" and/or "different" experiences of the young people she interviews.

By taking account of difference, micropolitics and reinscription Bhavnani offers an animated example of "feminist objectivity" as it functions within a feminist research project.

### *The epistemic sphere.*

Challenging and transforming existing ways of knowing is important if feminists are to identify and legitimate women's ways of knowing. In their work, Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff (1993) argue women's ways of knowing have been effectively delegitimated through a process they refer to as "epistemic discrimination" (p.217). They posit that this 'is not only politically disturbing but also epistemologically specious' (p.217). They cite midwifery as an example of "epistemic discrimination" and the deceptively plausible but false positioning of women's knowledge as not fairly deduced.

Midwives gained their knowledge through practice and "hearsay" rather than through "authoritative" books that collected "facts" and stated them in the form of propositions. (p224)

During the nineteenth century, the hijacking of midwifery by male physicians within a developing medical profession led to its scientific codification. Dalmiya and Alcoff are highly critical of this take over and the ensuing legitimisation of male medical gynaecological knowledge. They argue for an accepting of women's knowledge, in this case of midwifery, giving two main arguments. Firstly, that there exist "non traditional" ways of knowing, namely "gender-specific experiential knowledge" ("G-experiential") and "knowing how" - as opposed to the traditional prepositional way of "knowing that", and secondly, that we can not accept the epistemic totality of "*S*-knows-that-*p*". They present this argument:

1. Traditional women's knowledge, like knowing what it is like to give birth (G-experiential knowing) and knowing how to soothe a crying baby (knowing how) are not cases of "knowing that" as represented by the traditional schema "*S*-knows-that-*p*".
2. "Experiential knowing" and "knowing how" are epistemic states.
3. Therefore, "knowing that" as represented by "*S*-knows-that-*p*" does not exhaust the sphere of the epistemic.
4. Contemporary epistemology has generally taken "knowing that" as the paradigm of knowledge.
5. Therefore, contemporary epistemology is epistemically discriminatory or inadequate.

(Dalmiya and Alcoff, 1993 ; p.231)

This challenge to traditionally accepted ways of knowing is important to a feminist epistemology. By taking issue with the notion of a prescribed and set epistemic sphere, Dalmiya and Alcoff open the way for important debate around "epistemic discrimination" and the delegitimated positioning of women's ways of knowing.

Susan Babbitt (1993) argues for transformation experience as significant in the production of knowledge, therefore supporting Dalmiya and Alcoff's argument

for a space within the epistemic sphere for nonpropositional knowledge. Babbitt suggests that understanding can be acquired 'through transformative emotional involvement' (p. 258). Here the inclusion of 'emotional involvement' supports Jaggar's (1989) focus on emotion as a valid constituent in the production of knowledge. As an example, Babbitt cites Audre Lorde as a feminist theorist who successfully 'treats personal involvement and commitment epistemically' (p.258). Babbitt argues that even within "scientific" practice 'scientific "hunches" and intuitions' (p.259) are used as a source of nonpropositional knowledge. This inclusion of tacit knowledge is often overlooked when discussing how 'scientists acquire rational standards that guide them' (p.259). By making this process transparent Babbitt argues that both women's experience and situatedness 'advance the possibility of objective justification for claims about social and political realities' (p.246). She fears that feminists are reticent about developing theories of knowledge as a result of the belief that there are 'a priori, legislative conditions for knowledge' (p.261). Babbitt argues for ways of knowing which expose 'such epistemological demands' and render them 'misguided' (p.261). Clearly ways of knowing which take into account women's transformative emotional involvement offer a suitable challenge to traditional epistemology. Like the work presented by Haraway and Dalmiya and Alcoff, Babbitt's work reconfigures our understanding of the content and form of the epistemic sphere. All focus on ways of knowing by positing the personal and the particular and in this sense they promote women's ways of knowing.

In terms of my own research journey, I have found Jaggar's acknowledgement of the role of emotion and Babbitt's recognition of transformation experience as significant to the production of knowledge particularly useful. Such an approach allows for an inclusion of a discussion on my changing experiences and how these experiences can be central to the epistemic project of producing knowledge. In many ways the inclusion of transformation experience fits well with what some feminists refer to as reflexivity. One of the most significant transformative experiences I had during the research was related to a central

feature of my project, namely sexuality. Prior to the research for this PhD project, my previous experience of conducting research was limited to a user survey for my masters dissertation, and in terms of feminist informed research it was non existent. During the third interview, a pilot interview, I became profoundly aware of my position as a researcher and interviewer. The interview was with a young woman (20/21 yrs.).

The interview with Julie concluded with a discussion about the differences between our sexualities. As a self identified heterosexual, who was 'pissed off' with the stereotypical portrayal of women's football as 'butch lesbians', she found it difficult to give honest answers to some of the questions, as she was aware of my sexuality; 'I think its definitely because I know that you're a lesbian and I'm not and I do think its quite difficult to talk about - talk about this sort of thing' (interview transcript)(research journal - 5/2/98).

My pertinent question during the interview 'and you know I am a lesbian?' provoked much discussion between my supervisors and myself. This research "moment" including the interview and the proceeding analysis caused concern. At the time I wrote; 'I found the interview difficult and concluded that Julie was not a 'talker' and yet I feel uncomfortable with this simple analysis of a very interactive transcript. (...) I feel my status and subjectivity significantly influenced the interview. I feel there was an 'academic' power relation [at the time Julie was in her final year of a leisure studies degree] and a sexuality differential' (research journal - 26/1/98). On reading the transcript it was felt by my supervisors, and later by myself, that I might have intimidated Julie by disclosing my sexuality. It is possible to position the tensions that are evident within the transcript in relation to issues surrounding sexuality. By adopting such an analysis of the interview it became more apparent that there might have existed a subliminal 'agenda'.

I need to consider why it is I have this overarching 'passion' to explore lesbian sexuality within football culture, when previously it was in fact a 'passion' for football. Is it simply a reflection of recent reading (Sally Munt and Judith Butler)? I really need to focus on what I am doing my PhD on. I also need to address my stubbornness to give up my own

'identity' while interviewing . Can I be dispassionate about sexuality? do I want to be? and why don't I want to be? (research journal - 5/2/98).

The interview with Julie demonstrates that issues surrounding sexuality shape womens' experiences of playing football. I was aware of this prior to the research. However this became so much clearer once I had explored our experiences of the interview. Some time later, the discomfort I felt with how the disclosure of my sexuality could be read as "intimidating" and the struggles I experienced trying to understand Julie's "hostility" towards lesbian sexuality resulted in an in-depth exploration of the butch lesbian identity historically and within the context of sport.<sup>41</sup> I believe my discomfort reflects an emotional involvement with both the interview process and the interview content. I feel that 'through transformative emotional involvement' (Babbitt, 1993, p; 258) some time later I was able to offer an interpretation of how the butch lesbian identity impacts on women who play football and how this affects heterosexual subjectivity (Caudwell, 1999). Previous work within feminist sports sociology (Fastings and Scraton, 1997; Hargreaves, 1997) refers to the association between sportswomen and butch but fails to fully unpack the identity. 'Butch' epitomises the conflation of gender and sexuality and it has real currency within sport's culture. However, feminist writers within the sociology of sport have largely ignored it.<sup>42</sup> Clearly the butch identity remains under-theorised within sports sociology. My own engagement with the identity has evolved during the course of this research project. It was not an intention of the research project but has taken a significant place and driven important theoretical debate. This is as a result of my early interview research experience.

This personal engagement with the research process leads me to examine the issue of reflexivity.

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<sup>41</sup> In addition the research moment contributed to an engagement with methodological issues in relation to interview 'silences' and knowledge production. That is how my position as a sexual person (researcher) impacts on the process of producing knowledge. I return to this point later.

<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere feminist have rigorously explored masculinity in women, for example see the work of Butler (1993a), Feinberg (1993), Halberstam (1998), Munt (1998a), Vicious (1993) and Wilton (1996).

### ***Reflexivity.***

Reflexivity is the process of examining the subjective experience of doing research, it is based on the underlying assumption that the 'personhood can not be left behind' (Stanley and Wise, 1993; p.161) and that the consciousness is an available research resource. According to Maynard and Purvis (1994) the contribution reflexivity makes to the research process itself is 'rich and dynamic'. Maynard (1994) argues that this concern to document the subjective experience of doing research can be expressed in two ways;

1. It can mean reflecting upon, critically examining and exploring analytically the nature of the research process in an attempt to demonstrate the assumptions about gender (and, increasingly, race, disability and other oppressive) relations which are built into a specific project.
2. It may also refer to understanding the 'intellectual autobiography' of researchers. (p. 16)

In a similar way Liz Kelly, Sheila Burton and Linda Regan (1994) argue that it is possible to divide reflexivity into the personal and the theoretical. Here, personal reflexivity refers to reflections on doing the research and theoretical reflexivity informs the initial design stages. The research moments I have already described and the resultant commitment to unpacking the figure of the butch as she appears within football culture, represent both personal and theoretical reflexivity. According to Liz Stanley (1991) this type of engagement also represents intellectual autobiography. Intellectual autobiography is a detailed explication of how knowledge is produced and under what conditions. That is, the researcher produces her account or autobiography. This blatant location of the researcher within the research project represents 'one of the most fundamental premises of feminist research' (Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1994; p.150). By focusing on the analytic processes, the intellectual

autobiography makes transparent the 'representational and other issues involved in these processes and the conclusions derived from them' (Stanley, 1991; p.45). If we return to the feminist theoretical challenges to traditional ways of knowing (Babbitt, 1993; Code, 1993; Dalmiya and Alcoff, 1993; Haraway 1991), then reflexivity within a feminist research project fits within this challenge as fundamentally it signifies a rejection of foundationalist principles. Reflexivity epitomises how the researcher and researched are not detached.

### **Women's knowledge.**

The feminist engagement with the production of knowledge through "women's experience" and "women's ways of knowing" produces what can be described as "women's knowledge". By documenting and making visible women's accounts of social relations, feminists contribute to our understanding of the functioning of gender, as well as 'race', ethnicity, sexuality, class, and disability. This contribution enables some feminists to afford the claim "women's knowledge". The claim that there exists a distinctly "women's knowledge" is however problematic. Firstly, as with other feminist concepts prefixed with "women", issues of essentialism and universalism abound, and secondly "women's knowledge" and feminist epistemologies are not necessarily synonymous.

In relation to the first point, the above discussion on "women's experience" elucidates the principle features of the debates concerning essentialism and universalism within feminist thought. I suggest that recent feminist theorising is shifting discussion away from polarised and/or oppositional accounts of "women's experience" in an attempt to develop a dialogue which is more nuanced and less categorical (for example the work by Brah, 1996). I argue that the pursuit to document "women's experience" in a way that makes transparent the processes by which this is achieved does offer a body of knowledge that is distinctly feminist. Unlike the traditional epistemic "sphere" this body of



knowledge does not form a smooth and unchanging configuration. Instead it is being redefined and reconfigured by critical feminist thought, for example the work of black British feminists and feminist poststructuralists. While I am aware that this has not been an unanimous development within feminist thought, it is possible to show how issues of universalism and essentialism have been addressed, for example, work by Bhavnani (1994), Brah (1996), and Haraway (1991). Similarly, some feminists have confronted issues surrounding relativism, for example, Harding's work (1993), and yet relativism remains a contentious issue.

### ***Relativism.***

The idea that knowledge can be "reduced" to perspectives or points of view of the world and the acknowledgement that there are "different" positions, implies a certain type of perspectivism. Such a proposition and by implication the concept "women's knowledge" has been viewed as problematic. For instance, by advocating that knowledge is always relative to specifiable circumstances, and that there exists different realities, those supporting the feminist epistemological project have encountered critique based on the principle of relativism. In addition, within modern feminist debate, relativism has been read in one of two ways, either as:

- (i) a challenge to traditional notions of objectivity and universalism by placing emphasis on identity and difference, or;
- (ii) a disavowal of any shared politics and/or consensus.

The debates surrounding, and the efforts to protect against, relativism may reveal the continued vested interest in a model which conceived traditional epistemologies. Bat-Ami Bar On (1993) alludes to this when she claims that the modern feminist quest to empower women with epistemic privilege has emerged from within the framework of the Enlightenment model. It is often difficult to discern between what is a feminist radical rethinking of

epistemology and cognates such as epistemic discrimination and epistemic agency, and theory that hangs on the legacy of prominent traditional positivist epistemologies. As such, epistemological origin and meaning are difficult to disregard and continue to shape our present understanding. For example, as mentioned above, Hill Collins refers to this dilemma when she adopts standpoint theory.

However, in relation to Harding's (1991) categorical approaches to epistemology; standpoint and postmodern,<sup>43</sup> it is generally argued by modern structuralists (Harding, 1991) that postmodern approaches are relativist. That said, the reworking of standpoint theory, for example, Haraway's (1991) reconfiguration of "objectivity" and Stanley and Wise's (1993) distinct epistemological position which appears as a ten point schema they refer to as "fractured foundationalism" (p.9), protect against accusations of relativism. The jaundice that accompanies charges of relativism is seemingly avoided by standpoint's offer of a more encompassing metanarrative of 'womanhood', compared to the postmodern refusal to accept grand theorizing.

The debate over relativism within feminist thought appears to develop most momentum within the critique of 'feminist postmodern epistemology'. The argument being that since postmodern analysis is based on multiplicity, the particular, and the deconstruction of sameness and commonality, it is therefore relativist. As a result of the postmodern pursuit to deconstruct meaning the charge against postmodernists of relativism is linked to notions of nihilism, that is the postmodern rejection of shared realities. Some feminists (Waugh, 1992) are fearful of the postmodern potential for "apocalyptic nihilism". Postmodernists on the other hand argue that relativism is only coherent as it is positioned within a binary opposite. As such relativism only takes on meaning

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<sup>43</sup> Here I use the term "postmodern" as presented by Harding, however it is poststructuralist writers I have engaged with during the course of this thesis. Overall I tend to use the term poststructuralist as this reflects my current interests and understanding of epistemology and methodology.

within its partnership with universalism. Jane Flax (1992) argues that deconstructing meaning and contesting language is vital to our understanding of knowledge; 'we cannot understand knowledge without tracing the effects of the power relations which simultaneously enable and limit the possibilities of discourse' (p. 453). In this way it is the construction of meaning that is the focus of postmodern inquiry, and not the pursuit to parry accusations of relativism.

Clearly the debates surrounding relativism are intricate and complex. Largely relativism is positioned as anathema - something to be avoided in the feminist quest to produce authentic knowledge. However by avoiding the dogma of absolute and all-inclusive knowledge claims, feminists are able to focus on the particular. By documenting different realities all of which are valid, feminists working from either; within an overhauled version of traditional standpoint theory; through a postmodern analysis; or in the gaps between the two, separately and collectively, strive to establish a body of feminist knowledge based on women's experiential diversity.

### ***Feminist knowledge.***

At this stage, it is useful to replace the notion of "women's knowledge" with "feminist knowledge". At the same time I am aware of the clear distinction between 'woman' and 'feminist' and support Bhavanni's view that they are not 'collapsible into each other' (p. 39). By referring to "feminist knowledge" instead of "women's knowledge" it is possible to offer a more political analysis. In addition it may be less problematic and more useful to use "feminist knowledge" as a way to discuss the issue of feminist epistemology. Not only does the notion of "feminist knowledge" distinguish and mark the political nature of feminist epistemology it also reifies and concludes the discussion within this chapter. By adopting the notion of "feminist knowledge" as opposed to "women's knowledge", it reflects a commitment to the

arguments that knowledge is indeed political and that distinctly feminist epistemologies do indeed exist.

Clearly the critical engagement with traditional epistemology and the assertive project to develop feminist accounts, has resulted in a body of knowledge which is described by Gunew (1990) as feminist knowledge, and by Alcoff and Potter (1993) as feminist epistemologies.

### **Summary.**

This chapter provides a detailed discussion on some of the epistemological and methodological debates as they appear within feminist thought. Through the above discussion I have established the political status of knowledge and have illustrated how women have been effectively excluded from knowledge production. By engaging with feminist epistemology and methodology I am endorsing the possibilities of 'women's experience', and 'women's ways of knowing' as ways to contribute to a body of feminist knowledge. The material presented in this thesis provides an account of women's everyday lived experience of playing football. The methodologies employed to gather, interpret and present this material reflect particular 'ways of knowing'. It is through this feminist analysis of the women's experiences that I provide new feminist knowledge on women who play football. That said, I am aware of how problematic the concept women's experience is in relation to essentialism, universalism, and relativism. I have resolved some of the tensions by selecting and focusing on feminist theory that addresses the myriad of women's experience and feminist approaches that make transparent the processes of discovery. My intention, as set out at the beginning of this chapter, is to construct an ontology of knowledge with which to frame my research material. While I accept that no single view can be fully representative, in this thesis I start knowledge production from the perspective of the marginalised, namely women who play football. In a very Haraway-ian way, I offer local knowledges and join these partial views thus providing webbed accounts.

By positioning the category experience as central to the project of producing feminist knowledge, I explore the issues surrounding standpoint theory and homogeneity, and identity politics. Through a specific focus on issues surrounding 'race' and sexuality I highlight, via the work of Brah (1996) and queer theory, the need for subjectivity and situated knowledge to be taken into account. For example, I engage with Brah's concern to promote the non-fixed multiplicity of experience and her kaleidoscopic notion that there exist both shared and non-shared experiences based on an individual's shifting location within an existing landscape; set of unequal power structures. This emphasis on experiential diversity acknowledges difference by marking it as not always oppressive. Thus, asserting and supporting Hill Collins' argument that the marginalised is not hierarchical. Although dealing with difference is theoretically difficult within the bounds of modern feminist thought, such analysis has importantly 'broken up the singular standpoint of an earlier women's studies and the universalising identity of women visible from that standpoint' (Crosby, 1992: pp. 136). Brah's analysis attends to the social structures of inequality while at the same time allowing for an exploration of the nuances within 'women's experience'. Thus enabling a focus on marginalised groups *within* the category 'woman'. This approach emerges as significant when I discuss the women's experience of gender in chapter six and nine, and sexuality in chapter seven.

Throughout this chapter I refer to the formula "S-knows-that-p" as introduced by a consideration of the work by Lorraine Code (1993). The focus on "S" within the discussion on 'women's ways of knowing' has importantly illuminated the position of the "knower". In the next chapter I offer an in-depth discussion on my own position within this research project. In this way I locate the "knower" and elucidate the relation between reflexivity and methodology

Returning to this chapter, I illustrate how the theoretical dimensions of Donna Haraway's (1991) 'feminist objectivity' embraces the role of "S" in the

production of knowledge. Haraway advocates starting the process of knowledge production from the perspective of the subjugated. Her concept 'situated knowledges' continues to contribute to the discussions on feminist standpoint and the work of Atvar Brah. Therefore, I sustain the focus on feminist writers who have addressed difference while at the same time holding on to aspects of commonality. Kum-Kum Bhavnani works with Haraway's concepts of partiality, positioning and accountability preferring to make use of 'difference', 'micropolitics' and 'reinscription'. I have found the latter three particularly helpful during the analysis of my own research process and I discuss occasions in this chapter and also in the next chapter where I deal with the specific methodologies employed.

The discussion on the epistemic sphere, epistemic discrimination and reflexivity persist with challenging the traditional disregard for the "knower"; "S". I make connections between Jaggar's and Babbitt's recognition of the role of emotion in the production of knowledge, linking this to reflexivity. In this chapter I provide a specific example. In the next chapter I consider at length similar research moments as they have appeared within the research process.

Finally the inclusion of a brief review of relativism as it appears within feminist theory offers a discussion which elucidates the tensions that exist within contemporary feminist thought. Modern structuralist feminists seek to protect against relativism and postmodernism, whilst postmodern and poststructuralist feminists deconstruct the very meaning of relativism associating it with Enlightenment and positivism. The key issue, which appears as the crux of the debate is the contemporary acknowledgement of difference. Within modern feminist thought there has been a move from early second wave theorising on the unitary category 'woman' and difference between the sexes, towards attempting to deal with difference amongst women. This is paralleled by a postmodern, poststructuralist feminist project to move away from grand narratives and meta-discourses on difference and to accept diversity as a site of analysis.

In this thesis I offer an account that makes visible the experiences of the women taking part in the research. It is presented in a particular way and reflects a particular analysis. I do not claim to be offering an absolute version of women's experiences of football in England and Wales. However, I do provide valuable 'new' knowledge. Through the above discussions I highlight why this knowledge can be counted as feminist and illustrate the value of both feminist standpoint and feminist poststructuralist epistemologies.

## **Chapter four.**

### **Researching women who play football.**

#### **Introduction.**

The previous chapter offers an in-depth discussion on feminist epistemology and methodology. This chapter focuses specifically on the methodological issues particular to the research underpinning this thesis. It compliments the previous chapter in that it continues to animate some of the issues detailed. By plotting and exploring my own research experience I continue to engage with some central aspects of feminist methodology, namely power relations as they function within the research process, and reflexivity. Through this critical engagement with the research process I highlight the methodological limitations of the research. I make use of Haraway's (1991) concepts of positioning and accountability to highlight my own position in relation to the research topic and the production of knowledge. By focusing on the micropolitics of the research (Bhavnani, 1994) I expose the power dynamics inherent within this research project.

#### **Feminist methods of inquiry.**

Some feminists have argued that there are particular methods of discovery which assist the feminist epistemological project. Thus, Skeggs (1995) notes that 'in Britain Helen Roberts (1981), Angela McRobbie (1982) and Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1983) argued for the specificity of feminist methods and feminist research' (p.11). In the past feminists have discussed methods of inquiry and the role of reflexivity in an effort to distinguish and mark women's ways of knowing. However, as Skeggs also notes 'we no longer believe we should write, do and think in unified ways' (p.11).



Traditionally feminist theoretical engagements with the practicalities of the research process have positioned qualitative methods of inquiry as more desirable than quantitative. This view was particularly apparent in early feminist research as it was 'regarded as more appropriate to the kinds of knowledge that feminists wished to make available' (Maynard, 1994; p.11). In particular semi-structured and unstructured interviews are often viewed as quintessentially feminist. Ann Oakley's (1981) feminist critique of the traditional sociological approach made an important early contribution to the feminist adaptation of interviewing techniques. Within traditional sociological research practice, interviewers have been described as "sponges" soaking up detail while the interviewees are encouraged to be passive givers. This "smash and grab" or "hit and run" style of gathering "data" has been challenged by a feminist informed research ethic. Such an ethic actively addresses the asymmetric power relations previously evident in the sociological interview process.

In Shulamit Reinharz's (1983) adaptation of the 'conventional/patriarchal' model of sociological research (p.170-173), she advocates the importance of an interactive and democratized research approach. She argues that feminist research can be described as an 'open and active exchange between researcher and participant in partnership of co-research' (Reinharz, 1983; p. 174). Such a philosophy is easily applied to interviewing. The notion of 'partnership of co-research' encourages an interactive and democratized style and acknowledges the inseparableness of the knower and the known. Thus, revealing that both are of the same universe (Du Bois, 1983). That is the researcher and researched are on the same critical plane (Stanley and Wise, 1993).

According to Reinharz (1983) data gathering simply means 'gathering up what is already there' (p.178). She argues that this process 'ends when all parties feel saturated, depleted, complete' (p.181). The researcher is encouraged to 'surrender' (Wolff, 1971, cited in Reinharz, 1983; p.181) thus ensuring

receptivity. Later I discuss how problematic such an approach can prove to be in relation to research on issues surrounding sexuality and disclosure. From a feminist perspective the process of “finding out” should ideally occur within a non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian, non-manipulative setting. However, it is not always so easy to break down power differentials and more recently feminists (Haraway, 1991; Bhavnani, 1994) have offered ways to incorporate the positioning of the researcher within the micropolitics of the research process.<sup>44</sup> As Bhavnani (1994) notes during her research - ‘when interviewing young white men, the frequently encountered imbalances of power between white men and black women was potentially both inverted and reproduced in the interviews’ (p. 34). Similarly, power dynamics based on sexuality are clearly visible within the interview with one of the research participants. The power differential between heterosexual and lesbian are inverted, whereas the power dynamic between researched and researcher is reproduced, as is illustrated here;

What does piss me off is the implications that go with it [football]. I don’t think its fair - not just to me personally but to heterosexuals in general being labelled something [lesbian] you’re not. (...) because I know you’re lesbian and I’m not - I do think its [being pissed off with stereotypical butch lesbian image of women’s football] quite difficult to talk about (Julie).

Here, Julie articulates her position as an ‘heterosexual interviewee’. During the interview she remained largely reticent about her feelings on sexuality within football culture. This comment, towards the end of the interview, highlights the impact of my location as a ‘lesbian interviewer’. My position, within the research power dynamic as a lesbian researcher, serves to silence her views on the lesbian presence and visibility in football. In this way her knowledge of me as a sexual person impacts on the process of discovery. Here my sexuality can

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<sup>44</sup> I have already offered some discussion on this in the previous chapter.

be positioned as pivotal to knowledge production.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, silences have meaning.

In relation to method, there now exists debate around other methods besides interviewing which are susceptible to an ethical feminist approach, in particular a mixing of qualitative and quantitative. Maynard and Purvis (1994) argue that 'feminists are not suggesting, in some naive fashion, that combining approaches will ensure the increased validity of their data' (p. 4), instead they are advocating a mixing of methods as a way to find out more. For example Liz Kelly, Sheila Burton and Linda Regan (1994) posit the combining of research techniques as a way to help the 'process of discovery and understanding' (p.28) thus creating 'useful knowledge which can be used by ourselves and others to 'make a difference'' (p.28). In their questioning of research orthodoxy established as feminist ways of finding out, they challenge the reliance on qualitative method. From their experience of research and adopting a mixed method approach they show how quantitative methods can assist a feminist research project. They argue that Ann Oakley's critique and subsequent transformation of traditional interviewing technique suggests that it is possible to adapt other research methods to make them feminist user-friendly; 'we ought to at least explore the possibility of transforming the survey/questionnaire' (p.35). Kelly, Burton and Reagan conclude that 'it means something different to disclose information anonymously on paper or computer than to speak/communicate it interactively with another person' (p.35). In particular, they found self-report questionnaires useful during research with young people concerning sexual abuse. They argue that the feminist critiques of quantitative method focus on the way in which participants have been treated. If this is addressed then questionnaire research can 'allow us to move between generalised numerical data, direct quotations and individual experiences' (p. 35).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> I pick up this point later in this chapter when I consider disclosure, and again in chapter seven when I focus on issues surrounding sexuality.

<sup>46</sup> I offer such an analysis in chapters five and six when I combine quantitative and qualitative material.

Evidently some feminists (Glucksmann, 1994; Marshall, 1994; Skeggs, 1994) support a more flexible approach to research by not asserting the primacy of interviewing. Instead they adopt a combination of methods. For example, Miriam Glucksmann's work on the dynamics by which the women assembly line workers in her research were subordinated does not solely consider their accounts. She argues that other material, besides interviewing the women, is also relevant and can be 'welded from different elements' (p.158) for instance company archives and trade union journals, in this way her approach is 'multi-sourced' (p.158). Similarly, Beverley Skeggs' (1994) use of interviews, questionnaires, participant observation, statistical analysis, and historical documentation 'were all part of a more general framework relating research practice to the theories that underpinned her research' (Maynard and Purvis, 1994; p. 3).

### **Quantitative research - the questionnaire.**

My decision to administer a postal questionnaire is based on the existing lack of large scale, detailed information on women who play football. In accordance with the arguments put forward by Kelly, Burton and Regan, (1994) I felt it would be possible to adapt 'the questionnaire' so that the woman completing it would feel comfortable about doing so. In particular the disclosure of sexuality may be easier due to the anonymity of the questionnaire. I also support their view that by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods feminists are able to create 'useful knowledge'.

After several drafts the questionnaire took the form of a predominantly 'tick box', noticeably orange, two sided sheet of A4 (Appendix D)<sup>47</sup>. Although the questionnaire provides largely quantitative material, the last question is an open question thus providing qualitative findings. Since all but one of the questions

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<sup>47</sup> I am very grateful to staff working in the Centre for Leisure and Tourism (CELTS) at the University of North London for providing valuable support and guidance.

are closed, the depth of inquiry the questionnaire seeks to achieve is limited. However, the response rate (over 50%) suggests it was successful in amassing a range of information.

In designing the questionnaire I included an introductory passage to contextualise the research. In this preamble I position myself as a player aware of the significance of the game to women, whilst simultaneously, acknowledging the general lack of representation of women players. Thus, I wanted to be positioned as an 'insider' and I hoped the women would complete the questionnaire because they were also interested in the research. This shared interest in the research topic has been described as collaborative research within feminist methodology. In many ways it supports Reinharz's (1983) notion of 'partnership of co-research'. However, it is virtually impossible to ascertain the extent to which the women engaged with the research and why they completed the questionnaires. Indeed, it would be foolhardy to assume all those involved in the research share my research interest. This response to the final question on the questionnaire offers an explicit example of the extent to which this participant did not engage with the issues presented in the questionnaire;

The FA are not interested and their investment in women's football is just for show. I also think that these kind of problems are much more important for academic study than whether women football players live up to pathetic stereotypes of working class, lesbians who drink beer and smoke tabs. Who cares about those issues the football is important not our class or sexuality (no. 400).

My intention to explore the women's personal circumstances, for example their experience as it relates to their socio-economic status and sexuality is met here with derision. This research participant registers her agenda as a focus on the governing body of the game. Clearly, we do not share the same research interest. That said, some women did make comments on the questionnaire or in an accompanying letter claiming they were: interested in the research; the findings; asking for help and advice in their own research (student dissertations); and offering a contact if I required further help and assistance. In total, nine women

volunteered to be of further assistance. I managed to make contact with eight of these women. Two women were virtually impossible to meet with as they lived too far away from my research base (Aberystwyth and Tyne and Wear). Consequently, six of the fourteen women who took part in the interview research were contacted via the questionnaires.

Returning to the questionnaire design, I aimed to transform the way particular questions have traditionally been asked. For example, as a lesbian I often feel excluded by the existing definitions of relationship status. The categories 'single' and 'married' or 'Miss' and 'Mrs' are frequently used as a way to describe the heterosexual relationship and women's status in relation to men. As a way to omit this sexist and heterosexist language I used the following categories in the questionnaire: 'not in a relationship', 'in a casual relationship', 'in a serious relationship' or 'in a serious and permanent relationship'. Although I realise the notion of 'permanent' is problematic, I used the term as I wanted lesbians, without the privilege of recognition that go with marriage, to be able to make visible their long term relationships. Child care is addressed in a similar way. I asked respondents if they; 'take care of children alone', 'share child care' or 'have no child care responsibilities'. By designing certain questions so as to be sensitive to the needs of different women, for example lesbians, single mothers and carers, I aimed not to exclude their 'voices'. The anonymous nature of the questionnaire also allowed the women to respond to the question - 'would you describe yourself as;' 'heterosexual', 'bisexual', 'gay/lesbian' or 'prefer not to answer', thus providing a terse representation of sexuality. Issues surrounding sexuality are picked up and explored more fully in the interview research.

The pilot comprised of 100 questionnaires of which 57 were returned. There were no changes to the questionnaire. The large-scale survey of 870 questionnaires followed; questionnaires were sent out between 23rd September 1997 and 8th December 1997. 437 complete questionnaires were returned by the final cut off date at the end of March 1998. The sample was not random but geographically selected as a result of football's organisational structure.

Football has a regional structure which at the time of the survey consisted of 10 regional leagues in England and Wales (Scotland has its own organisation). The regions are: Eastern, East Midlands, Greater London, Northern, North West, South East, South West, Southern, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humberside. A regional secretary oversees the regional leagues. By contacting the FA it was possible to gain access to the addresses of regional secretaries. A letter explaining the research and requesting a copy of the regional directories (a directory of contacts for all teams in the regional league) was sent to the 10 regional leagues with a pre paid large envelope for return. Initially six directories were returned. A reminder letter accompanied by another pre paid envelope was sent a month later and a further three directories were returned. It was decided to work with the contacts made with 9 of the regional leagues (no information was returned for the Southern league so it could not be included in the survey). The British University Student's Association (BUSA) was also contacted and in a similar way a contact was made with women's university teams playing in the BUSA league. In this instance it was only the address of the University, which was provided so I decided to insert the title 'club secretary, women's football'. A letter explaining the research (typed on UNL letter headed paper) and two questionnaires in two separate envelopes were sent to all the team secretaries in the regional and BUSA leagues. The letter asked the secretary to pass on the enveloped questionnaires to two players (over 18 years) in their team. A player would receive a questionnaire and a pre paid envelope (addressed to Jayne Caudwell at the University of North London).

This process appears successful as the response rate for both the pilot and main questionnaire was very good (over 50%). However, it is important to be critically reflective of this process so as to expose the limitations of the research methodology. In this vein there are two issues of significance, namely the role of the club secretaries as gatekeeper and the influence of my affiliation to UNL.

It is impossible to know why and how the club secretaries decided to distribute the questionnaires. The only piece of information I have received about this process is when one letter and the accompanying two questionnaires were returned with the following passage written on the original letter;

“I have been told by two other club secretaries that your forms have been binned. Few questions have nothing to do with football, whats it got to do with soccer if a player is bisexual/hetro etc., if you want to now about females in football as [sic] the right questions” (signed - male) 28 years in female football, manager (team).

This response demonstrates the significance of the club secretary as a gatekeeper. In this case it is a man who is deciding the one question on sexuality out of a series of twenty-seven is inappropriate.<sup>48</sup> Knowledge of the questions entails opening the envelopes containing the questionnaires. Club secretaries not only act as gate keepers in the sense of passing on the envelopes, they can also choose to act as gate keepers via informed censorship, as is demonstrated here. This selectivity may also arguably work in the opposite direction, whereby secretaries actively encourage players to complete forms and select players they think would return the questionnaire. In this instance, the gatekeepers and respondents demonstrate a willingness to invest in the research as is evidenced by their assistance with the questionnaire process. This decision to comply can be positioned within the notion of collaborative or partnership research.

It may also be the case that the UNL letter headed paper, and the official pre-paid envelopes influenced the secretaries and respondents decision to take part or not take part in the research. In addition, by appropriating an official position as a researcher I clearly assume a location of power; I become an academic and hence an ‘outsider’. This positioning contradicts my simultaneous location as an ‘insider’. Thus uncovering the tensions academic research can produce for the researcher. In fact, I have a range of competing locations and it is important that I

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<sup>48</sup> Thus alluding to the ‘unmentionableness’ of sexuality, a theme that has emerged regularly throughout this research project.



accept my 'outsider' status because not to, would mean a denial of my position of power as a researcher. As Haraway (1991) argues, researchers must take responsibility; 'transcendence' can only offer 'a story that loses track of its mediations' (p. 187). Clearly as an academic researcher supported by an institution I am always already inscribed with power. Clearly I am both insider and outsider.

A further exploration of the process of questionnaire distribution reveals the complexity of the research power dynamic. In effect the club secretaries were empowered by their critical involvement. This has an impact on the balance of power between the researcher and researched. In the case of the questionnaires being returned or 'binned' then the researched are denied power, in that they are denied choice. During the research process power is fluid rather than fixed and at times, as is illustrated here, circulates beyond the researcher-researched relationship.

The questionnaire distribution took place within a relatively tight research schedule. The questionnaire was compiled and administered at the start of the second year. This followed on from two stages of preliminary research. Firstly, a six-month period of reading the literature relevant to the research topic. Secondly, a further six months of writing out ideas and presenting two papers at conferences. The league structure was used to administer the questionnaire. This access to nodes of contact seemed a smooth and simple way to reach a large number of players during the football season. On reflection the facileness of this process obscured the issue that has subsequently emerged, namely that of the club secretary as gatekeeper. Again by way of critical reflection it is possible to admit to both 'research impatience' and 'research naivete'. Both may be positioned within the constraints of a three-year, full time research project and accompanying research bursary. In addition, they may also be positioned as significant to my personal and intellectual biography.

On reflection I feel I arrived at UNL (October, 1996), after terminating my teaching contract with the University of Wolverhampton, determined 'to do' my P.hD. As I have mentioned elsewhere I had limited research experience.<sup>49</sup> I can now position my desire to 'get on with it' as both useful and 'dangerous'. Useful since the questionnaires enabled rapid amassing of information, which has supported the arguments put forward in the four analytical chapters of this thesis. However 'dangerous' because if I compare my limited critical engagement with this process to the constantly reflexive course I negotiated for the interview research I can admit to being largely detached from the research. This lack of engagement is certainly not evident in the interview research.

Finally, the data from the closed questions on the questionnaire was processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows. This involved a period of monotonous inputting and these findings appear in the analysis chapters (predominantly chapters five to seven) as percentages. Thus, offering numerical representation to support the discussion of the qualitative material. The results from the one open question were also imputed into SPSS for windows. This was achieved by firstly registering all responses, a total of 319 comments from 213 questionnaires. Some respondents made up to five comments. The comments were differentiated and highlighted, and twenty-four themes emerged. All comments were then coded according to these themes. These codes were imputed into SPSS for windows and this produced frequency and percentage figures. These were then ranked according to popularity (Appendix II).

The questionnaire offers mostly quantitative material. The data from the final open question appears in this thesis both quantitatively and qualitatively. That is, the themes are discussed according to their popularity (frequency and percentages) and also direct quotations of the comments are used to illuminate important issues. In all, the questionnaire offers a smaller contribution to this

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<sup>49</sup> The extent of this previous research was a small user survey of Ackers Trust Outdoor Activity Centre in Small Heath, Birmingham as part of my Masters in 1989.

research project compared with the fourteen in-depth semi-structured interviews. However, this contribution is valuable since it represents a sample of 437 women who play football in England and Wales.

### **Qualitative research - the interviews.**

Interviews can offer a unique insight into the meanings and significance of lives and lived experience (Clarke and Humberston, 1997; Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Oakley, 1981; Roberts, 1981; Riddens and Edwards, 1998). Feminists keen to explore in-detail women's particular experiences of sport have championed the interview as a method of inquiry (Cahn, 1995; Clarke, 1997; Hargreaves, 2000; Scraton, 1997). In this research the interview material offers rich accounts that contribute to our understanding of women's experience of football.

The 14 women interviewed reflect a particular group of individual women. Therefore the interview material is not representative data and the knowledge generated from the interviews is not universal. The sample of women is not random but is selected by way of expressed interest in the research topic. The 14 women offer rich accounts of their experiences and most of them volunteer detailed and in- depth information on sensitive issues.

The sexuality aspect of the research can be considered sensitive especially in relation to disclosure. Gill Clarke (1997) during her work on lesbian PE teachers adopted a snowballing technique as a way to make contact with women who felt able and willing to take part in important and highly sensitive (given Section 28) research. She later critiques this method because she found the women tended to be very similar, that is her sample consists of white middle class women. Through snowballing the women introduce another research participant to the researcher. Since they know this person the new research participant tends to come from a similar socio-economic background (Clarke, 1997).

During the research process I was keen to make contact with women who were interested in the research topic for two reasons. Firstly I wanted to work with women as partners in research (Reinharz, 1983) and secondly I wanted the women to feel willing and able to discuss some of the more sensitive aspects of the research (Clarke, 1997). That said, I also wanted to avoid interviewing many women who share similar experiences to myself as white, middle class and lesbian. With this in mind I decided to interview women who expressed an interest in the research topic. These women first became apparent during the questionnaire stage of the research. In addition there were women I knew of through my own involvement in the game who also expressed an interest in the research when I discussed it casually in social settings. In this way I located women who were keen to be involved in the research. This decision has meant that the women are geographically dispersed and play at different levels and in different teams. As such it is impossible to universalise their experiences and claim that they represent a particular group of footballers. The research material represents and offers detail of the specific situations and circumstances facing each individual woman.

The fourteen interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and one and a half-hours. The women decided where the interviews would take place. This resulted in a variety of locations. Two in my home (at the time Stanford Hill, North London). Two at UNL, Holloway (my work place); seven at the women's homes (this involved travelling to; Luton, Cheltenham, Leyton, Stratford (East London), Bethnal Green and Tottenham); and three in the women's workplace (again this involved travelling to Bath, Coventry and Ramsgate). I relied mostly on public transport or my bicycle, although I was able to borrow friends' cars when needed. I completed two interviews in one day on three separate occasions. For instance I visited the women in Bath and Cheltenham on the same day. I found interviewing twice a day exhausting but at times necessary.

As mentioned above, six of the women volunteered by way of the questionnaire. One woman volunteered through a colleague at work, and I knew seven women

through my own involvement in football (at the time I was playing for a team in the Greater London League). The women I knew of, through football, had shown an interest in the research when I had mentioned it to them. I pursued this interest by approaching the women with a letter (Appendix IV) explaining the research more fully and asking if they would consider taking part. The women were aged between 20 and 43 at the time of interview. By way of introducing them I will use their fictitious names; Tamsin (self-selected name), Di, Julie, Collette, Donna, Tracey, Bev, Sam, Helen, Laura, Rachal, Kaz, Nadia and Shirley (for further information on the research participants see appendix III).

The interview guide (Appendix V), the pilot interviews, adjustments and amendments, and the eventual interviews are all informed by feminist methodology. In addition, as a way of supporting and developing a reflexive approach to the process negotiated during interviewing I kept a research diary. During the following discussion I draw upon this reflective log.

The interview process has not been straightforward. It has raised methodological issues that are central to the research itself. During the planning stages, the interview guide became a major focus of attention. The content and format of the guide were decided after many drafts. The pilot interviews confirmed the relevance and appropriateness of the questions and yet the actual interviewing process created many tensions that were difficult.

Tamsin, Di, Julie and Collette all took part in the pilot interviews. Tamsin is a friend of mine, Di volunteered via the questionnaire, Julie is the friend of a work colleague's daughter and I knew Collette through football. The interviews with Tamsin and Di felt comfortable and relaxed and inspired me as a researcher. Both women were prepared to talk at length about their footballing experiences and talked fluently about issues surrounding sexuality.

Unlike the questionnaire research my own location within the interview research process emerges as significant from the outset. The next interview with Julie was

not as flowing and relaxed, she seemed less at ease and did not talk as much. In particular, Julie seemed to find it more difficult to talk about issues surrounding sexuality.<sup>50</sup> I found this disappointing since my aim during the pilot interviews was to establish a way of interviewing which would enable the 'unfolding of narratives of experience' (Heaphy, Donovan and Weeks, 1998; p. 460).

The interview raised many issues in relation to power differentials, leading questions and 'safety'. In the previous chapter I discuss my emotional involvement in the interview with Julie and the role of transformative experience in the production of knowledge. A critically reflexive analysis of the interview highlights the power differentials, namely my location as older and an "academic", and her location as a young student. As an academic researcher I am very clearly inscribed with the power of knowledge and by coming out as lesbian within this role I inverted the power of dominant heterosexuality. In addition, I have already mentioned how sexual codes can function to indicate knowledge.

Julie's short answers to questions, which had previously engendered much discussion between Tamsin and myself, and Di and myself (both 'out' lesbians), were difficult for me to understand. I appear to ask more questions the less Julie offers. The 'safety' of both the researched and researcher is paramount to the feminist research project. The interview with Julie was uncomfortable and difficult and I register this in my research diary. If I have these feelings then there is reason to believe Julie also experienced the interview as problematic. As Heaphy, Donovan and Weeks (1998) argue;

The challenge for the researcher is to engage with respondents in a way that is sensitive to the extent to which they feel comfortable with the topics under discussion (p. 465).

As a result of the pilot interview with Julie I decided that a letter and the interview guide (Appendix IV & V) would be sent, prior to the actual interview,

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<sup>50</sup> Later I discuss how the questions on sexuality caused difficulty during the interviews with Bev and Rachal.

to the women who volunteered to take part in the research. This letter also invited the women to ask questions if they wanted to know more about the research or the researcher. This was an attempt to reduce the power differential between the researcher and researched, especially in relation to the very personal disclosure of thoughts on sexuality. A long period of time elapsed after this seemingly 'painful' interview before the fourth pilot interview with Collette. This gap allowed the space for a reflective analysis and the reconciliation of some of the tensions outlined above. As a way to avoid over questioning and falling into leading the discussion, I decided to make a conscious effort to speak less. I explained to Collette that we would go through the questions that she had already previewed, I would not talk very much and that she did not have to talk to fill any uncomfortable gaps. The interview was a success for two reasons. Firstly, it felt very comfortable and relaxed. Secondly, the discussion offers a wealth of interesting and relevant information. In addition, it enabled an editing of the interview guide. I inserted a preamble to the sexuality section, thus ensuring consistency for the remaining interviews. This reflected the difference between introducing the sexuality section poorly during a difficult interview with Julie, and coherently during the easier interview with Collette.

Some of the difficulties encountered during the pilot interviews surfaced again. This lengthy extract from my research diary offers a very important insight into interviews five and six.

*Interview 5; 9.4.98(am).*

As I sat next to Donna in her lounge I couldn't get over the size of the television set - it was huge and very central (my largely middle class upbringing didn't position TV's in this way; they were considered relevant at 'appropriate' times).

I have played football with Donna for about 4 seasons over a period of 6 years in fact we played alongside each other this year in central midfield. I have a lot of admiration for Donna. When I met her she worked in a building society but always wanted to be a physio, she completed an access course and went off to Uni. This year she will qualify. Recently, her partner San had his 40th, he is Hindu. San, and his brother watch us play football. The team were all invited to the party. Our team is

predominantly lesbian and most of us attended the celebration. Two women from the team display their sexuality very openly - they sat on each other's laps all night. Both Donna's and San's families were there. I can remember admiring Donna's belief in and respect for people. I was keen to capture her views on women who play football. Her passion for the game is undeniable, hence the "exaggerated" TV and access to Sky.

I sat opposite the oversized TV and listened to Donna talk, this was her home and she welcomed me in. I continue to be indebted to the women who have done this. I remember feeling grateful and trying to make the interview a pleasant experience by way of settlement. I think I may have talked too much at the start. I don't fully understand why I believe it will be easier for the interviewee if I contribute. Looking at the transcript it appears that I avoid this as the interview progressed.

Donna provided a rich and fascinating story bound by memories of childhood and recent experience. She talked about growing up on a council estate in Leyton. She openly discussed sexuality and her feelings as a heterosexual woman playing in a predominantly lesbian team. She appeared to talk without constraint. Maybe she trusted me as a result of our friendship and the team work we had on the pitch. I thought it was going well, however at the end of the interview she made a remark that jolted me. She said she felt like - 'I'm meant to come out with this interesting revelation about something'. Foolishly, I'd never considered that the 'interviewee' wanted to 'please me' by saying the right thing (perhaps I should have realised it when the cat got kicked out for meowing too loudly, too often). I always felt like I had to 'do the right thing' for the 'interviewee' as they were doing me a favor.

I have made efforts to reduce the power differentials, especially after the interview with Julie, and yet it is clear that I do not, and may never absolutely understand the power relations that exist between researcher and researched. Previous anxieties around my subjectivity did not emerge during this interview. However, I was made more aware of the covert anxieties as felt by the interviewee.

*Interview 6: 9.4.98(pm).*

As I walked from the tube to Tracy's flat in Stratford, I passed a street game of football. A small group of boys ranging in size and age played into a goal mouth drawn on the wall. The boys appeared to be African. Somehow they negotiated the curb which formed a raised 6 yard box area. I felt pleased they were playing but disgruntled that there were no girls amongst them. I wondered if it would ever change. Minutes later I sat with Tracy on her sofa listening to her memories of playing in the street when she was 5 or 6 years old.



Tracy plays in the same team as Donna and myself. She also started playing as a young girl on the estate where she lived, has an enlarged TV set and is an avid supporter of Arsenal. The interview came to an end after about 45 minutes. I switched the tape off and we continued to talk about women in sport for a further 50 minutes. Tracy is also a climber and works at an indoor wall near Bethnal Green - she talked about her experiences there.

Despite our attempts to relax during the interview, there was tension. As with previous interviews we decided to have a drink, usually it is tea or coffee. Tracy offered me a beer and I accepted. Tracy appeared to deal with the questions in the first part, although her responses were often short, her remarks were succinct and personal. It was the second section on sexuality that seemed to create discomfort.

I think there is the potential for intimacy during interviewing, particularly when discussing questions of sexuality. I had spoken to Tracy about the interview and when I gave her the letter requesting an interview, her response was - 'does this mean we've got a date then?' This flirtation was non-serious and yet it occurred, leaving both of us to establish boundaries for future interactions. During our discussion on sexuality I noticed Tracy's 'cool' approach and wondered how she would read my interest in her sexuality.

On this occasion, the drinking of alcohol symbolised the desire to relax and the desire to capture a more social setting - the irony is that neither were fully achieved. Unlike my anxieties around the interview with Julie, it was possible to re-establish a relationship with Tracy, we continue to train and play together. After the interview our interactions seemed more relaxed. Somewhere along the way boundaries have been established in relation to lesbian flirtation.

The interviews with Donna and Tracy, and subsequent diary notes, raise two issues relevant to feminist research. Firstly, and a return to, insider-outsider status, and secondly intimacy and boundaries. As with the questionnaire research I am marked as both an 'insider' and 'outsider'. Donna, Tracy and myself play together and at the time I was captain of the team. This serves to complicate the insider-outsider relationship. Through this involvement we know each other. They may view me as an 'insider' because we share the desire to play football and for the team to get on together. Thus providing a sporting and social space for us all and we invest in this shared interest. They will also position me as an outsider; I was not brought up on a housing estate in East London - I am middle

class by way of my education and location in academia. I am different and hence an 'outsider'. This is further defined during the interview when we become marked as 'researched' and 'researcher', and Donna alludes to this relationship when she talked about how she felt - 'I'm meant to come out with this interesting revelation about something'. Both 'insider' and 'outsider' status carry certain responsibilities. For instance the commonalities play a significant role 'in determining the extent to which trust develops within the interview' (Heaphy, Donovan and Weeks, 1998; p. 456). Donna and Tracy may disclose certain information because of my 'insider' status. As an 'outsider' and a 'researcher' I have power to determine how this information is used and represented. My location within the research process is very significant because as Heaphy, Donovan and Weeks (1998) argue;

[W]e are not simply dealing with respondents' stories, but with narratives that have been shaped and structured by the researchers' agendas, by the research methods and techniques employed (...). The question remains: to what extent can we claim that the research adequately reflects anything that is 'out there'? (p.467).

I argue that it is possible to capture what is 'out there', however we must acknowledge that the subsequent representations are shaped and formed by the researcher.<sup>51</sup>

To pick up the second point, interviewing that involves disclosing information and views on sexuality demands a certain degree of intimacy between the researcher and researched. The interview with Tracy raises relevant issues as they relate to closeness and familiarity. Again I make connections with the work of Heaphy, Donovan and Weeks (1998), they pose the question - 'to what extent is there a danger that the interview itself can become a sexualised encounter? (p. 465). It is difficult to ascertain the exact dynamics at play during the interview

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<sup>51</sup> Heaphy et al. go on to argue this point; 'we have attempted to provide a sense of the extent to which the decisions we have made as researchers have shaped the overall research. We have further considered the extent to which our particular concerns as researchers have shaped the narratives provided us by respondents' (p. 467).

with Tracy, that said, it is possible to register the concern I had with establishing boundaries. This issue is rarely made visible within the literature on feminist research. There has been reference to friendships being forged as a result of research with, by and for women and yet there is little discussion on the dynamics of attraction.

In relation to the issue of intimacy it is evident that some of the women taking part in the interviews create boundaries to avoid disclosing personal information. For example, some of the women used silence as a way to protect themselves. Bev volunteered to be interviewed via the questionnaire. She was the seventh interview and my first completely unknown contact. She managed a home for the elderly and this is where the interview took place. Bev mentioned during the initial contact that she would be unable to answer the questions on sexuality since she felt uncomfortable with talking about it within earshot of those she 'managed'. The interview was difficult for other reasons. It was traumatic for me as I found myself visiting a home for the elderly two days before my grandad's funeral. I could have avoided this situation but instead grasped the opportunity to interview another woman about football. For the first time I was interviewing in a busy, noisy environment. Work colleagues would regularly interrupt. Although these distractions disrupted the flow of the interview we did have a very interesting discussion. Bev had played and watched football for over thirty years. In many ways the environment provided a safe fabric for us as complete strangers. We did not delve into the intimate because we were both unable to, and this seemed to suit our needs at the time of interviewing.

Interviewing 'strangers' raises many interesting issues in relation to the intimate and the disclosure of information. The interview with Bev was followed by four more interviews with women who were completely unknown to me. Three of these involved travelling long distances. The interviews with Laura and Rachal are particularly engaging. I visited Laura at her workplace. She manages a research unit within an academic institution. We sat in her private office with a 'do not disturb' sign on the door. Laura talked at length and in detail about many

issues. For the first time during the course of the interviews transsexuality was talked about since Laura knew a player facing prejudice and abuse. The interview provided a huge window to look through at the socio-cultural arena of football. I left the interview inspired and keen to conduct the next interview thirty miles away. I arrived at Rachal's house oblivious to the research dilemmas I had negotiated during the previous ten interviews. As I walked down the driveway of a large detached house in a noticeably affluent residential area I became aware of how unsure I felt about the prospect of entering a stranger's home; I felt intimidated. I describe the act of arriving at a stranger's home as 'cold calling'. A situation that is problematic but an often-unavoidable part of conducting research. Once on the doorstep, I was expectant and positive. I had just experienced a successful interview, Rachal had received a copy of the interview guide and this was my eleventh interview. However, the interview with Rachal involved a re-visiting of many of the dilemmas I had experienced during my earlier interviews. I wrote the following in my research diary;

We started the interview and I asked the first question, which usually promoted a lengthy response. I imagine that when the women look at the interview guide they rehearse the first few questions and question one usually initiates a whole story around football and childhood. As I sat looking at Rachal expecting her to talk for a while my mind drifted a little. She held eye contact as she spoke which felt odd, as most of the other women tended to search the surroundings as they remembered. I very suddenly had a weird and scary thought; no one knew where I was.

Rachal's response to the first question was brief and took me by surprise. I managed to probe a little, however I now feel that this set me on my 'rescuer' script. The second question was similar in fact it was worse. When I asked 'do you have any strong/vivid memories, she said 'no'. At this point I wondered how I should approach this interview - should I probe as she may be shy and unsure. I'm aware that my probing questions verge on leading at times. I didn't want to risk this, at the same time I didn't want to go away after a 200 mile round trip with no material. This sounds like the type of research I wish to avoid, e.g. 'hit and run'/ 'smash and grab' interviewing.

As we went through the interview guide the substance of the questions seem to tumble away. That afternoon it had all clicked into place, just

hours later it seemed to dissolve in front of me. The interviews with Laura and Rachal represent the pleasure and pain involved in this research project (11.6.98).

Certain issues re-emerged during the interview with Rachal. As with the interview with Julie, the lack of contribution offered by the women requires critical reflection. It seems that I contribute more during interviews that appear to be lacking comfort and fluency. In both cases my input has often involved 'leading' the discussion. This seems to occur as a result of a felt need to 'save the day' and in this way can be positioned alongside research that is driven by the aim to take something away. Such an approach unintentionally engages with the traditional exploitative character of the interview situation (Stanley, 1990). By controlling the discussion in a particular way, I am effectively dominating the interview. This raises important issues surrounding 'safety'. It is not possible to determine accurately how 'safe', in terms of comfort, Julie and Rachal felt. It is possible that they read my approach as domineering.

Very clearly it is not my intention to over-awe the women and yet this may have occurred as a result of my own anxiety. At times, the anxious moments I have experienced during interviewing have meant an inability to act with regard to the women's integrity. Despite the overall success of the interviews, as measured by the ease and fluency of discussion, it is apparent that there have been moments in which the women, and myself, have experienced discomfort and anxiety. These feelings shape the interview with Rachal in as much as I felt unable, and to some extent unwilling, to ask the questions on sexuality. At the time it seemed too difficult to enter into what I have described earlier as 'the intimate'. I feel this dilemma was compounded by the 'cold caller' nature of the interview.

During these moments of dilemma, it seems that the power relationship between 'researched' and 'researcher' ultimately favours the 'researcher'. That said, it is important to recognise the power of non-disclosure and silence. This recognition of the complexity of power positions the women and myself within a web of power relations. Here a Foucauldian analysis of power is relevant since the

structuralist notion of power as a binary opposite between the researcher and researched is contested. There is evidence in this research that power is discursive and not wholly fixed to the researcher, for example during the questionnaire distribution, the issue of the gatekeepers, as well as the non-disclosure of information during the interviews.

Similar to the interview with Julie, a period of time elapsed before I felt able to conduct any further interviewing. In fact, this period was months instead of weeks. The remaining three interviews took place in London with women I knew through football. These interviews were far less challenging and involve the disclosure of some very fascinating accounts of Kaz's, Nadia's and Shirley's understanding of gender and sexuality as they function within football culture and impact on their everyday experiences.<sup>52</sup>

Since the 'Cheltenham experience', all interviews have been wonderful. It's 'funny' how inconsistent the interview process is. The last three interviews have been with people I know - be it loosely. I have found this less daunting and more relaxing. There seems to be some element of trust, which has allowed a more comfortable approach to pursuing deeper stories. The women appear relaxed and willing to 'chat' about their experiences of, and relationship to football. I don't feel like I'm being nosey (Research Diary, 26.10.98)

This extract from my research diary deserves further analysis since it is evident that as a researcher I identify reticence and silence as markers of difficult interviews. In the previous chapter on feminist epistemology I discuss standpoint epistemology. A standpoint approach relies on women verbalising their experiences, thus contributing authenticity to knowledge production. Within standpoint theory the voices of the marginalised are used to establish the 'truth'. In this vein, silence is inauthentic and indicates that 'truth' does not exist. Clearly this argument is flawed because more/less voices do not necessarily add up to more/less 'truths' (refer back to the arguments presented by Hill Collins (1991)). To a large extent the diary notes illustrate my privileging of 'voice' over

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<sup>52</sup> Their testimonies are evidenced in the analyses chapters of this thesis.

silence. In my research diary I appear to position the research participants' reticence as an indicator of 'bad' research. It is worth noting that in relation to knowledge production, authenticity is not wholly dependent on verbalized experience. Later, in the analysis chapters, I produce new knowledge by exploring what 'is said' and also what 'is not said'.

Finally, the interview material appears in this thesis as direct quotations. The material is presented in relation to the women's experiences of the centrality of the game, issues surrounding gender, issues surrounding sexuality and the functioning of gender and sexuality together. Importantly, these accounts are located within a particular temporal and historical context and this must not be overlooked. Similarly interpretation and presentation of the transcript material reflects particular selections and omissions on my part. The transcript material used in the analysis chapters of this thesis supports the five research questions detailed in chapter one. The tapes were listened to and the transcripts were read and re-read many times (see appendix VI for sample transcript). Important discussions during the interviews, in relation to the research questions, were highlighted. Themes emerged signalling both continuities and discontinuities of experience. The transcripts were cross-referenced and particular themes were selected for in-depth analysis. This qualitative material, that is the women's narratives, contributes most to the analysis chapters of this thesis.

### **Summary.**

This chapter details the research process. I highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the research through an engagement with the questionnaire and interview processes. For example, I discuss the questionnaire and interviews in relation to my location as insider and outsider and the research power dynamic. In addition, I explore the limitations of the research through an engagement with the research sample and I make clear that the findings reflect the experiences of the women taking part in this research. That is, the knowledge produced from the research cannot be used to uphold universal claims.

In the chapters that follow, I rely on the questionnaire and interview research to elucidate the women's experiences in relation to football. By documenting the everyday lived experiences of the women taking part in the research this thesis represents a commitment to feminist methodology. That is research with, by and for women. The research material provides insights that reflect the women's particular and located experiences. Therefore I provide situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988).

In a less obvious way the difficulties I experience as a researcher, and the ways these have been considered, also reflect a commitment to feminist methodology. I have illuminated my position within the research and offered critical reflections of this location. I expose the tensions I experience in relation to understanding and addressing the power dynamic already present in the research process. I demonstrate the impact of my location on the women and the research, and the production of knowledge.

This chapter offers a critical reflection on researching women who play football. It considers 'insider-outsider' status and my position as both. I explore the intimate character of interviewing, in particular engaging with issues surrounding sexuality. Throughout I attempt to expose the functioning of power and my place within the research power dynamic. In short, the research process has not been unproblematic. In particular, the process itself raises questions that are central to the epistemological and theoretical issues I engage with throughout this thesis.



## **Chapter Five.**

### **The normalisation and routinisation of football in the lives of women who play.**

#### **Introduction.**

In this chapter I offer an analysis that coherently positions football in the lives of women who play. Firstly, I offer a critical analysis of existing sociological accounts. I show how this body of knowledge omits women's experience of playing and thus documents football as exclusively male. I then discuss women's involvement from a historical perspective and give a brief overview of the contemporary situation; thus challenging the existing male centred theory. This presentation and analysis of the research material reflects a commitment to feminist knowledge production from the standpoint of the marginalised. This engagement with standpoint theory continues to develop the previous discussions on theoretical approaches to research in chapter three. Here I highlight the value of feminist standpoint epistemology through a rigorous engagement with the women's testimonies. In the first instance this chapter relies heavily on a distributive approach. In accordance with my first research question, this initial approach will go some way towards documenting the position of football in the lives of women who play. However, I argue for an approach which places women's everyday lived experiences of playing as central. In the second part of the chapter, I use findings from both the qualitative and quantitative research to support a discussion on the normalisation and routinization of football in the lives of women who play, thus providing an account which normalises and does not marginalise women's involvement. In all, I employ standpoint theory to make visible women's experience. Thus I offer a contribution to feminist epistemology as discussed in chapter three.

### **Football and male centred theory.**

Within sports texts, football has been marked as male. Male sports historians and sociologists have effectively positioned the game as an integral part of men's lives and male, predominantly working class, culture (Tomlinson, 1983; Giulianotti and Williams, 1994; Granville, 1969; Mason, 1996; Moorhouse, 1996; Sugden and Tomlinson, 1994; Walvin, 1975; Young, 1968). This extensive documentation has largely ignored and/or omitted women's involvement and experience of playing. In a similar way to Deem's (1986) feminist analysis of leisure theory and Oakley's (1981) feminist critique of traditional sociological inquiry, I offer a critique of the literature on football. I highlight how football has been positioned as a 'male phenomenon', which starts from the 'male as norm premise' (Deem, 1986). This male centred approach to the study of football has documented it in a way which renders the 'sociological invisibility of women' (Oakley, 1981). Such an approach perpetuates the notion of the "men's game" as the norm and marginalises women's participation by positioning it as the 'other'.

Early text includes work by Percy Young (1968) and Brian Glanville (1969). While Glanville offers a distributive analysis that chronicles fixtures, matches and scores, Young provides a more sociological account that relates footballing events to issues in wider society. Both map a history, which documents pre industrial forms of football and focuses on the major post industrial developments influencing men's involvement. In their accounts football is positioned as a significant aspect of public life and both public life and football are clearly marked as male. Through his historical analysis of men's involvement, Young argues he is in fact 'constructing a history of the nation - from a particular angle' (p.xi). He claims that 'the game now being of universal significance, it may be seen to have become the plain man's guide to philosophy' (p.xii). Similarly, James Walvin (1975) identifies football as 'the game of the common people' (p.6). He argues that football has 'rarely been

described by professional historians' (p.4) and proceeds to carve a place in written history for 'the people's game'. His account is completely malecentric; 'the common people' is synonymous with men. The blatant exclusion of women from Walvin's account effectively makes women's involvement historically invisible. In addition through such writings cultural history itself is marked as male.

More recently sociological texts documenting football have shifted from historical accounts to a focus on football as a cultural form within modern society (Tomlinson, 1983; Sugden and Tomlinson, 1994). For example, in his introduction to a collection of articles on 'football culture', Alan Tomlinson (1983) describes the importance and significance of such an analysis;

The task, then, becomes to elaborate the cultural bases of leisure experience, to account for the culturally specific aspects of different leisure experiences (...) The question has developed in this general sort of way: how do we account for *different groups' experiences of leisure* ?

We need to look at the meanings and values embodied in specific cultural forms; to look at how different cultural forms are *experienced by different social groups*.

For an adequate understanding of football we need to know more about the social worlds of players and managers as well as fans. (...) If the idea of leisure institutions as sites of cultural practice is at all worthwhile, we must explore all the dimensions of that cultural practice (my emphasis)(p. 8).

Ironically, although Tomlinson opens the way for the inclusion of women's experience of football as a cultural form, *all* of the papers in the collection explore the social worlds of either *male* players, and/or *male* managers and/or *male* fans. From a feminist perspective, the 'adequate understanding' of football supposedly offered is in fact completely inadequate as it fails to include women's experiences. Despite the stated intention to document 'a real sense of how cultural forms and experiences are constructed and lived out' (p.9), Tomlinson et al. fail to represent women's lived experiences. By

omitting women from the analysis, leisure, culture and football are all identified as male. This process of exclusion is repeated in a later collection (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1994) in which 'soccer' is again very clearly marked as male. The discussions within the edited text explore 'soccer culture' without any acknowledgement that the focus is exclusively male. Despite the following admission the authors fail to take account of the game as anything other than a male phenomenon.

Soccer is accessible because it can be played in improvised fashion in just about any circumstances, and without the need for sophisticated or expensive equipment. It can flourish in small-sided spontaneous games on public parks, in confined spaces in the inner-city, in corners of school play areas, with balls of various sizes and clothes or other random objects for goal posts (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1994: pp. 4).

The ideas presented here become very relevant when I discuss the research findings that demonstrate that the women taking part in the research developed their footballing skills because of the improvisational nature of the game as described above.

There have been more recent edited texts that focus on football and identity (Giulianotti and Williams 1994; Mason, 1996; Moorhouse 1996). Here again these historical and contemporary accounts, through their analysis of national identity, ignore women's past and present involvement. In particular, Tony Mason (1996) discusses how men playing in teams during the period between the late 1800s and early 1900s adhered to a North/South division. Later I will show how this division was also reflected in the teams women organised and played in during the same period. Similarly, Moorhouse's (1996) analysis chronicles the struggles and schisms within the Football Association, demonstrating the power of English authority over Wales, Ireland and Scotland. He also fails to mention how the control of the game by a male English governing body impacted on the experiences of women who played - a point I also return to later.

This short discussion gives credence to the view that the existing sociological theory on football is male theory. Football has been positioned within the public sphere as a cultural form worthy of scrutiny. However women's involvement in and relationship to football have been largely ignored and omitted; women are invisible within the accounts. To return to the epistemological and methodological debates set out in chapter three, Elizabeth Grosz's (1993) arguments become pertinent here. Through a critique of knowledge as sexist, androcentric and phallogentric, she exposes male hegemony in knowledge production and argues for a positioning of the female in epistemological debate in order to subvert, dislocate and transform traditional epistemologies (cited in Alcoff and Potter, 1993: p.10). This brief review of football literature provides evidence of how some male writers have constructed football as a male phenomenon. Thus, controlling and dominating existing knowledge on and of football and at the same time marking cultural history as male. In relation to Grosz's final point there are some writers who are beginning to challenge these existing and/or traditional representations.

### **Hidden from history - women and football.**

I have argued that women's involvement in football has largely remained hidden from history as a result of sociological study, which positions male as both subject and object of inquiry. This male perspective has worked to reinforce the relationship between cultural history and football and delineate both as exclusively male. It is evident that women do not feature in these footballing epistemologies. However there are a few accounts that have *recently* begun to redress the omissions. Women's involvement has been reliably traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century (Fletcher, 1993; McCrone, 1988 and 1991; Parratt 1989) and speculatively plotted to the early eighteenth century (Williamson, 1991). Writers have also mapped a more recent history focusing on this century. For example, Gail Newsham (1997) offers an account that positions football in the lives of women who played for Dick Kerr during pre and post World War I and II. Sue Lopez (1997)

concentrates on women playing nation wide and abroad from the 1960s-1990s, and Pete Davies (1996) offers a journalistic narrative of the contemporary cultural arena particular to the Doncaster Belles. Others (Coddington, 1997) have also provided accounts which position football in the lives of women who are fans. As is evident, this recent intervention is not confined to sociological text and represents a more cultural and political approach.

The post industrial era of the late 1800s has been defined as a period when sports, in particular games, became codified and formalised (Hargreaves, 1994). The education system played a significant part in many sports' development. Association football originated as an alternative to rugby football, and as a way to distinguish the games the latter was often known as "rugger" and the former as "soccer" (taken from the pre-fix association). In her account of sport in Victorian and Edwardian England, Kathleen McCrone (1988) refers to historical records which show that at the first education institution for women, set up by Emily Davies in Hitchin, football was being played in the early 1870s. Virginia Woolf (1927) confirms this during her discussion on women, emancipation and the importance of education, when she writes;

A mother, for example, would only entrust her [Davies] with her daughter's education on condition that she should come home 'as if nothing had happened', and 'not take to anything eccentric'. The students, on the other hand, bored with watching the Edinburgh express slip a carriage at Hitchin or rolling the lawn with a heavy iron, took to playing football.

Similarly Sheila Fletcher (1993) provides evidence of football games being played at the same time; 1870s, at private girls schools at Brighton and Nottingham. Playing was not confined to the educational institutes and in 1881 a match took place between women playing for teams representing England and Scotland (FIFA, 1996) and later in 1895 a game between the North and the South took place in London (S.B.D. The Sketch, March 27th, 1895). Both of these matches reflect the North/South division as discussed by Mason (1996)

and yet Mason's account fails to represent such fixtures. The latter fixture is particularly interesting as an inaugural event celebrating the setting up of the British Ladies Football Club. In 1902 the Football Association, the governing body of the men's game, issued an official warning to its members not to play against 'lady teams'. We can assume from this that women actively took part in organising and playing fixtures and that the English governing body assumed control by actively discouraging and reducing women's opportunities to participate. Moorhouse (1996) discusses the impact of the highly influential Football Association on men's participation in Wales, Ireland and Scotland and yet there is no reference to the immense power exerted over women's involvement.

Clearly, women's early experiences of playing might usefully be included in an account of the political, social and economic influences particular to the late 1800s and yet these experiences have been omitted from most of the existing socio-historical texts articulating nineteenth century developments in the game.

Women's participation during the First World War years has not been ignored to the same extent by sport sociologists. For example, John Williams and Jacky Woodhouse (1991) offer an extensive account of the factory and charity teams women organised and played in during this era. Their work contributes to a collection on *British Football and Social Change* and represents one of the few chapters in mainstream text that focuses exclusively on women's experience of playing. Again by giving a distributive account Williams and Woodhouse allude to the significance of football in the lives of women playing at this time. They claim that 'towards the end of 1921 there were around 150 women's clubs in England' (p. 93). Gail Newsham (1997) provides a fascinating account, which focuses entirely on one of these teams - Dick Kerrs. Her narrative is compiled from interview material with various women playing for the team between 1914 - 1965, many of whom are now elderly. Newsham collates some of the very personal accounts the women share with her, and presents a chronicle that positions football as central in their lives. For

example, Lily Parr started playing at the age of 14 in 1919. She left her home in St. Helens and moved to Preston to play. She was with the team for 32 years and played in games in France and the United States during the early 1920s. Joan Whalley also started playing as a teenager at 15 years old; she played her first game on Coronation day; 12 May, 1937.

'It was fantastic' recalls Joan, 'I was at the end of the line when we all marched out on the field. They played the national anthem and all the crowd were cheering, it was wonderful, it was out of this world. I think I scored that day, I'm not sure, but I know I was a very happy person' (Newsham, 1997, p; 121).

Newsham successfully captures the history of the Dick Kerr's team by compiling the animated accounts of the women who played during the club's 50 year existence. Factory teams such as Dick Kerr's and Wallsend Shipway Marine (Williams and Woodhouse, 1991) represent a significant challenge to the idea that women's involvement was marginal. For instance, in December 1920, Dick Kerr's played against 'the rest of England'; the game took place under artificial light, and in 1921 the team played a total of 25 matches and attracted crowds ranging between 3,000 - 33,000 (Newsham, 1997).

Similarly, Sue Lopez (1997) focuses on the experiences of women playing during the post-war period, in particular Jean Seymour who started playing at 16 years old in 1946.

(...) she went on to play for Manchester Corinthians in the early 1950s. She spent much of her time travelling around the world playing with the Corinthians, including matches when the team represented England in various international tournaments. She then moved to the south of England, where she became involved in the rebirth of the women's game, playing for Portsmouth and then for the first Southampton team, in 1966 (p.11).

Lopez weaves together Jean Seymour's experiences as a footballer with several more women players' experiences. She shows how the women experienced both support from family members, in particular fathers, brothers



and uncles, and constraint within the school system. Many of the women developed their passion and skill in isolation but as more clubs such as Manchester Corinthians, Fodens and Warminster became established more players were drawn together.

Women who played football during the late 1800s, early 1900s, during the First World War years and in the 1940s and 1950s did so without the support of a national organising body. In 1969 the Women's Football Association was formed and in 1993 the WFA was *taken over* by the Football Association (FA); the same governing body which had warned against men playing 'lady teams' in 1902 and banned women from playing on FA affiliated grounds in 1921. Both of these decisions represent very overt barriers to women's participation. In addition it can be shown that there exist more covert constraints, based on gender relations, impacting on women's experience of playing. In the next chapter I will focus specifically on these constraints.

### **The present state of play.**

Since the FA take over and concomitant 'acceptance' of women's involvement in football, the number of women and girls playing has been widely documented. For example, newspaper articles (see for example Guardian 13.8.98 and Times 24.9.98) and coverage in various magazines (see for example Ms London, 1993; Diva, 1995; Kick it Again, 1995; Horizons, 1995; Health and Fitness, 1996; Everywoman, 1996) not only offer distributive accounts but serve to make visible, within the mainstream, women's active involvement in football. This type of coverage invariably depicts the increasing number of women playing during the 1990s. For example, in 1990 there were 9,000 players and 314 clubs (Gibbs, 1995), and in 1998 14,000 women players, 15,000 girl players and a total of 1,700 clubs (Crinnion, 1998). In addition to this representation, the popular media have attempted to capture and represent the lived experiences of women who play. In particular accounts of the Doncaster Belles, a successful national league side, have been widely

publicised. This representation includes newspaper articles (see for example Observer Review 12.5.96; Guardian 21.2.97; Observer, 7.12.97), Pete Davies' book *I lost my heart to the Belles* (1996) and a BBC drama series entitled *Playing the Field* (1998/99/2000).<sup>53</sup> As a result of popular media coverage the public have been made more aware of the numbers and experiences of women who play football.<sup>54</sup>

The increase in participation rates reflects the improved opportunities for women to play. Teams are now organised within a league structure, which includes 10 regional leagues, 4 combination leagues and 3 national leagues (season 1998/99). At international level there is a senior squad, an under 16 squad and an under 18 squad. As a way to encourage elite performance 'The FA Talent Development Plan' was launched in March 1998. The result of this strategy includes the development of centres of excellence. The first centre was opened in Southampton for girls under 12, under 14 and under 16, and an academy of excellence was opened in Durham in September 1998. The academy combines education and football thus offering the players aged between 16-19 years intensive coaching and training opportunities. The young women who attend are selected and reside at the academy. At the participation level, the FA set up and continually support five full time women development officers (DOs) with the aim to improve opportunity for women and girls at the 'grass roots' level. The DOs work at a regional level within the North East, North West, Midlands, South East and South West. The league systems, international/elite initiatives, and DOs form the basis of some of the infrastructure influencing the experiences of women who play now. Clearly these current developments contrast greatly with women's experiences in the past.

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<sup>53</sup> More recently players have appeared in television commercials/advertising.

<sup>54</sup> Clearly media representation is open to critical evaluation, however this is not the project of this thesis. Suffice to conclude that the media has gone some way towards documenting thus making visible women's involvement in football.

In relation to the past and present state of play I have offered a descriptive account which relies heavily on a distributive approach. This provides a broad representation of football in the lives of women who have played and who now play. This account is not exhaustive but it does provide both a starting place and a backdrop. What follows is an account that demonstrates how the women taking part in this research have normalised and routinized their involvement in football. Thus making visible the significant position of football in the lives of women who play.

### **Women who play football.**

The quantitative and qualitative research has been discussed in detail and at length in the previous chapter. In short and by way of a reminder, the quantitative research material represents 437 completed postal questionnaires. 870 questionnaires were sent out to all clubs registered in 9 of the 10 regional leagues (England and Wales only) and the British University Student's Association (BUSA); the sample was not random but geographically selected. The questionnaire data documents the socio-demographic details of women playing in England and Wales during the season 1997/8. Some of the findings from the quantitative research will be used here to support the qualitative research material. The qualitative research represents 14 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with women who were playing football at the time of interview (season 1997/8). The interview research sample was not random and is not representative but reflects women who are interested in the research topic and their individual experiences. The interview guide has two distinct sections (see Appendix V). The first section considers football generally and the second section focuses specifically on players' understanding of sexuality and the relationships between football and sexuality. It is the material from some of the questions in the first part of the interview that I draw upon here to show how the women taking part in the research have normalised and routinised football in their lives.

The following analysis is based on relevant questions posed on the questionnaire and during the interviews. By using both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry I aim to 'move between generalised numerical data, direct quotations and individual experiences' (Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1994; p. 35). The questionnaire provides data that illustrates how long players have been playing for, who introduced them to the game and how many hours a week the women dedicate to football. The interview material offers a more detailed account as the women taking part in the research talk about: when and why they started playing; their vivid footballing memories; the centrality of football to their lives; and the responses to playing they have had from family and friends. These accounts are the women's own narratives and I have represented their voices by endeavouring to use their words in context. The 'stories' I choose to retell are clearly my interpretation of what I feel is significant and relevant to my analysis.

### **The women's first experiences of football.**

For the women taking part in the questionnaire research the most common length of time they had been playing for was 5-10 years (26%). Significant proportions had been playing for 10-15 years (17%) and over 15 years (16%). Thus, nearly two thirds of the respondents had been playing for over 5 years. Just over one fifth (22%) of the respondents cited the "playground" as the answer to how they were introduced to football. The second most common answer was by a "female friend" (18%) and thirdly by their "father" (12%). The influence of the informal setting of the playground and the large numbers of women taking part in the quantitative research playing for over 5, 10, and 15 years were themes that emerged in the qualitative research. Of the 14 women interviewed 11 started playing as girls (under 14 years). For many of these women this was during the 1970s. Nine of these women describe playing on a regular basis, two of the women did not mention the frequency with which they played. For all 11, their reasons for playing are diverse and include the

influence of female friends, fathers and brothers as well as informal playground experiences and/or informal play on the housing estates where they lived. For the three women who started playing as adults the influence of a local or university team was cited as the main reason for playing.

Nine of the women interviewed talk about playing football frequently during girlhood. They share very similar experiences and their continuities of experience are based largely on informal play either playing out at home or playing in the playground at school. From their accounts, four themes emerge as significant, namely - where the women lived as girls, the influence of brothers, the space available to play and the playtime opportunities at primary school. Some of these findings support recent research with 'top-level European women footballers' (Scruton, Fasting, Pfister and Bunuel, 1999). For example, Sheila Scruton et al. found that on average players from England, Germany and Norway started playing between the ages of 4-6 and that their early experiences 'were generally in informal spaces within local neighbourhoods' (p.102).

There is a burgeoning body of feminist literature (see for example, Duncan, 1996; Massey, 1994; Valentine, 1993) which addresses the specific issues relevant to a discussion on gender and space. In particular, Doreen Massey (1994) among other issues illustrates how public space used for physical activity and sport has been, and remains, dominated by men. She describes a familiar scene when she recounts her girlhood memories of the 'dank, muddy fields' of the Mersey flood plain being 'divided up into football pitches and rugby pitches' (p. 185). She recollects that on Saturdays 'the whole vast area would be covered with hundreds of little people', likening it to a Lowry painting (p. 185). Her lasting impression of this scene is particularly relevant to a discussion on space and gender and it is to her bewilderment that 'all of these acres of Manchester', 'had been entirely given over to boys' (p. 185). Feminist geographers such as Doreen Massey offer sharp and poignant reminders that public spaces are 'gendered' and largely male dominated. The

following accounts offered by the women interviewed must be considered against this backdrop. It is significant that they 'played out' in public spaces and that their involvement in informal play within their neighbourhoods challenges the male exclusivity of space. In many ways, the women's presence as girls within public neighbourhood spaces, in the words of Doreen Massey, positions them as 'space invaders' (p. 185).

Where the women lived as girls appears relevant to their reasons for starting to play. For instance Shirley (aged 33) explains 'I lived on an estate, a council estate and every Sunday there was a massive game, everyone just used to come out and play and I just used to join in'. Donna (aged 30) also talked about the significance of living on a council estate when she was asked when and why she started playing ; '... just because purely I lived on a council estate where there was loads of... well more boys than girls really and so we all used to play, just play in the street (...) you just put your jumpers down for your posts and off you went'. The greater visibility of boys than girls becomes more apparent when some of the women start to talk about the influence of brothers. Rachal (aged 34) describes her interest in playing as greater than her brother's, who was two years older. However, she acknowledges that - 'I wouldn't have been able to play if I hadn't have had him - I wouldn't have been able to play with his friends'. Here Kaz (aged 31) returns to the relevance for her of living on a council estate. She also registers the impact her brothers had on her early experiences of playing.

'I had 4 brothers at home so I did things with them (...) I was brought up on an estate - council estate and we had the perfect square outside (...) It wasn't one particular day, I was just brought up on it [football]' (Kaz).

Similarly Tracy (aged 23) positions the influence of her brother and the actual space they used to play on as central to her reasons for playing; 'I started playing football when I was about 5 because my big brother done it. We used to have a little green just up the road to my mum's. There used to be these two

trees - I'll always remember it - and we used to go up there and play'. These experiences relate to the women's involvement in football as girls aged between 5 and 7 years within their home environment.

Three of the women talk about similar experiences at the same age within the school setting. Bev (aged 43) admits she 'loved the game from the age of 6 or 7' and started to play regularly when she went to school; 'I was a right tomboy and I was into playing with boys'. Collette (aged 32) also remembers liking football and playing in the playground with the boys. She specifically recollects the informal process of team selection amongst her male peers - '... you know the terrible situation where you used to get picked at primary school - captains picking teams - I used to get picked by the boys, which was a major feat'. Nadia (aged 26) recounts; 'Why ? I think the boys wanted to play the girls at football, so I just joined in (...) I kept playing with the boys and I started wearing trousers to suit playing football at break time'.

Clearly the games the women took part in as girls were frequent and regular events. For these women the playing of football appears to be a continuous part of their childhood. Helen (aged 23) mentions the initial influence of her father but goes on to describe her continued independent involvement thereafter

Why? because my dad just kicked a ball to me in the garden and I kicked it back and it just went from there. (...) then it progressed to playing with friends at school and playing just locally - there were no teams to join, so I just played with friends, that's how it started.

The above accounts show how football was, for many of the women taking part in the research, a routine part of playtime activities. As girls these women played often either within their home environment or during their time at school. Some of the women clearly position playing as part of growing up on a council estate; it is seen as a typical thing to do within this environment, others view informal play at school as significant. All of these women talk about

playing football as part of their ordinary experience of girlhood. However, at the same time they also acknowledge the lack of other girls playing and the dominance of boys, in particular brothers, within their informal play culture.

### **Footballing memories.**

As a way to find out more about women's initial or early footballing experiences I asked the women taking part in the interviews to talk about any strong or vivid footballing memories they had related to either themselves, other people or an event or incident. The women's memories are useful as they reinforce the idea that for all of the women involved in this research football is viewed as customary. I continue to develop this argument when I consider the centrality of football in the lives of the women taking part in the research. In addition, by discussing and focusing on some of their narratives I intend to introduce the notion of discontinuities of women's experience. So far I have alluded to the functioning of class as well as gender as significant to the women's experiences of playing. Sexuality and ethnicity additionally affect some of the women's experiences. I pursue the epistemological discussion on the discontinuities *and* continuities of women's experience throughout the thesis. That is, I problematise standpoint theory and develop situated knowledges through an engagement with the particular and located.

The women's memories reflect two basic themes, namely, playing at tournaments and spectatorship. Six of the women specifically remember playing as girls in organised tournaments. These memories seem significant as a result of the status of playing in front of others and being seen to achieve. For example Donna (aged 30) remembers;

We [girls team from school] entered a tournament at the Michael Sobell [leisure centre in north London] and it was really vivid it was just like a mixed thing, there was mixed teams there, there was men there. (...) we did really really well and I scored a goal and worked really really hard, I mean I was only small then (...) I got a medal at



the end for like player of the day, like you know best player and I was, and I like still remember it being chuffed and I wanted to cry (...) I was about 11 then.

Karen (aged 31) talks about playing in a similar event at the Britannia leisure centre (in east London). She specifically remembers playing in the final and 'everyone was screaming at me and it was like 'oh they like me, I'm doing really well'. Playing in finals, scoring goals and winning tournaments are significant memories for some of the women. Tracy (aged 23) remembers being the captain of the girls' school team playing in a tournament and winning a trophy. Helen (aged 23) talked about being in a tournament and playing alongside and against boys, she recollects 'when primary school did let me play - I scored a hat trick'. Helen's memory features the significance of scoring goals however, she also alludes to her satisfaction with challenging male exclusivity i.e. 'when primary school did let me play'.

Shirley (aged 33) also remembers the significance of tournaments, however she positions the event slightly differently. For instance, here she focuses on the people she took part with and not the extrinsic rewards of competing and winning.

That [Metropolitan Police tournament] 5 a-side is always strong in my mind, and people that played in it, I see a couple of them still and we're talking, like I say 18 years on. So the people are still alive to me, a couple of them I'm still very friendly with.

In a similar way but within a very different context Tamsin (aged 29) viewed tournaments as her most important memories. Tamsin started playing football when she was aged 25. She describes her main reason for playing as 'I had heard that Hackney was an all lesbian team and I really wanted to be in an environment of all lesbians just for the camaraderie'. For Tamsin tournaments have a very different meaning compared to those attached to girlhood and competing. Like Shirley, Tamsin focuses on the sociable aspects of being at

large events, unlike Shirley, Tamsin talked about relatively recent events and centralises sexuality within these memories.

I love going to tournaments because it's that whole team feeling - it's usually about 20 people and we go like to Mansfield and Cheshire (...) we get completely pissed, we smoke a lot, we have a laugh (...) like a whole weekend together with people that I like. And the football is secondary to the whole thing (...) And the sing songs after football, (...) So it's the people more than - I don't really remember specific goals or specifically running up the field to take a really good ball. (...) I think my first tournament with Hackney in Mansfield was really exciting because I was getting to know everybody and we all camped, we all sang songs outside and everyone from the other teams wanted to come and sing with us and wanted to be with Hackney (...) all the baby dykes kept sneaking out from the other tents and staying out with us.

For Tamsin tournaments represent a space not just for playing football, also they provide a forum where she feels safe to express her lesbian sexuality. Football is positioned as central in as much as it brings the women in the team together. However, what becomes more significant than this is the opportunity football allows for the women to feel comfortable about overtly displaying their sexuality. Tamsin's account alludes to the relationship between football and lesbianism. I return to this issue more fully when I consider the 'sexual peremptory in football' in chapter seven.

Six of the women talk about spectating as their most vivid footballing memory. For these women specific games, the teams playing and in some cases the scores are all important. Bev (aged 43, lived in Ramsgate all her life) remembers the first time 'my father took me to West Ham. It was like going to the other side of the world then... it was just after the 66 World cup - I was 10'. Rachal (aged 34) remembers going to watch Liverpool play and paying '35p to get in'. Di (aged 29) articulates the pleasure of ; 'watching West Bromwich Albion play somebody like Leicester in the old first division on Sunday with my sister having Sunday dinner in front of us. I just thought that was brilliant. That was my first real memory of football.' Laura (aged 33) also talks about watching a game as a girl - 'I can remember my father taking me to watch

Cardiff at Ninian Park - they played Queens Park Rangers and I think it was one all - something like that'. Similarly Collette (aged 32) and Nadia (aged 26) recollect attending matches as girls, both went to games during the early 1980s.

I had a friend at secondary school and she was really into football, but it wasn't - it didn't seem as fashionable then as it is now (...) we both supported Aston Villa so we used to go and watch the games. But that was a bit traumatic at the time as well. (JC - why was that ?) ...at that time two girls on their own didn't seem quite right. So that was hard work sometimes, we used to get unwanted attention from boys - men sometimes. And it was a bit fascist really. A bit... and there weren't many black.... there were black players at Villa. (JC - was your friend black or white ?) She was white. Yeah, we used to get... it wasn't overt - cos we were young you know, I'm thinking - how old were we ? - we must have been about 13 or 14.(...) It just became uncomfortable really (...) we just stopped going (...) yeah, well just unbelievable. Yeah there would be people next to you or around you chanting you know, fascist racist things, chucking bananas, crap like that (Collette, aged 32).

Clearly Collette's experience of watching live football is gendered and 'raced'. As a black teenage girl attending games in the early 1980s she was aware of the presence of black players, however her overriding memory is of the racist behaviour of the crowd. This experience is situated according to race relations. While it is not possible to recapture the experience of Collette's white friend it is possible to imagine that her experience will be different although also 'raced'. Collette's testimony is about 'race', her experience locates and marks her in relation to whiteness. Although Nadia does not make direct reference to racist behaviour she also clearly remembers the whiteness of the crowd.

I remember going to my first Arsenal match, in fact I've got a programme (...) it was 83 my first match, it was against Stoke, Stoke City (JC - So you were 11 years old - who did you go with?) My dad runs a sweet shop and one of his customers - a big Arsenal fan - had 2 boys at the time, they were big junior Gunners as well and he - they were a white family, and my dad told them that I liked Arsenal, and he - Mr. Beech - took me to Highbury. (...) I stood on the terraces with lots and lots of men and boys. (JC - What was that like?) Very scary, because there was a lot of swearing. I was very aware of my colour at

that age (...) Mr Beech was a big man, and he you know, didn't realise or didn't give a shit who I was, or what colour I was, the fact that I supported Arsenal meant something to him. (JC - And being a girl, was that unusual?) I was aware of the dominance of men, (...) being surrounded by so many white men.

Nadia continued to attend matches and joined the junior Gunners (Arsenal's fan club for young supporters). In this sense being an Arsenal fan was normalised, however her memories of supporting Arsenal as a Hindu Indian illustrate how this experience is inscribed by ethnicity (I return to Nadia's experiences in the next chapter).

By focusing on when and why the women first started playing football, and vivid footballing memories it is evident that many of the women have successfully integrated their involvement with football into their lives. The memories the women have support their narratives of initial involvement. For many of the women football has been a significant and habitual part of their lives from an early age; it was an integral part of growing up and is firmly positioned as an aspect of their girlhood. For most of the women, their involvement in football as girls has been normalised. Playing, competing and spectating are positioned as typical and common occurrences. Some of the women share similar experiences of football, for example playing on council estates and in the playground at school. Some share experiences such as tournaments and watching matches but understand these experiences in very different ways. In particular I have shown how these discontinuities of experience are based on sexuality, 'race' and ethnicity. Such an approach reflects a commitment to standpoint theory. However by engaging with both shared and non-shared experience, that is experiential diversity, I produce knowledge based on women's similar and different experience of football. Thus signifying a commitment to the production of feminist epistemology from the standpoint of the marginalised.

### **The centrality of football.**

Here I intend to establish the centrality of football in the lives of the women taking part in this research, by focusing on the present. I will draw on both the quantitative and qualitative findings, relying mostly on the interview material.

Briefly returning to the questionnaire material, the quantitative findings show that the most common period of time dedicated to football on a weekly basis is 5 hours (18%). The next most common response is 6 hours (17%) followed by 4 hours (13%). To summarise, three quarters (76%) of the respondents dedicated between 4 hours and 10 hours a week to football. In relation to weekly routine these figures represent regular training; once or twice a week for 1-2 hours, and regular playing; once a week, usually on a Sunday for one and a half hours. Respondents may have included other games or additional training as well as travelling time and socialising time after training or playing. The number of hours dedicated to football reflects a habitual commitment. The women taking part in the interviews reproduce these themes when they talk about their dedication and commitment to the game.

Eleven of the women in the qualitative interviews refer to football as either being very central or quite central.<sup>55</sup> The three women who did not describe football in this way refer to: the 'social thing' being more central; other sports being more central; and a recent change in lifestyle. In the last instance, Shirley (aged 33) had just retired from playing, she stresses that 'from the age of 18 till 32 it was very central, I didn't miss training - I didn't miss a match, you know life revolved around it [football].'

Sam (aged 28) talks about her passion for football, she 'loves' playing and 'loves' the game, it is a significant part of her life. Bev (aged 43) goes as far as to suggest that - 'it is my life - it is my life'. Bev joined a women's team when she was 12 years old in 1968, she believes she's played 'probably every single

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<sup>55</sup> In response to the interview question - 'can you explain how central football is to your life?'

Sunday in the winter since'. Julie (aged 20) also acknowledges football as her priority; however she is more reticent about how she feels about playing : 'Yeah at the moment it's very central (...) it is priority erm I don't know that it, sort of, necessarily should be like that - doing a degree and that - it does take up a lot of time and money'. In comparison, Di (aged 29) and Donna (aged 30) explain in detail the relationship they have with football. They both talk about how playing and spectating are assimilated into their home life, they include their partners as an essential part of this. Di talks about 'football as a central point'. She positions playing, the large group of friends she has that are players, and watching ('both women's football on the TV, but obviously, because of the sponsorship and the high profile of the men's game, it's usually men's football that I watch'(Di)) as a large and significant part of her life.,

Ask my partner - she'll tell you. (...) It is very central in my life. (...) It sort of infiltrates into all parts of my life. (...) So it is a big focal point. (...) I love playing football, and I don't think there's anything really that gives me that enjoyment. The closeness of my family and the intimacy with my partner - that's comparable. (...) Everyone comes round to our house and sees the football on Sky. It's usually the same crowd and it's usually round our house (Di).

Di's account identifies the many components of her life; her partner, her passion for football, and her friends. She defines football in a way that coalesces these parts; 'it is a big focal point'. As with the women's memories of football, for some of the women interviewed, spectating is viewed as a critical aspect. Di's account demonstrates this and here Donna also describes the everyday nature of her spectatorship.

Oh very, very big in my life, see cos I not only play, I watch football as well so practically everything evolves around it really, cos if I'm not playing I'm watching it and if I'm not watching it live I'm watching it on tele. So I watch everything - we [male partner who is not a football player] watch Spanish, we watch Italian, we watch German - pick the German channel up and you get, you know, cos the commentary don't matter - what does it matter you can't understand the commentary you just watch the football. We flick channels every night and watch something probably (Donna).

In addition to spectating and friendship networks some of the women who talk about football as 'very important' mention their work. Bev (aged 43) positions work within the following equation - 'I work to go on holiday to watch football. I'm not going to the World Cup this year but I've been to the last ones - I went to America and Mexico'. Helen (aged 23) reiterates this 'passion for football' theme by including her job and role as a physical education teacher within her account.

It's probably the most central thing. I live for football and can't wait for the World Cup [1998] to be here. It's just everything - all my friends are from the football team, all my college mates that I'm still in contact with are from our football team at college. I socialise with mates from the team, I watch it regularly and I also teach it quite a lot, and I'm involved with all the girls' teams here [School where she teaches], so it's a pretty major part of my life.

For the women who described football as 'quite important' their analysis does not overtly position football as such an integral part of their lives. Instead these women view their involvement within a series of other commitments. Nadia (aged 26) describes football as 'pretty central'. She contextualises this by adding 'I think there's about 4 things which are important in my life - my job, my relationship, football and my social life, and not in that order'. Clearly by listing a set of central concerns the place football takes is not so exclusive. However, football still appears to adopt a pervasive character. Nadia continues - 'I listen to football on the radio, I read about football at some point during the day, I'm sad enough to look it up on the teletext, watch it whenever I can on TV and I play a couple of times a week'. It is interesting how some of the women place their own involvement alongside watching mainstream media coverage of men playing. As Di stressed earlier she ends up watching men playing as a result of the media's prolific coverage, she would prefer to watch women play but as yet this is not a reliable option; mainstream media only offer sporadic coverage of women playing. Tracy (aged 23) is one of the few women who talked about watching women play 'even if I am not playing I still

like to go and watch, just cos I love the game so much'. She is talking about watching her own team 'live' on a Sunday afternoon. On the whole, the women who are avid spectators appear to access what is provided, in other words they watch men playing football.

Returning to the importance of football in the lives of the women interviewed, Laura (aged 33) begins by stating 'it's not central, because I have a 3 year old, and nothing other than a 3 year old could possibly be more central, because of the demanding nature of a 3 year old, erm, and working full time'. However she admits 'it comes close, it comes third in line'. Again football is positioned within a list of priorities and clearly Laura's experience of motherhood impacts on her experience of football. She continues to talk about family life and concludes by registering the position of football.

I spend at least one if not two evenings a week involved in football, every weekend throughout the season, you know, which means that my husband [not a football player] has to look after my daughter and she comes to every game (...) so it is quite central within our house I suppose, and yeah we watch a lot of football (...) so football's quite a big thing.

This account offers an illustration of the routinization of football in the life of Laura and her family. It fits with the quantitative findings and suggests she consistently dedicates at least 4-5 hours a week to football during the season. Her commitment exists alongside family and work commitments.

For the eleven women who described football as either 'very central' or 'quite central' their accounts illustrate how football either fuses the various aspects, or blends into a succession of parts, of their lives. For the women that introduce their partners during their accounts it seems that football is a customary part of their relationship. By talking about the centrality of football, the women demonstrate how they have successfully assimilated it into their lives. The discussion that follows illustrates that although the women, and those partners who have been mentioned, have normalised and routinized



football, their wider networks of family and friends have been more ambivalent about such involvement.

### **Women who play and their family and friends.**

The responses to playing the women receive from friends and family range between being very positive, ambivalent and indifferent. The women who have introduced their partners into the discussion, offer accounts which show how playing has been routinized within their relationship. The two women who have children talk about the practical difficulties of childcare, and balancing their children's activities with their own playing aspirations. They do not mention any element of surprise from their children towards their involvement in football. For most of the women their families appear to be either very positive or ambivalent about their involvement. Friends who do play are also immersed in the game, and register playing as an everyday experience. On the other hand friends who do not play tend to respond indifferently.

Julie (aged 20) talks about her parents who separated when she was very young - 'I couldn't have got where I am now [trials for British Universities team] without either of them. They've both helped in different ways - my dad knew everything about it and my mum, sort of got me there'. While acknowledging their different responses she identifies their input as positive. Di (aged 29) makes direct reference to the positive response she has had from her family - 'They [parents] thought it was great. My family has been brilliant about it. My grandparents always ask 'how are you getting on' - always encouraging'. Similarly Shirley (aged 33) highlights the positive effect of support she has received from her parents.

They've [parents] always been very supportive, supportive in that - it sounds really odd when I look back at it now - I'd say they were supportive in that the fact that they didn't get too involved, but for me, that was positive.

Both Donna (aged 30) and Nadia (aged 26) experience relatively similar responses to Shirley. They also interpret their parents' lack of interest in football as positive in as much as they were allowed to play. Donna believes her involvement was unproblematic for her parents - 'I've always played out in the street and they never said nothing, you know, there was never any 'oh god, you can't go and play'. (...) they just let me'. However, Nadia suggests that her involvement was far more problematic for her parents.

My parents didn't know what hit them when I was younger, asking them to buy trousers for me instead of skirts or dresses (...) I wanted trousers all the time, or shorts, erm, they didn't actively discourage it, but they weren't too impressed, but they let me get on with it.

Here the ambivalent response from family members becomes more evident. Nadia continued to play and her involvement challenged her parents' understanding. In this instance Nadia's involvement initially not positioned as 'normal' by her parents, was over a period of time accepted and normalised to some extent. For some of the women an ambivalent response is particularly apparent when they discuss their mothers' reaction. This is evident when Tracy (aged 23) pithily describes her family's response.

My brother loves it. My mum hates it, well she doesn't hate it, she just says 'well its up to you, but you shouldn't be doing it '. I don't know about my dad I haven't seen him for years. But my nan likes it. She phones me up every Sunday - 'how did you get on?'

The idea that mothers think football is unsuitable for their daughters is understood as based on a mixture of fear surrounding the risk of injury and the inappropriateness of football for women. Sam's (aged 28) rhetoric of her mother's reaction illustrates this point - 'my mother thinks it's far too dangerous for women. She thinks I should pick something more feminine.'

Although some of the women discuss the ambivalent response they have received from their families only one of the women felt that her playing had not been accepted at all by her parents. Tamsin (aged 29) suggests that her parent's failure to accept her involvement is more to do with sexuality and class issues than it is to do with football per se.

They really don't like to talk about it and I think that's more because they know that I play with a lesbian team and they really don't like to talk about the whole gay thing. So the football gets lumped into being gay (...). My parents are actually quite, you know middle class and snobbish (...) and football is, is probably quite common to them.

Despite the range of responses the women continue to play regardless of their family's reactions. In this way they have routinized playing but not necessarily normalised their involvement within the family setting. The response from parents represents wider issues. Some are illustrated, for example gender appropriate behaviour and issues surrounding sexuality. I explore these more fully as I engage with gender and sexuality in the succeeding chapters.

Within friendship circles the women have not faced the same ambivalence they experience within the family. On the whole the friends of the women are also players; only one woman stated that none of her friends played. Three of the women had both friends that played and friends that did not. For these women the responses from their friends that did not play reflect indifference. Sam (aged 28) mentions her friends who are musicians and 'the bizarre looks they give me when I want to play football'. Laura (aged 33) suggests that her non playing friends 'will ask if I'm playing on Sunday just so if I'm not we might do something else'. Donna (aged 30) believes that the friends she has that do not play 'just think I'm a bit mad'.

For ten of the women football has provided an important forum to make and develop friendships. For all of these women their immediate circle of friends are also footballers. Helen (aged 23) admits that 'since I've been to college *all*

my friends are involved in football'. Julie (aged 20) who is still at college shares a house with 7 other women and they all play football. She stresses that her closest friends 'are my mates in football'. The opportunity football allows for friendship is not particular to the college setting and/or student lifestyle. Kaz (aged 31) left school at 16, her lifestyle has been, and is, very different to Helen's and Julie's and yet she states 'most of my friends I made through football'. Similarly, Shirley (aged 33) left school at 16 and started to play for a club when she was 18. She has friends she has known since then.

My closest friends are from football - they're not necessarily even playing anymore, but I've got a very, very close knit group of friends, probably a dozen of us now, we're all quite different, but we're just got this focus that's in common, we'll meet for games, like when the World Cup's on.

Nearly all of the women who were interviewed socialise with women who also play. Within these circles of friends football is very much accepted as standard. Playing is viewed by these groups of women as the convention; it is expected, and in this way normalised.

### **Summary.**

As the first chapter to include an analysis of some of the research material this chapter achieves three aims. Firstly, it exposes the existing documentation on football as largely male centred theory, thus making links with the theoretical discussions on knowledge as political terrain in chapter three. Secondly, it supports the notion of a feminist standpoint epistemology (as discussed in chapter three) by making visible women's footballing experience through an analysis of the narratives provided by the women. Finally, by considering women's experience as discontinuous, this chapter highlights the functioning of class, 'race', ethnicity and sexuality, as well as gender, for the women taking part in the research. In this way 'women's experience' as a unitary

category is problematised and the notion of situated knowledges emerges as relevant.

The above documentation of women's footballing experiences is achieved through an analysis of empirical and anecdotal research material. These findings are used to challenge the existing male centred theory on football. By adopting standpoint theory and making visible women's experience of playing, the account contests 'the content of what currently passes as truth' (Hill Collins, 1991, p. 206) and exposes traditional knowledge claims as reflecting the interests of the dominant group, namely men. As Sandra Harding (1993) argues 'the experiences and lives of those at the 'bottom' have been devalued and ignored; they are not visible, but can provide starting points for thought' (p. 54). The relationship between feminist epistemology and 'women's experience' is very transparent within feminist political thought. Here I return to Beverley Skegg's (1995) point; 'it was the perceived disjunction between individual women's experiences and the (few) representations offered by traditional disciplines that provided the spark for feminist research' (p. 15). This chapter represents my first contribution to feminist epistemology. This is achieved by starting knowledge production from the standpoint of the marginalised. However, through the documentation of the women's shared and non-shared footballing experiences I offer their narratives as central rather than marginal.

The chapter reflects the first detailing of women's experience in this thesis. It offers an initial move towards providing a larger body of feminist knowledge. It is significant that the womens' experiences represented here are marked as continuous and discontinuous. In this way it is acknowledged that there exists a myriad of women's experience. Here, it has been shown that not only gender, in addition class, 'race', ethnicity and sexuality inscribe the footballing experiences of the women.

In the following chapters I continue to explore the women's experience of playing on a micro-social level. In particular I offer an in-depth consideration of the functioning of social relations and the power relations of gender and sexuality.

## **Chapter Six.**

### **Gender relations in football contexts.**

#### **Introduction.**

This chapter focuses on the social relations of gender in football contexts. The analysis addresses the second research question relevant to this thesis; how central is gender to the footballing experiences of women who play? Discussion follows on from the previous chapter where women's active involvement in football was established as regular and routine both during childhood and at present. Here, I move on to offer a critical analysis of the women's active involvement. This is achieved through an interrogation of the operations of power within social relations. I engage with Foucault's (1975) earlier work on disciplinary power as a way to highlight the mechanisms by which the women's experiences of playing football are regulated. More specifically, the social, discursive and material practices that function at the micro-social level are considered within football contexts. The focus on the social, discursive and material reflects an engagement with the work of Foucault (1976), Butler (1990) and Braidotti (1992) and I explain these terms more fully below.

In chapter three I argue for the epistemological inclusion of women's continuous and discontinuous, shared and non-shared, collective and individual experience (Haraway, 1991). I also discuss the dynamic functioning of power within the social relations network and the shifting location of individual women (Brah, 1996). This approach is continued here through an exploration of particular gender relations within football contexts and the women's various locations within the gender matrices. It is evident from the research that the women have shared and non-shared experiences that relate to their participation in football. Various sites and practices are mentioned as

impacting on their active involvement. I explore the particular ways power operates through an analysis of 'schooling' and the 'football fields'. That is, I discuss how football is socially and discursively constructed within the education system and the formal spaces used by the women to play. At these sites it is evident that the women's participation is regulated. In addition, some of the women's particular experiences are discussed. These narratives provide located accounts that demonstrate the myriad functioning of social relations.

In all I offer a particular analysis of gender relations in football contexts. This is achieved through a focus on the local configurations of power and a consideration of some of the women's particular locations within the network of social relations. Such an analysis highlights the functioning of disciplinary power and considers some of the regimes of power that regulate the women's participation.

### **Power relations and poststructuralism.**

Poststructuralists work from the premise that power is 'an invisible web of interrelated effects, a persistent and all-pervading circulation of effects' (Braidotti, 1992, p.188). Power relations are viewed as unstable, changeable, unfixed, fluid and reversible (Kenway and Willis, 1998). Reference to networks of power relations and power as a dynamic effect appears in the work of Michel Foucault. In *'Discipline and Punish'*, Foucault (1975) exposes the intricate operation of power and argues that networks of power or power matrices can produce regimes of power and these function to regulate and discipline individual action. However, since power is exercised and not possessed, individuals are invested with and are transmitters of power and power matrices are unstable and in flux. Foucault posits we are both objects and subjects of power and power can be viewed 'as a productive and positive force, rather than as a purely negative, repressive entity' (McNay, 1992, p.38).



...the power exercised on the body is conceived not as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to 'appropriation', but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess; that one should take as its model a perpetual battle rather than a contact regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory. In short this power is exercised rather than possessed: it is not the 'privilege', acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions. (...) Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who 'do not have it'; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them (Foucault, 1975, pp. 26/7).

For Foucault power operates within a charged field, it exists in a capillary form and experiences of domination are effects of power. For instance, shared experiences of domination reflect the strategic positioning or clustering of power within a network of relations.

Jana Sawicki (1991) argues that poststructuralists seek to understand power on a local level with a focus on the 'myriad of power relations at the micro level of society' (p.20). More specifically, feminist poststructuralists are interested in how individuals contribute to and fit into wider power relations (Kenway and Willis, 1998). This relationship between power's operation and individual action is the focus for the work of Judith Butler (1990 and 1993a).

Butler (1993a) explores the boundaries of individual choice through her concept of the 'terrain of signification.' For Butler the 'terrain of signification' represents discursive practices within power matrices that produce cultural intelligibility. She supports Foucault's claim that individuals are immanent of power and as such can exercise power. However, she remains mindful of the limits of freedom and her reference to cultural intelligibility makes links with Foucault's concepts of self-surveillance, panopticism (1975) and his later work on care of the self (1984b).

Foucault's (1975) concepts of self-surveillance and panopticism illustrate the complex functioning of power whereby the individual contributes to the

operation of disciplinary power. Through self-surveillance the macro and micro aspects of power's effects are drawn together and serve to regulate individual action. Foucault went on to develop the notion of practices or technologies of the self and acknowledged that individuals adopt various practices to actively fashion their own existence. Through the concept of the 'terrain of signification' Butler (1993a) brings together the notion of disciplinary power and the idea that individuals can modify and change existing structures of domination. She argues that the individual can act in her own interests however, this choice occurs within the limits of intelligibility (Butler 1993a). In this way, Butler (1993a) problematises the notion of absolute freedom within power networks.

'(...) the "I" that might enter is always already inside: there is no possibility of agency or reality outside of the discursive practices that give those terms the intelligibility that they already have' (1990, p: 148).

She argues that to enter the terrain of signification is not a choice and contests the concept of agency as absolute freedom. However, she is reluctant to dismiss entirely the notion of agency.

(...) the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent of power (1993a, p:15).

Here Butler is arguing that there is a space for individual action that contests existing power regimes. However, individual action occurs within a wider matrix of power and this location provides the context for the operation of power at a micro level. That is, individual action is set up within and reflects wider social relations therefore agency is described as a re-articulation of macro configurations of power. In short, Butler supports the Foucauldian notion that power is exercised and considers the implications of this for the contestation and transformation of existing social relations and power regimes.

Accounts of the intricate functioning of power are provided in Foucault's (1975) analysis of power as unfixed and fluid and his analysis of social relations as in flux and unstable, and Butler's (1990) deconstruction of the concept of agency. More specifically, Foucault's reference to self-surveillance (1975) and Butler's notion of cultural intelligibility highlight the functioning of disciplinary power on a micro-social level. In relation to regimes of power, individual action is regulated on a micro level through the macro strategic positioning or clustering of power within the power matrix (Foucault, 1975). In addition, individual action is disciplined through the 'terrain of signification' (Butler, 1990) the individual negotiates in order to be culturally intelligible. This regulation and disciplining occurs at various sites and poststructuralists (Foucault, 1980; Butler, 1990; and Braidotti, 1992) identify social, discursive and material practices as instrumental in the social construction of social relations of power.

The poststructuralist and more specifically feminist poststructuralist analysis of power's operation within social relations is relevant to discussions that follow for two reasons. Firstly, such an approach attends to women's experiential diversity. That is, through an emphasis on the micro functioning of power it is possible to focus on the women's different everyday lived experiences. And secondly, feminist poststructuralist advocacy that power is exercised and not possessed provides the opportunity to consider the contestation and transformation of power regimes. This allows a consideration of social relations as shifting and dynamic.

### **Social, discursive and material practices.**

For Foucault (1980) social practices are made up of procedures, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of living. He argues that relationships between individuals, exchanges and communications, institutions and modes of knowledge are all produced through social practice. In his account of the history of sexuality he identifies and highlights the ways sexuality is culturally constructed via social as well as discursive practice. His analysis of the

historical, social and cultural demonstrates how power operates to formulate meaning. In particular, he identifies the influence of discursive practices in formalising knowledge and argues that 'every society produces its own truths which have a normalizing and regulatory function', (McNay, 1992, p.25). For example, he argues that it is "scientific" discourses that have produced meaning and serve to discipline sexuality. In this way sexuality is socially and culturally constructed via power/knowledge regimes.

For Butler (1990) it is signification via language *and* discourse that produce meaning. Moreover, she argues that language is fundamental in the construction of a culturally intelligible identity/self. In different ways Foucault and Butler expose the social and discursive practices that function to construct and regulate the sexed self. Both identify social and discursive operation of power in production and reproduction of sex as a stable binary opposite. However, Butler goes on to interrogate cultural configuration of gender and gender relations, whereas Foucault focuses on cultural construction of sexual relations. That said, both demonstrate the dynamic and complex functioning of power within social relations.

In a similar way Braidotti (1992) considers the role of language in the construction of the differentiation of sex and sexuality. In her critical appraisal of the feminist agenda she calls for a focus on the deconstruction of meaning as a way to interrogate social relations of gender and sexuality. Like Butler (1990), she questions the usefulness of the construct the sex/gender distinction and calls for an interrogation of how the distinction produces hierarchical difference in relation to gender. In addition to the emphasis on the social and discursive practices that produce and reproduce power relations, she argues for an incorporation of materiality in understanding gender power relations. For example, she demands a revisiting of the material sites where 'woman' is essentialized, disqualified and excluded. In this vein she strives to deconstruct not only language and meaning but also the material regimes that produce meaning and impact on women's experience.

In this chapter I refer explicitly to social, discursive and material practices that operate to construct gender and gender relations. I highlight how these practices impact on the women's active involvement. In chapters seven and eight I continue to consider the social, discursive and material as a way to explore and analyse the social construction of sexuality and the sexed body.

### **Schooling and disciplining girls [not] to play.**

I describe the process of being influenced by the school environment as 'schooling'.<sup>56</sup> I make use of the concept 'schooling' as a way to consider the women's experiences of primary, secondary, further and higher education. What emerges from the research, is that football and gender are socially constructed in and through the education system in particular ways. A combination of social, discursive and materials practices impact on girls' and young women's experiences of football.

For the women who expressed their experiences of school it is evident that being a girl within the education system is a central issue. During the analysis of the questionnaire findings I provide the age category as a way to chronologically position the women's experiences. This respondent uses strong language to describe her previous experience - 'in school forced to play traditional female sports. Banned from playing football' (no.111, aged 30-32). And during the interview research Tracy (aged 23) mentions and emphasises the response she had when she tried to play football at school - "'girls can't do that'..." These remarks illustrate how gender and sport are socially constructed on the premise of sex difference. The idea of 'female sports' and the notion that sex forecloses certain sporting opportunities demonstrates the functioning

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<sup>56</sup> This term has been borrowed from work that critically appraises the education system, for example: Brah and Deem, (1986); Epstein and Johnson (1998); Hargreaves, (1986); Scraton, (1992).

of social and discursive practice. These experiences are shared by many of the women and the following comments further illustrate this point.

When I was at school none of the girls were allowed to play even if they wanted to (no. 72, aged 21-23).

I wanted to play football as a child in the school team and was not allowed. Same with boxing (no. 115, aged 36-38).

In school and college the teachers wouldn't let us play football during P.E. or with the boys (no. 18, aged 18-20).

Not being allowed to play reflects procedures and attitudes that constitute social practice. Procedures and attitudes reflect exchanges that shape relationships between individuals and formalise knowledge claims (Foucault, 1976). In and through school sporting discourse the relations between girls and boys are based on the knowledge that boys can do certain sports and girls cannot. In this way modes of knowledge are produced such as girls cannot play football. Here discursive practice demarcates the difference between girls and boys and functions to regulate girls' active involvement as is highlighted in this comment. In addition, discursive practice functions to uphold knowledge/power regimes.

[W]hen I was at school I was never allowed to play football with the boys because they said and the teacher said it's a boy's game (no. 60, aged 18-20).

Clearly social and discursive practices within physical education produce and reproduce what is 'normal' and 'natural' sporting behaviour for children. The findings highlight that school sport and physical education are sites for the social construction of football and gender. The notion that football is a 'boys' game' demonstrates discursive practice within a particular configuration of gender relations and the functioning of disciplinary power. In other words, girls' active involvement in the game is constrained but boys' participation is

not. It is evident that regimes of power exist to discipline and regulate girls' participation.

That said it is important to remain mindful of power as exercised and not possessed and how this contributes to the instability of power/knowledge regimes. The research findings indicate that the situation in some schools is different. Two of the women interviewed are physical education teachers and both report that the girls in their schools are given the opportunity to play. For example, Collette (aged 32 and teaching at a school in East London) talks about her approach when she introduces girls to football in PE lessons.

'Often the girls think they are not any good, they listen to the stereotypes - they believe girls aren't good at football. I try to tell them it is all to do with experience - "when they are playing with little dolls at 3 what was your little brother doing?" - he was out playing football with whoever'.

Helen (aged 23 and teaching in the East Midlands) also talks about the future of football in schools for girls. She is positive and places less emphasis on the prevailing negative attitudes - '[N]ow, because of more people like myself coming through from sports colleges and coming into teaching, we're setting up more girl's teams'. Collette and Helen report their provision of regular and frequent opportunity for girls to play football at school. Their experiences of teaching girls to play reflect individual efforts on a micro level to challenge the 'natural' relationship between boys and football. Their particular situations demonstrate that power relations exist in a number of ways at the local level and their actions challenge social and discursive practices within schools that position football as a 'boys' game'. As Jane Kenway and Sue Willis (1998) argue: gender relations in schools are contextually inflected, therefore to understand power it is important to examine its local operations.

Through the inter-play of discourses and the ways in which individuals and groups take up the positions which such discourses offer them, power takes effect and has effect (Kenway and Willis, 1998, p: 98).

In conjunction with the comments that report girls not being allowed to play, the testimonies of the teachers demonstrate the functioning of power and resistance within the education system (Foucault, 1976; Sawicki, 1991). In other words, within the process of schooling individuals both experience and exercise power (Kenway and Willis, 1998).

To further demonstrate the complexity of gender relations within the education system, it is worth considering not only the social and discursive practices that impact on girls' relationship to football but also the material practices. The reported (Guardian Education 22.06.99) success of Shrewsbury girl players aged under-16 and under-13 offers an example of the importance of material sites in the social construction of the game. On a local level the girls were provided with opportunity to play as a result of the Shropshire schools development plan. The development plan was initiated by £138,000 share of '£10m of funding, provided jointly by the Lottery and the Premiere League' (Revell, 1999). Funds were distributed with the intention being to provide opportunities for girls within schools. The effects of this material practice are localised. However, the Shrewsbury girls' experiences of increased participation challenge the construction of football as a 'boys' game'. Their increased participation and success work to destabilise notions of girls' sport and boys' sport within schools. Clearly, material practice can serve to reconfigure the operation of power within the network of gender relations.

Staying with material practices but moving on to the women's experiences of further and higher education the women's testimonies continue to demonstrate the functioning of disciplinary power within the process of schooling. Findings illustrate how the young women who have experience of the University system in England and Wales experience disciplinary power and are further schooled in relation to gendered notions of the footballer. For example, the findings suggest that within the University system material practice reflects and reinforces configurations of gender relations that regulate women's participation. The following comments illustrate this point.



Our team has recently had problems regarding sponsorship and grants from AU [Athletic Union]. Our team has been awarded only £150 this year whilst the men's team has been awarded £1200. Whilst we understand that there is obviously a degree of difference in skill between our teams, essentially the running costs of both teams are similar (no. 270, aged 18-20)

Men's football and rugby also seem to have more priority when it comes to new kit etc... Our uni athletic union is supposed to replace our kit every 3 years, we've had the present one for about 4/5 years. Why ? (no. 202, aged 18-20)

The material differences between provision for female and male students in the form of financial support and playing kit reflect and reproduce wider gender relations. Via material practice the women's participation is devalued. Braidotti (1992) calls for a re-visiting of the material sites where women are excluded and disqualified. Clearly these comments suggest that University sport's policy and the distribution of funds to student sport are sites where women are disqualified. In addition to material practice, social practice also contributes to the regulation of women students' participation. The following comment illustrates how gender is produced and reproduced through social practice.

Playing football for my university team in the final of SESSA tournament. We only played 40 minutes each way as the ref (man) decided the pitch was too big for women to play 45 minutes and plus they didn't want to delay the all important men's finals (no. 150, aged 30-32).

This example highlights the effects of disciplinary power on the micro-social level. The referee's decision to reduce the game by a total of ten minutes on the basis that the pitch was too big for women players contributes to a particular power/knowledge complex. In other words, he is active in the production of a regime of truth, which is that women are unable to play a complete game of football. His decision illustrates how he has exercised power within a particular power regime that favours a particular construction of

gender. His actions both reflect and reinforce male domination within social relations and show how individuals contribute to and fit into wider power relations.

Such blatant regulation via the functioning of power within gender relations has been challenged elsewhere and it is argued that football in the United States of America has been 'constructed as a sport suitable for women' (Henry and Comeaux, 1999; p.278). Through legislation and the introduction of Title IX of the Education Act Amendments (adopted by Congress in 1972 and made mandatory in 1978), practices that exclude and disqualify women from football are deemed illegal. The effect of this change in policy and provision has been an increased number of girls and women taking part in sport. For example, at high school level the figure rose from 294,015 taking part in 1971 to 2,240,000 in 1996. And the average number of sports made available to women at intercollegiate level increased from 5.61 in 1978 to 7.53 in 1996 (Acosta and Carpenter, 1996, cited in Dworkin and Messner, 1999, pp. 345). More specifically it is suggested that 'soccer emerged as a primary beneficiary' of Title IX (Henry and Comeaux, 1999; p.278) and it is estimated that half of the 18 million soccer players in the USA are female (Lopez, 1997). There is no equivalent sporting legislation in this country. As such there is no challenge to practice that constitutes power regimes that regulate women's active involvement. In this way, the disciplinary power exercised by the referee in the above testimony of a student's experience of playing, reflects micro-social practice that is immanent of macro gender relations particular to football in England and Wales.

It is evident from the research findings that disciplinary power operates within the process of schooling. In particular, there are practices within the education system that have a regulatory function on girls' and women's participation. For example, it is evident that football is discursively and socially constructed as a 'boy's game' and regimes of truth produce the knowledge that girls and women are unable to play. That said, the experiences of the women teachers

and girls in Shrewsbury indicate that on a local level regimes of power that produce gender relations are being modified and changed. In view of this last point it is important to remain mindful of the discussions in the previous chapter. There I offered the women's accounts of their girlhood participation as a way to illustrate the normalisation and routinisation of football in their lives.

Clearly the education system plays a part in the production and reproduction of particular configurations of gender relations. The women experience the social construction of football on a local level in and through schooling. At times power operates to configure a matrix of gender relations that is regulatory. That is, disciplinary power functions to constrain women's active involvement. However, it is evident that there exist different configurations of gender relations and that these networks do not carry the same disciplinary power. As is evidenced above and in the previous chapter girls and women *do* play. Therefore in some ways football has been produced and reproduced as a 'girls game'.

In the next section I move beyond the education system and consider the women's experiences of participation through a focus on the broader 'playing arena'. Moreover, I describe the formal sites where women's involvement is visible as the 'football fields' and this entails a discussion on how the game is overviewed by 'officials' and overseen by spectators and the media. This consideration of the practices that formalise women's participation continues to focus on the operation and effects of disciplinary power. This is achieved through discussions on how organisers/providers, referees, spectators/passers by and the media treat women players.

### **The football fields: formalising the position of women.**

How women players are treated is significant to any discussion on gender relations. For example, from the twenty-four themes that emerge from the

questionnaire material (See Appendix II), three reflect the women's experiences of 'not being taken seriously and/or ridiculed'. In particular the women comment on not being taken seriously and/or ridiculed by, organisers/providers, referees and spectators/passers-by. During the interviews the women reiterate organisers/providers and passers-by as perpetrators of ridicule. In addition there is evidence that the media marginalise, trivialise and sexualise women players.<sup>57</sup>

Through a focus on the research material that highlights the ways officials and observers construct the game I continue to illustrate particular and specific mechanism that operate to produce and reproduce gender in football contexts.

### *On the pitch: the official control of the game.*

Here I consider how organisers/providers and referees control both the game and the space used for its display. The analysis offers an illustration of how women's position on the football fields is 'formalised'. In relation to gender, it is significant that the women taking part in the questionnaire research refer to the responses they receive from 'officials'. That is, how coaches/managers and the referee (usually men) contribute to the construction of particular power/knowledge regimes that impact on their involvement.

During the interview research the women were asked how they felt about men being involved in the women's game. Four of the women were firmly opposed to men's involvement, as they had witnessed derogatory treatment of players by male coaches. Many of them were unsure about male involvement and went on to discuss the importance of 'how they were involved' (Donna) and the value, but rarity of finding a male coach who is 'aware of all the gender issues' (Collette). Laura (aged 33) provides an anecdote to support her own ambivalence towards 'officials'. Her experience is particularly relevant here

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<sup>57</sup> The findings support previous work that illustrates the role of ridicule in the trivialisation of the 'female athlete' (Bryson, 1987; Messner, 1994; Therberge, 1985; Willis, 1985).

because it highlights issues surrounding women and girls not being taken seriously even by those who may appear well intentioned.

(...) we have a development officer (...) he was very kind of understanding of women's football, you know, he has good knowledge of it, he was very interested in it, he was very serious about it (...) About a year ago, the development worker that I was telling you about, at Christmas time it was, they had a big game on boxing day, and they were trying to attract a lot of people to the ground. He wanted the women's team to go on at half time on Boxing Day, so he wanted the whole of the women's team to get another team to come... to do something on the pitch for 15 minutes, and I said "that is the most patronizing request I have ever heard - why not let us play a 90 minute ?". (...) When I was at another team we were asked to play in some guy's testimonial and Andy Cole was playing, because he used to be a City player. (...) They wanted us to form a tunnel for the men to run out of, you know.... you've got to be bloody joking. So it's things like that, that make you wonder really, and that is part of the danger of having men involved in running your team.

Laura's account demonstrates how women players are viewed and at times officially positioned as 'entertainment' or 'accessories' to men's participation by those responsible for organising and staging events. Evidently, there exists a prevailing discourse, which is that women players are there to service and applaud men's participation. Laura's example exposes the relationship between the team and development officer as a site for the social and discursive regulation of women's participation. As with the example above where the referee decided the women should only play for 40 minutes, the effects of power's operation contributes to gendered footballing knowledge. Both examples highlight how the formalisation of the game favours the knowledge claim that it is men and not women who are legitimate footballing subjects. Interestingly, Laura's response to and critique of the requests continues to demonstrate the circulatory nature of power in that it seems that she refused to be the object of gendered power relations.

The organisers of the game in a more general sense also include those who provide the facilities required to play. These 'officials' contribute to the formal

production of the game as belonging to men by policing access to pitches and changing facilities. For example, the women report difficulties in gaining access and their comments include; 'when we book pitches men still get priority' (no. 253, aged 21-23) and 'last priority for pitches' (no. 196, aged 21-23). The preferential treatment received by men, means that they take precedence when it comes to playing and further indicates that they are more likely to be viewed as viable footballing subjects. Women's fixtures are positioned within football's discourse as inferior as is highlighted here.

(...) if we've booked a pitch or playing surface for training purposes and its double- booked with lads or we play alongside lads - they automatically assume priority as "its only a bunch of women" (no. 419, aged 27-29)

Women are treated as second class citizens in football - we always have to play our fixtures on Sunday afternoons as the men have preference over facilities (no. 356, aged 30-32)

It is apparent that the women experience regulation via a formal system that makes use of a combination of social, discursive and material practice. This practice is formalised via policing by 'officials'. In other words organisers and providers are instrumental in the construction of the game and who is taken seriously as a player. A consideration of referee's response demonstrates this point more fully.

Some of the women view the scarcity of referees for their games as indicative of a less serious approach compared to the support men receive from officials. For instance; 'I feel that referees do not take women's football serious [sic] and that is seen by the limited number of referees available for these matches' (no. 91, aged 21-23). While some women cite the behaviour of the referee during the game - 'male referees (usually older ones) laughing at our efforts' (no. 208, aged 24-26). In particular, some of the women mention that referees they have experience of, are 'not taking the game seriously' and are 'not enforcing rules' (no. 409, aged 24-26). This issue is also evident in recent

research (Patterson, 1998, cited in Cooper, 1998 and Frean, 1998b) on referees' behaviour at 5-a-side matches. In her study, Lindsey Patterson monitored behaviour displayed by referees towards both men and women players. Findings suggest that foul play by women was more likely to be ignored and go unpunished because referees dismiss players as being unfamiliar with rules. Such an approach to rule enforcement is also evident in this research.

The worst thing is the refereeing - I have seen, playing ten years, less than 10 players get booked - a stupid perception that if women foul it's an accident (no. 100, aged 24-26).

(...) being taken seriously by refs i.e. allowing "dolly throw ins" (no. 126, aged 27-29).

As captain of the team I have found that some referees don't take us seriously and tend not to play the game strictly to the rules e.g. offside rule is ignored for the first half and then the second half he'll begin to use it (no. 342, aged 21-23).

These players' comments are clearly related to the referee's inability or unwillingness to treat women as legitimate subjects of the game. To conclude, the referee's responses contribute further to official practice that effectively serves to invalidate the women as players.

### *Over-seeing play: the spectator and media gaze.*

Here I focus on the attitudes, modes of behaviours, exchanges and communications (Foucault, 1980) of observers of football towards women who play. In addition to this engagement with social practice, the language used by spectators/passers by and the media is considered as significant to an understanding of how power operates within gender relations.

For example, remarks some of the younger women report makes explicit how ridicule functions within power relations.

'men think it [women playing] is funny' (no. 174, aged 21-23)  
'lads taking the piss' (no. 221, aged 21-23)  
'many men laugh at you when they hear you play football' (no. 237, aged 21-23)  
'I have been laughed at for wanting to play by male peers' (no. 250, aged 21-23).

In addition to this overt ridicule, the women also mention not being taken seriously in different ways. For instance, 'males are very condescending towards me when I say I can play football' (no. 157, aged 18-20) and 'males thinking I have no knowledge of the game which is worth listening to or to be taken seriously' (no. 383, aged 18-20). The women also report comments made by spectators /passers by.

'ridiculed by male passers by' (no. 100, aged 24-26)  
'men watch and make vulgar comments and take the piss' (no. 419, aged 27-29)  
'male players on other pitches who don't take the women's game seriously' (no. 137, aged 33-35)  
'teasing by work colleagues and other male footballers' (no. 102, aged 24-26).

These findings show how the women's participation is open to both the gaze and concomitant ridicule and trivialisation of their footballing performances. It is evident that male on-lookers are very blatant about their inability and unwillingness to take women seriously. I have been told of a league game on Hackney Marshes where a man walked across the pitch during play; an act which demonstrates his complete disregard for the women who were playing. Such trespassing illustrates a very visual challenge to women's active involvement and highlights social/physical practices that are used to gender sporting space. As mentioned in the previous chapter, feminist geographers (see for example, Duncan, 1996; Massey, 1994; Valentine, 1993) have shown how public spaces are socially and culturally constructed as male terrain. 'Male passers by', 'men watching' and 'male players on other pitches' who ridicule women players continue to mark public space as male through verbal and visual strategies. In



doing so they establish and perpetuate the game as a male preserve. Paul Willis (1985) describes this process in the following way.

The fundamental anxiety seems to be that men and women have to be continuously differentiated; male preserves continuously guaranteed. One way of emphasising this is to promote laughter or cynicism when females take to the field, another way is to set out to prove incontrovertibly that women are inferior through direct challenge (p.122).

Evidently, women players receive both direct and indirect messages through discourse and social practice that their involvement is insignificant, unimportant and inconsequential. Ridicule and denying women's involvement as serious configure gender in football contexts. This configuration is further galvanised via practices that directly discriminate against women's participation, for example, sexist comments and verbal abuse.

Experience of receiving sexist comments and verbal or physical abuse for playing represents a small but important proportion (5% and 4% respectively) of the total responses. Findings support the view that women are discriminated against as a result of gender discourse. For instance, some of the women mention that they receive sexist statements from men telling them that they 'shouldn't and can't play' because they are women, and that they should and can play 'women's sport, such as netball' (no. 246, aged). More specifically sexism is reflected in the comments below.

The general 'male' remarks such as we should be at home cooking the dinner on Sundays, football is for men, kind of statement (no. 117, aged 18-20).

Men on the sideline shouting 'so who's at home cooking the Sunday lunch then?' (no. 331, aged 27-29).

In relation to the reported verbal abuse received by some of the women, many sources are identified. The following litany demonstrates the point.

'abuse from ignorant passers by normally males' (no. 126, aged 27-29)  
'people shouting abuse from the sidelines' (no. 146, aged 18-20),  
'subject to abuse by male teams/coaches' (no. 234, aged 21-23)  
'men shouting abuse' (no. 348, aged 21-23)  
'getting verbal abuse off the lads for playing' (no. 389, aged 18-20)  
'sometimes playing football if men watch (not all men) they hurl abuse at you saying you are crap' (no. 410, aged 27-29).

The women's perceptions of the responses they have received clearly position the remarks as 'abuse'. In two cases, women mention the physical abuse they have experienced; 'I've been laughed at, sworn at and spat at' (no. 417, aged 27-29) and, 'attacked (verbally and physically) by men for playing football' (no. 111, aged 30-32). The harassment some of the women have reported represents serious attempts to police their participation and prevent them from playing. It seems that opposition is largely based on the notion that women *should not* play football, but *should* take part in activities that are appropriate to being a woman, that is netball and cooking. This belief represents a way to justify and legitimise women's subordination in football.

Clearly women are discriminated against as a result of prevailing attitudes and the public airing of these beliefs. Sexist comments and verbal abuse are examples of how discourse can function in the operation of disciplinary power to favour men's participation in sport over and above women's participation. This point can be further demonstrated through a consideration of the media's treatment of women who play.

Here Shirley refers to the role of the media in the under-representation of women and/in football. She offers her point as part of an explanation as to why fewer women play compared to men.

(...) some of it's historical, it's just that men take their sons and that type of thing. I think because of the media the view of football is still male and erm... they're used to seeing men playing and they're used to watching men, it's still a very male orientated sport. I don't think it's totally acceptable still for some girls to be playing, socially, within their families, people are not quite sure about it. I think a lot of it is

historical. I think you'll get more and more girls playing. Ever since I've been involved, all I've heard is that women's football is the fastest growing sport (...) that's showing in teams, there's lots more youth sides [pause] the league [Greater London], when I first started playing, I think the league had 8 teams now it's got 7 divisions of 8 teams.

Sam reiterates the significant role of the media when she was answering the same question - 'I mean you never see women's football on television, not unless we actually win at something'. Without doubt the media play a major part in the production and reproduction of dominant sporting discourses. This is achieved via what is mediated and importantly how it is mediated. It is evident that the media marginalise, trivialise, and sexualise sportswomen through a lack of coverage, sexist narrative and commentary, and visual objectification (Creedon, 1994; Daddario, 1994; Duncan, 1993). In sporting contexts the media inform our understanding of who plays (Halbert and Latimer, 1994). If it is men playing football that continues to be over-represented by the media then viewers continue to believe that football is a male preserve. Interestingly, the game played between the North and South in 1881 organised by Nettie Honeyball received the following newspaper coverage.

So it has come at last! What next? Two teams of young women have just played a game under Association Rules in Edinburgh. Several years ago there was a rage for silly displays of certain kinds of athletics by women, but we thought the time had passed for another outburst in the form of Association football. (...) for no football club with any regard for its good name would encourage such a humiliating spectacle made of the popular winter pastime (1881, cited in FIFA, 1996; pp.141).

A more contemporary example of how the media trivialise women's participation in football appeared in 1993, when Arsenal played 'Doncaster Belles' in a game to decide the winners of the National League. The article was entitled 'Gunnerettes head for title as Belles of the ball are caught on hop'. And made reference to player's hair-styles; 'they tend to dye their hair for the big occasion', physiques; 'a tubby midfield general' and the referee; 'took

several phone numbers as defenders played the woman' (Alexander, 1993). Through language and naming the Arsenal side as 'Gunnerettes', compared to the 'Gunners' (the name given to Arsenal's men's team) the writer marks the women's side as feminine. Feminist analysis of television commentary shows that commentators use language to verbally mark 'women's sport' as "other". For example, by referring to 'tennis' and 'women's tennis' (Halbert and Latimer, 1994) and 'basketball' compared to 'women's basketball' (Duncan and Hasbrook, 1988) 'men's sport' remains unmarked. As with the use of 'Gunnerettes', the reference to 'Belles of the ball', continues to linguistically signal the difference already constructed between 'Doncaster' and 'Doncaster Belles'. The Guardian was heavily criticised, on its letter page, for the way in which the male journalist reported on the match; 'Kick back' (31st March, 1993). It was quite rightly argued that 'none of these snide remarks would have appeared in a report on a men's game' (Griffiths, 1993). However, there was no challenge to the naming of the sides. As the research conducted by Duncan and Hasbrook (1988), and Halbert and Latimer (1994) demonstrates, the process of marking 'women's sport' as the "other" appears to slip into sport's language and discourse unnoticed.

The media coverage of the women's participation continues to be an issue and more recently three of England's players (Katie Chapman, Rachel Yankey and Marianne Spacey) attended a media staged photo shot before an international fixture against Ukraine. On 25<sup>th</sup> November 2000 'Football Focus' – BBC1's Saturday morning football coverage ran a feature entitled 'England's Angels'. The feature, a spoof of 'Charlie's Angels', covered the photo shoot as a way to promote the successful qualification by England for the European Championships. Jennifer O'Neill as editor of the magazine 'On the ball', the UK's only women's football magazine, wrote the following

The players chatted to Football Focus presenter Sue Thearle and other press in between being shot in their normal sporting gear, then in a collection of smart day wear (with a predominance of leather we noted) and then in stunning evening collection. (Jan 2001, p. 26).

Both the programme and the subsequent magazine coverage explicitly represent the players in relation to heterosexual femininity. Of the 5 minutes coverage about 15 seconds depicted the women playing football. The rest of the time the women were represented as models. Thus providing further evidence of how the sporting media symbolically trivialises *and* sexualises women athletes. In addition, the media's treatment of players continues to demonstrate how the football fields are policed through a positioning of women as objects of the gaze and not viable footballing subjects.

### **Women's experiential diversity and shifting locations on the field of play.**

The following discussion seeks to challenge and contest the assumption that gender power relations are always central to the women's experiences of playing football. Through a consideration of some of the women's non-shared experiences I continue to expose social relations as complex and dynamic. Moreover, through an analysis of the women's experiential diversity I demonstrate how the women are located differently within social relations and highlight that an exclusive focus on gender falls short of an in-depth interrogation of women's experience. In this way I support McNay's (1992) assertion.

Gender intersects with race, class, ethnicity, etc., to produce different – at times radically different – experiences of what it is to be a woman (...). Furthermore the individual's own identification with and investment in different subject positions makes it even more difficult to speak of gender as some kind of unified or bonding experience. (p.65)

Here I focus on race and ethnicity and to a lesser extent class to illustrate the myriad of women's experience.

Race and ethnicity impact on all women's experience and it is essential to take account of race when analysing power's operation. The feminist engagement with race relations has produced a burgeoning literature on race and ethnicity

as well as whiteness (Brah, 1994; Frankenberg, 1993; Ware, 1992 and Wong, 1994). Black British feminists have identified important issues surrounding race, ethnicity and racism (see for example Mirza, 1997) and more recently there has been a call for the deconstruction of whiteness because as Frankenberg (1993) posits the white self must be investigated. In addition, the critical engagement with whiteness prevents the assumption that race is experienced only by black, South Asian and Asian women. hooks(1991) and Ware (1992) advocate that white women must consider the racialised context of their own experience and Watson and Scraton (2001) call for a confronting of whiteness in their research on the lives of South Asian mothers.

As Mirza (1997) argues despite the feminist and postmodern moves toward celebrating difference and recognizing otherness it is still important for Black British feminism to consider how black women are being produced through race relations to power. Without doubt race relations and whiteness are central to an understanding of black, South Asian and Asian womens' experiences of sport (Scraton, 2001). And here I offer an account that illustrates how race and ethnicity are socially and discursively produced in football contexts. Having mentioned whiteness it is evident that the following analysis does not focus on the ethnicity of the white players. The discussions highlight some of the ways black women are being socially and culturally produced in football contexts. In this way whiteness is not addressed. However, the undefined and unmarked location of whiteness is examined through an engagement with the narratives offered by Collette and Nadia. Their accounts illustrate how race relations can effect black and Asian players, although I am not suggesting that their experiences represent all the issues surrounding ethnicity. In all, I aim to deconstruct race relations and make a contribution to Mirza's (1997) call for an interrogation of how black women are being produced.

In the interview research, Collette (aged 32) talks about one of her early experiences at the football club (an out lesbian club) she plays for. She played as a girl, however during her late teens and early twenties she was a successful

track athlete, then netballer. She joined a football club in her late twenties and here she talks about one of her first experiences.

(...) there was an assumption I think based on (...) that I should ...[pause] because I hadn't played before so I didn't know where I should play or wanted to play, and they assumed, someone assumed, that I should be up front. Automatically assumed that I was going to be super fast, which is an assumption, it is a stereotype, 'black athlete' - super fast, not good at stamina and stuff.

This account demonstrates Collette's experience of how meanings are attached specifically to colour and highlight Mirza's (1997) point that 'living submerged in whiteness, physical difference becomes a defining issues, a signifier, a mark of whether or not you belong ' (p.3). Collette's experience demonstrates how race is socially and discursively produced and further constructed through a notion that she is physically different and therefore equipped to play in a certain position for the team. Clearly Collette's experiences as a player on a micro-social level and within a sporting context are effected by practices that produce notions of race based on skin colour. Here Nadia (aged 26) talks about a similar incident.

I was going up for a corner, and I was going up in the box and this girl from the team pointed at me and said 'I've got the coloured one'. (...) I thought 'have I got a number on my shirt?', you know what I mean, why point out my colour, which made me really aware. (...) Our manager went up to their manager after the match and said exactly what had happened, and he kind of - not dismissed it - he said 'right we understand', but I don't think he did anything about it.

As with Collette's experience skin colour is central to how the women are defined as players and effects how white players view them. Whiteness remains intact and white assumes the centre; it is socially and discursively positioned as the 'norm'. In other words, players don't shout - 'I've got the white one'. As is illustrated in the anecdote provided by Nadia 'colour' as an inadequate collective for 'non-white' is marked via sporting discourse as the "other".

Nadia continues to describe her experience of the discursive and social construction of race when she talks about 'an Asian girl' who plays for a team in South London. She comments - 'I know her name, because everyone who has seen her play thought I was her, because at the time there was only two Asian women playing'. This discursive practice of marking Asian players but not white players further demonstrates how power operates within race relations to construct otherness and illustrates how whiteness remains undefined. Clearly, the functioning of power highlights how whiteness assumes a central unmarked position (Frankenburg, 1993) and how black women's experience is universalised with a lack of recognition of diversity amongst groups (Scruton, 2001).

The experiences Collette and Nadia talk about demonstrate how power functions within the network of social relations to produce and reproduce particular configurations of race. This consideration of experiences of black and Asian women is vital to an understanding of the effects of power. As Brah (1996) argues a consideration of both gender and race are central to identification of the myriad of shifting configurations that social relations to power assume. Through a further analysis of Nadia's experiences of playing I argue that it is also important to take account of sexuality. This inclusion of sexual relations to power continues to support significant theoretical propositions. For example, Brah's (1996) notion of social relations as kaleidoscopic, Foucault's (1980) analysis of power as an all-pervading circulation of effects and Butler's (1990) concept of a terrain of signification. The following discussion explicitly supports these theoretical concepts through a focus on Nadia's shifting location within a particular matrix of social relations. Through an exploration of Nadia's located experiences I highlight the power fields she is exposed to and identify power's effects as dynamic. In addition, I contest the idea of absolute freedom and show how Nadia must negotiate her participation in football as an Indian Hindu lesbian.



Nadia plays for an out lesbian team, she has a long-term partner who also plays in the team. She started playing at school in the playground and started wearing trousers to school so that she could continue to play at playtime. She supports Arsenal and when she was a child, a 'white man' took her and his sons to watch some games at Highbury. She is Hindu and has two sisters and a mother and father who are also Hindu. Nadia talks about the tensions between her and her family's religious culture and playing football for an 'out' lesbian team. As is demonstrated here Nadia has unfixed locations within the social relations of gender, race and sexuality within family and football contexts.

When I started playing football on Sundays that's the only time really my family would ever have family gatherings, or weddings, and when I started to miss a few of those then they started, you know, getting a bit upset, and actually the most recent one is where they've let it go - the gay games and a big Indian wedding; which I missed because of the gay games (JC - They knew you were going to the gay games?) No, they knew I was going on a football tournament, they don't know I am gay, erm, they think Michelle is my best friend, who goes to my mum's house for dinner once a week. (...) another example is - it's our Christmas soon, and today my mum told me that I have to be available on a Sunday, which means I'll have to miss a match, whether I like it or not, because it is a huge family gathering (JC - when you say our Christmas, is it) [interrupted] Diwalli, it's the Hindu Christmas, the equivalent of Christian Christmas, I can't say I'm not going home - so I have to do that.

Nadia experiences religion, culture and family as social and discursive practices that at times regulate her participation. On a micro-social level she experiences the effects of power through family discourse. She is both subject and object of power within the power field of the family. That is she is both able and unable to play. As a lesbian she enjoys playing for an out team and has attended the gay games. However, she also talks about having 'to miss a match' in order to attend a big family gathering. Here, there is evidence of self-surveillance and an indication that the family's religion and culture represent a terrain or landscape she must negotiate in order to be intelligible to her family. In other words she is not out to her parents and she feels she must attend Diwalli.

She experiences the power relations of gender, race and sexuality in complex ways. Her experiences support the Foucauldian notion that power is an effect that operates dynamically, it is changeable and shifting (Brah, 1996) and the Butlerian concept of a terrain of signification. That is, we are never entirely free agents and must negotiate social relations to power in order to be intelligible.

Interestingly and returning to the notion of whiteness, the Christian Christmas causes a break in the football fixture calendar. This means that players who celebrate Christmas, unless involved in the high profile commercial game, do not have to make the same decision Nadia faces. This demonstrates how social, discursive and material practices of Christianity produce configurations of race relations within British sporting discourse.

In addition to race and ethnicity, it is evident that class impacts on women's experience of football. In the previous chapter I begin to discuss class through a focus on the women's narratives of when and why they started playing. In the interview research some of the women talked about their 'class' background or 'class' culture when they were asked what made it easy/difficult for them to play. Some of these women mention their experience of playing on council estates as girls. Two of the fourteen women made specific reference to this when they talked about what made it easy for them to play. For instance, Shirley makes reference to the low costs involved - 'I mean, football is one of those sports where you just need a ball'. She grew up on a council estate and acknowledges the ease to which she was able to join in mass games on Sundays. Kaz not only refers to accessibility of the game she makes direct reference to where she lived in London as relevant.

I think living on a council estate made it quite easy. You had a football and a football's cheap, we had the square (...) Living in the East End and that, I think, just gave me the opportunity - it's like accepted.

This acknowledgement of the significance of working class culture in London's East End reinforces the idea that football has a stronghold in working-class urban areas (Horne, Tomlinson and Whannel, 1999). Clearly, it is not only male players who affiliate with football's working-class culture. Unlike the appropriation of soccer in the U.S. by the middle classes (Henry and Comeaux, 1999) both working class and middle class women play football in this country. The actual class composition was not discovered by this research, if indeed the 'class' could be quantified. However, the players completing the questionnaires were asked their view on whether 'more working class women play football than middle class'. Nearly one third of the respondents 'agreed' with this statement, a quarter was 'neutral', and almost half 'disagreed'. Clearly there is no definitive answer, both working class and middle class women participate; there is no indication of class exclusivity. From the findings it appears that the effects of class are not oppressive to working class women in the context of football. Since football is working class inflected working class women appear to have the cultural and social capital that can enable participation. That said, it is still the case that class is a social factor and emerges as significant in terms of how women experience access.

In relation to the materiality of class, the economic profile of those completing the questionnaires is varied. Sixty five percent of the respondents are in paid employment, of this group eighty percent are in full time employment. Of those in paid employment, fifty five percent 'take home', on a weekly basis under £200, thirty two percent 'take home' between £200 and £300, and twelve percent 'take home' more than £300.<sup>58</sup> In other words more than half the respondents earn less than 10,400 (gross per annum). Income becomes significant when considering financing participation. During the interview Bev

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<sup>58</sup> During the analysis of the questionnaire material I chose not to code and interpret the information provided on occupation. Although I asked the respondents to indicate their occupation I later decided that the categorisation of occupation would merely serve to hierarchically rank the women. This positioning seemed futile and of no value to exploring the women's experiences of playing. However I felt weekly pay would be of value in relation to cost as a barrier to participation.

mentions that - 'what's made it easy for me is I've always earned a good living - so I can afford to play when and where I want'. Helen also talks about how financing playing is an issue.

(...) the club is in financial difficulty because the girls can't afford to pay the subs that we need to keep going (...) because we're in the national league now, you have to take a minibus, you have to go as far as Blyth, then all the way down to Brighton, so we end up paying probably about a fiver every time we travel (...) we have to pay that ourselves (...) there has been a couple of people drop out of the team because they can't afford it.

From this account it is evident that in some situations money is a constraining factor. At these moments it is possible to identify larger social relations to power. For example if women are unemployed or in low paid work then the costs of playing can be difficult to meet as Helen highlights above. Here class relations and the effects of class regulate women's participation.

However, most of the women who did talk about class, position it as conducive to participation. There is little evidence that the local operation of class relations regulate the women's involvement in football to the same extent as the social relations of gender and ethnicity. From a material aspect the women identify football as a relatively cheap sport. The research highlights that despite being on low wages, working class women represent a large proportion of the player population. This, and football's working class history and culture, position the game as largely accessible to working class women. This finding indicates that through a poststructuralist analysis and an exploration of the everyday, local experiences of women the effects of class do not always produce oppressed subjects.

### **Summary.**

This chapter highlights the operation of power within networks of social relation and identifies the ways gender and gender relations are constructed via

social, discursive and material practices in football contexts. Through a focus on the process of schooling it is evident that the game is largely constructed as a 'boys' game' although there is evidence of significant challenges to this arrangement. The discussion highlights the effects of disciplinary power and power's operation on the women's experiences. For example, many of the women report not being allowed to play at school and the women who have experience of further and higher education describe the ways their involvement is regulated.

In addition to schooling the chapter considers the ways the football fields are policed via formal practices such as how the game is officially organised and how players are treated by on-lookers. Here it is evident that the existence of particular gendered power/knowledge regimes impact on the women's participation. As with schooling certain knowledges are produced to regulate the women's participation. The official control of the game by organisers, providers and referees and the formalising of football fields by spectators and the media are achieved largely via social and discursive practices. The women tend to share experiences of ridicule and abuse, and spectators and the media tend to treat all women the same. In this way the configuration of football's gender relations demotes women *en masse* as legitimate footballing subjects. That said, there is evidence of opposition to this configuration and it is important to remain mindful of the local effects of power that do not mirror larger social relations as well as the non-fixed nature of social relations to power.

In addition to the point that gender relations are shifting it is vital that women's non-shared experiences are not ignored. In this vein the chapter goes on to consider women's experiential diversity and their different locations within power relations.

The discussions on the experiences of Nadia and Collette intend to highlight the local effects of power and not further marginalise their difference. By

making these experiences visible the aim is to illustrate the ways social relations produce different “subjects”. For example, Collette’s experiences highlight the importance of deconstructing prevailing discourses of physicality that produce race and Nadia’s account demonstrates the complexity of her location as an Indian Hindu lesbian and the multiple sites where she experiences regulation. For Nadia, there are discourses within the family related to religion and culture, and on the football field related to notions of race and ethnicity. Both impact on her experiences of playing.

The inclusion of class continues to demonstrate the usefulness of a poststructuralist analysis and the focus on the local effects of power. Historically and culturally football has been socially and discursively positioned as working class and this has enabled working class women’s access to the game. Working class women appear to have the social and cultural capital that allows participation. It is this consideration of the everyday, local experiences of class that reveals that football is working class inflected. In this way football’s class relations to power do not regulate the women’s active involvement to the same extent as the local effects of gender and race. That said, cost exists as a material site where women may experience constraint.

In the next chapter I continue to explore the women’s everyday lived experiences as players. Importantly, I develop further the arguments presented in this chapter, namely that ‘woman’s experience’ is both continuous and discontinuous, both individual and collective and is always embedded within complex and shifting power relations.

## Chapter Seven

### The [hetero]sexual peremptory in football.

#### Introduction.

This chapter considers sexuality as it functions for the women footballers taking part in the research. It contributes to a discussion on social and cultural construction of sexuality in sport and addresses the third research question integral to this thesis, by exploring how issues surrounding sexuality impact on women who play. I offer an account that centralises the women's understanding of sexuality. I show through an analysis of the stereotypes of women who play football how lesbian sexuality has real currency within football culture. Moving on from the stereotypes, I make use of the research material that indicates there is a definite lesbian presence in football. Sport can provide safe sporting and social spaces for lesbians, and some players have challenged and transgressed the heterosexual norm by risking being "out".<sup>59</sup> I consider the extent to which players can display and disclose their sexuality and illustrate how some players construct 'dykespaces'. The idea that dykespaces can be created fits with a queer political analysis of sexuality and space. Finally, I consider heterosexual subjectivity and illustrate how the heterosexual peremptory both exists and is inverted.

In chapters five and six I focus on gender and offer an analysis of the women's individual and collective experience as it relates to football. Together the

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<sup>59</sup> I make use of the term "out" as a way to indicate players' disclosure and display of [lesbian]sexuality. In the same way I make use of the notion - being in the "closet". However I recognise the complexities of being "out" or being in the "closet" and later I interrogate the concepts in relation to the responsibility placed on the individual. That is I question why queer subjects are positioned as responsible for the disclosing of their own sexuality whilst heterosexual subjects are not.

chapters highlight the complex functioning of power within social relations. More specifically, chapter six explores the social, discursive and material practices that operate on a micro-social level within football's gender relations. I demonstrate the fluidity of power and advocate an approach that takes account of local and located experiences of playing. In a similar way this chapter documents the women's shared and non-shared experiences of sexuality. The notion of "agency" and Butler's reference to a 'terrain of signification' becomes particularly relevant during the discussion on disclosure and concealment of players' sexuality – both lesbian and heterosexual. In short, I explore networks of sexual relations in football and interrogate regulatory heterosexuality. This is achieved via a consideration of heterosexual dominance and 'non-heterosexual' or queer subversion.

### **Sexuality.**

Documenting and representing sexuality is problematic and I acknowledge the sentiments of Heaphy, Donovan and Weeks (1998) when they discuss researching 'non-heterosexual relationships' and tensions that exist when relying 'on neat categories and definitions' (p. 457). The questionnaire research does make use of terms as a way to identify categories of belonging, namely heterosexual, bisexual, gay/lesbian and an option for 'prefer not to answer'.<sup>60</sup> In many ways this approach continues the process of re-categorisation of sexuality. In comparison the interview research relies on self-definition, that said, notions of identity emerge as central to the women's understanding of sexuality.

During the interviews the women were asked if they were willing and/or able to discuss sexuality. Nearly all the women entered into a discussion, however to varying degrees. One woman chose not to and during another interview it

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<sup>60</sup> 23% of respondents identified as lesbian/gay, 5% as bisexual and 65% as heterosexual. 6% preferred not to answer and 1% added their own comment, namely 'I am none of these', 'unsure' and 'transgendered'.



was avoided. By way of introduction to such a personal question I asked the women - 'can you talk about what you or what you think other people understand by the term sexuality?' This was followed by 'how would you describe your own sexuality?' Seven women describe themselves succinctly by using the term 'heterosexual' and six women use a range of self-definitions to express their desire for other women, for example, lesbian, gay, and dyke. Interestingly, none of the women interviewed identified as bisexual. This poses two important questions: are there no bisexual interview research participants? and/or, is football space and the interview space specific to this research unsafe space to come "out" as bisexual? During the interviews the women do discuss bisexuality as a way to help explain sexuality and I return to this point shortly.

The interview questions generated discussion mostly on notions of sexual identity, although some women mentioned lifestyles and culture as significant. In contrast, when the women were asked 'when you are with the rest of your team do you mention/talk about sexuality?' most related stories of gossip, joking and teasing based on acts of sex. It is evident that identity and the act of sex are key components of sexuality for the women taking part in the research.

Some of the women allude to notions of essentialism when they discuss sexuality. For example, Shirley (aged 33) mentions feeling 'natural'; 'do you feel natural relating to a man, or a woman, or to both? and that's what I would understand by sexuality'. Kaz (aged 31) appears to be positioning sexuality as innate when she describes a lack of choice; 'it's not a choice either, unless you're bi. It's not a choice (...) no it's not a choice, you know, it just happens, that's how it is.' Interestingly, Kaz distinguishes between heterosexuality and lesbianism, and bisexuality. Her understanding of sexuality positions bisexuality as fluid and heterosexuality and lesbianism as fixed. Here Tracy (aged 23) positions bisexuality as a conflation of both heterosexuality and

lesbianism; 'sexuality, (...) it means if you're gay or straight or both', thus failing to acknowledge an independent bisexual subjectivity.<sup>61</sup>

The use of categories is common to most of the women taking part in the research who chose to talk about sexuality. Nadia (aged 26) suggests that '(...) you can be heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, asexual, if you wanted to', and Sam (aged 28) adopts more of a queer take on sexuality when she exclaims sexuality is; 'whether you're gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered'. However, two of the women found sexuality extremely difficult to describe, here Julie (aged 20) admits; 'I'm not sure. I can't, I can't describe it'. Some of the women were able and willing to explore in detail their understanding of sexuality. These discussions provide valuable insights that reflect the women's lived experiences. For example, Nadia articulates her view as 'a dyke';

I don't think it's [sexuality] understood by the public in general. If you are gay, you understand it more because it is in your face, it's part of you. I understand sexuality to mean being gay, being a lesbian, err, being a woman who prefers women.

Similarly, but not so coherently, Tamsin who also identifies as 'a dyke', suggests - 'I think it comes down to whether you are gay... or not'. Interestingly, this fits with a Foucauldian view that sexuality is understood through homosexuality. That is, historically heterosexuality has been defined through a pathologised homosexuality. Both women centralise experience of being 'gay' to an understanding of sexuality, thus claiming that the term has more currency for 'gay' people. On the whole the women in the research who defined themselves as heterosexual do not discuss their sexuality at length, their descriptions are terse. I argue that this reflects the heterosexual imperative, whereby heterosexuality is assumed and therefore not experienced as problematic in the same way as 'non-heterosexuality' or queer subjectivity.

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<sup>61</sup> Bisexuality is often marginalised and excluded. The work of Clare Hemmings (1993 and 1997) and *Bi Academic Intervention* (1997) highlight the theoretical debates and make visible bisexual subjectivity.

This privileging of heterosexuality positions it as the norm; the dominant. By valorising narratives that locate the experiences of being 'dykes' as central, I am effectively supporting standpoint epistemologies.<sup>62</sup> By focusing on the experiences of lesbian players I offer accounts from the subjugated and/or marginalised. However, I am not claiming that lesbians have a more accurate view of sexuality.

In addition to the notions of sexual identity, three of the women talk about how sexuality influences individual lifestyle and functions to create a sense of community, therefore providing evidence of the impact of sexuality on individual and collective subjectivity. For example, Tamsin suggests that:

(...) it's the whole way of thinking, it's you know, it's basically who you sleep with (...) and it's a lot more than that it's the whole thing, sort of, yes, the culture (...) my social life is completely different to my sister's for instance who's straight.

Di (who is lesbian but describes her sexuality as 'I'm me') talks about how other people 'see it as what you do between the sheets', but like Tamsin she argues that it is about 'how you express yourself (...) in terms of your dress, speech. (...) It's what you do, how you act, your lifestyle. The whole thing'. Interestingly, Collette who plays for an out lesbian team and describes herself as heterosexual also mentions how sexuality is 'more than just the person you sleep with'. She feels that sexuality 'always has something to do with... not necessarily your lifestyle but [pause] (...) sexuality, it defines you, who you are to some extent'. These insights position sexuality as central to individual subjectivity and a sense of belonging to an identifiable sexual community.

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<sup>62</sup> In chapter three I explore the epistemological issues surrounding feminist standpoint theory. In chapter five I demonstrated the value of adopting a traditional standpoint approach to the production of knowledge. That said, I highlight the particular and partial aspects of knowledge production and in this way I also produce situated knowledges. As a way to incorporate both standpoint theory and situated knowledges I contribute a feminist epistemology from the standpoint of the marginalised.

Through this brief consideration of the women's understanding of sexuality, I offer an introduction to - firstly, the idea that as well as identity, lifestyle, community and culture are important components of sexuality and secondly, the marginalisation of 'non-heterosexuality'. Both are relevant to any discussion on women who play football. In the next sections I illustrate how 'non-players' and players view football as an integral part of lesbian identity and lesbian lifestyle and culture, and vice versa. Through an analysis of the visibility of lesbian sexuality I continue to explore issues surrounding the marginalisation of 'non-heterosexual' players.

### **Football's sexual peremptory.**

The questionnaire and interview material provides evidence that demonstrates the sexual stereotyping of women who play football. Here some of the questionnaire responses highlight the strong connection made between football and lesbianism.

Branded as a lesbian because I play women's football (no. 107).

... you are kind of typecast as being a dyke for playing men's sport (no. 128).

Women are stereotyped as crap or gay (no. 181).

... assume that the majority of women footballers are gay (no. 186).

You are stereotyped as being lesbian by men players (no. 189).

Automatic assumption that I am lesbian because I play football (no. 312).

... many people often assume that you are gay if you play a traditional male sport (no. 429).

People assume I can't play and am crap but others assume that there is a contingent of lesbians but I don't look like the "typical" footballer so I get less stereotyped, but still get some teasing (no. 139).

Interestingly all of these women, apart from the last respondent who ticked the 'prefer not to answer' box, identify themselves as heterosexual on the questionnaire. Their comments suggest a lesbian peremptory exists. Throughout this chapter I consider in-depth the possibility that the sexual imperative in football is shifting and dynamic, for example, here I consider the displacing of heterosexual dominance by the lesbian stereotype and later I discuss the construction of 'dykespaces' and the dislocation of heterosexuality.

Elsewhere I have theorised the social construction of lesbianism (chapters two and eight), and gender and sport (chapter two).<sup>63</sup> I have illustrated how lesbianism and sport are social constructs that are defined in relation to masculinity. For example, during the Victorian era muscular Christianity established sport as a prerequisite of manliness and manhood, and sexology linked mannishness in women inextricably to lesbianism. The above responses the women offer demonstrate the contemporary location of the lesbian stereotype in sport. Moreover, these responses indicate that there exists an association between lesbianism and football, thus confirming the socially constructed association between sport and masculinity, and masculinity and lesbianism. The women taking part in the interviews reiterate these views.

During the interviews I asked a series of questions as a way to help establish how the women thought they were viewed as players. They include; 'What do you think other people think about women who play football?', 'What stereotypes of women footballers are there?' and 'How true do you think the stereotypes of women footballers are?' For the first question most of the women suggest that it depends on who you ask and how much experience and or knowledge they have of women players. As with the material that supports the analysis in chapter two ('The normalisation and routinisation of football in the lives of women who play'), the women mention being taken more seriously

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<sup>63</sup> Also see; Caudwell, J. (1999) 'Women's football in the United Kingdom. Theorizing gender and unpacking the butch lesbian image,' *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp: 390-402.

by those who are close to them or involved in the organisation of their teams. However this acceptance varies accordingly and it can be fragile. When the women talk about the stereotypes they are aware of, it becomes clear that women players are not taken seriously (as was demonstrated in the last chapter). The women are stereotyped in a way that positions them as objects as opposed to sporting subjects. In other words, the focus is not on the women as viable players, but instead as sexual objects. Here Donna elucidates this point;

I think that everyone thinks just because you play football you're gay. I think you immediately get labelled just because you play. (...) you know you don't look at a men's, male game and you don't think one way or the other, I don't think 'oh that player's gay that player's heterosexual' - you go for the football (...) but people don't go for the football in the women's game or they don't seem interested in that level of it, it's like 'oh women's team, oh must be gay' (...) they sort of make decisions on another level (aged 30).

Donna refers to the gaze and how male players are viewed as subjects of football whereas the gaze on women players is on 'another level', namely women's sexuality. This illustrates an effective tactic to belittle women in the game. Similarly some of the women report comments being shouted while they play. For example, 'when you're training up the park, wherever you are training. The lads will come a long - 'oh dykes' you know' (Bev, aged 43). Tracy (aged 23) believes the main stereotype is; 'dykes basically innit' and Sam (aged 28) has the same view; 'they think they're all bloody dykes'. Kaz (31) acknowledges this stereotype and in addition she makes reference to another misconception - 'big, butch, lesbians basically playing football and running around (...) also girls screaming when the ball hits them'. Likewise, Shirley (aged 33) mentions both lesbianism and heterosexual desire - 'you feel that people probably just assume you're gay as soon as you say you play women's football. (...) if you go in male company and say you like football, they'll go 'oh yeah, you like Ginola's legs' or something like that'. This comment provides further evidence of how women players are not positioned as viable footballing subjects.

In support of the discussion in the previous two chapters, football continues to be positioned as a male preserve. Women who play challenge the ownership of the game. This challenge becomes bound up with the stereotypes in as much as women are charged with wanting to be men. Helen (aged 23) refers to this here - 'the main stereotype is that they're all lesbian, that we're all butch and we just want to be men'. Di (aged 29) makes a similar comment when she describes the stereotypes in circulation - 'a bunch of dykes playing football, trying to imitate men'.

By preventing women from being subjects, the male gaze works to maintain the football fields as male space. In this way there is a conscious gendering of the football fields. The research material also suggests sexuality functions to maintain the space as male.<sup>64</sup> For example, sexuality is regulated so that heterosexual desire positions woman as the object of the male gaze and lesbian desire positions women as 'wanting to be men'. This makes links with previously discussed theories of [lesbian]sexuality. For example as referenced in chapter two Barbara Creed (1995) notes - Freudian theory 'attributes lesbianism not to a woman's own specifically female desires but to her desire to be a man' (p.94). This regulation of player's gender and sexuality serves as another tactic to maintain sporting space as male.

While I accept that the stereotypes are used as a way to control women's sporting bodies, it is also evident from the research and my own involvement in the game for the last ten years, that there is an actual lesbian presence in football. Tamsin (aged 29) is also clear about the real links between football and lesbianism. Although she stresses that not all players are lesbian she does acknowledge the large lesbian community.

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<sup>64</sup> Later I analyse lesbian [non] presence and [non] visibility in football. During this discussion I illustrate that by inviting her boyfriend to every game, Helen makes heterosexuality conscious, thus sexing space.

It's sometimes a way to identify yourself as [erm] as a lesbian, because you know sometimes if I, sort of like, if I'd been talking to someone who I thought was maybe a lesbian, but I'm not quite sure, I would often mention the fact that I played football [erm] because I think it gives the impression that [erm] that you could be a lesbian [laughs], if you see what I mean. Its a bit of a strange way to say it.

Heather Sykes (1998) makes reference to a similar situation in North America; 'often the "suspicion" that someone is lesbian is confirmed by the "fact" that they are physical educators' (p. 169). She discusses this in relation to the complexity of the "closet", in particular she makes reference to the 'paranoid closet' (p. 169) and the resolving of doubts about sexuality. She positions this doubt as posing a challenge to the stability and certainty of heterosexuality. I return to this issue when I consider 'compulsory heterosexuality' in the context of football.

The next section considers lesbian presence as it relates to the notion of the "closet". I explore the women's experiences of "out" lesbian sexuality. The terms "closet" and "coming out" indicate the position of heterosexuality as dominant. Being in the "closet" and being "out" are understood in relation to heterosexuality as the norm, thus reflecting the sexual relations to power. In the above discussion on the stereotypes I illuminate the ubiquity of lesbian sexuality in football. More specifically, the women's testimonies provide evidence of a lesbian presence. However, the "closet" and being "out" exist as major features of these narratives. The extent to which players' sexuality is made visible varies and I argue that the degrees of disclosure reflect the dominance of heterosexuality.

One of the ways heterosexuality maintains its privileged status is through the discursive figure of "the closet", where everyday speech normalizes heterosexuality while silencing lesbian sexuality (Sykes, 1998; p.154).



### **Lesbian [non] presence and [non] visibility in football.**

During the interviews many of the women on different occasions acknowledge the lesbian presence in football. The twelve women who were able and willing to offer personal narratives, talked about the situation in the teams they played for. Of the six women who identified as heterosexual, five play for teams that are predominantly lesbian. For example, Laura (aged 33) describes her experience; 'well there are a lot of gay women in women's football, I mean, there's no doubt about that (...) there are gay women in all the teams that I've played in'. Similarly, Shirley (aged 33) has a long playing history, however unlike Laura she has only played for one team. She explains; 'a lot of my friends who play were gay, and their friends who then came into the team were gay, because it was a lot of friends (...) and they come along and play'. Of the six women who identified as gay, lesbian and/or dyke, three play for "out" lesbian teams and three play in teams that are predominantly lesbian. Di (aged 29) describes the team she plays for; 'there are 13 players, of which there are 3 who would not describe themselves as lesbian'. Tracy (aged 23) claims that she 'didn't realise until I joined United just... just how many gay women play football'. Drawing on my own experience of playing for a team in East London, one in the West Midlands and now for a Northern side, I have similar experiences to the women taking part in the interviews. While these three sides have not been exclusively lesbian or "out" teams, there has been a noticeable lesbian presence. I am not suggesting that all teams are made up of lesbian players, however the material supports the argument that there is a lesbian presence in football. The issue here is not to settle a distributive proposition instead it is to offer a starting point from which to discuss lesbian visibility in football. In other words, how easy is it for lesbian players to disclose and display their sexuality?

Two comments taken from the questionnaire research open the way for a discussion on lesbian visibility. Both of the following responses acknowledge the numbers of lesbian players linking lesbian presence to the process of

stereotyping women who play. It is the second response that interestingly positions lesbian visibility as a significant issue.

... males and females assume that if you play a male sport you are a lesbian because there are so many of them that do play (no. 379)

Other women tend to label all females wanting to play a traditional male sport as gay. I find that gay women, particularly in football, to be overt about their sexuality, which portrays an unnecessary image (no. 358)

This player's view that overt lesbian sexuality 'portrays an unnecessary image' can be viewed as a homophobic response. Pat Griffin (1998) not only documents the complexities of the relationships between sexuality and sport in the United States, she also details the workings of homophobia. She identifies three climates for lesbians in athletics: hostile, conditionally tolerant, and open and inclusive (p.92). With reference to conditionally tolerant, she introduces the concept of the glass closet, whereby it is lesbian visibility that is viewed as the problem. The glass closet suggests that lesbian players can be seen by those to whom they have come "out" to, however they cannot flaunt their sexuality. They must behave and are expected to behave as if they were still in the "closet". The idea that lesbian sexuality is tolerated on the condition that it is not overt suggests that to be accepted and avoid harassment and abuse lesbians either conceal their sexuality or behave in a certain way. The notion of the "good" or "well behaved" lesbian requires a largely unmarked sexuality that relies on not being fully "out".

The "closet" and coming "out" position heterosexuality as the dominant and the norm since non-conformity to heterosexuality is hidden and silent. In addition, the process of coming "out" places the responsibility of challenging the sexual dominant with 'non-heterosexual'/queer individuals. As a way to understand the functioning of sexuality in football contexts I now explore the women's experiences of visible lesbianism. Many of the women interviewed talked about situations particular to their teams and/or clubs and it is these testimonies that provide evidence of the extent to which lesbianism is overt

and normalised. Here Helen (aged 23) offers her understanding, as a self-defined heterosexual, of sexuality as it relates to football.

[T]here are quite a high percentage of lesbians that I know of in football. I mean there's me and about 2 other straight people in our team, everybody else is gay (...) a lot more women who play football are a lot more open with their feelings, and quite sort of happy in the way they are, so they come out more. I think football enables them to come out, rather than football attracting... do you know what I'm saying?

Di (aged 29) alludes to this openness and visibility when she responds to the question 'when you are with the rest of the team do you mention or talk about sexuality?' - 'the dominant language is a 'lesbian language' because 10 out of the 13 players are lesbian'. In both cases dominant heterosexuality is challenged simply because there are fewer heterosexual players. Although majority status erodes notions of the "closet" and reduces lesbian silence, the accounts do not refer to the intricacies of lesbian visibility. The women who identify as lesbian, gay and/or dyke offer differing accounts of the extent to which other people are aware of their sexuality. For instance Sam's (aged 28) comments - 'gay and out and not going back' and 'they don't have much choice really (...) if they don't know, then they soon do', suggest she is very overt about her sexuality and intends to remain visible as a lesbian. In comparison some of the women foster a less conspicuous approach, here Di (aged 29) appears to be decentering her sexuality (Seidman et al, 1999) - 'I'm me (...) If somebody asks me - yes, I'll say I'm gay. I don't cover my sexuality, but I don't promote it either'. Unlike Sam who seems emphatic about being seen as 'gay', Di does not assert her sexuality in the same way - instead she positions it as a part of her. According to Seidman et al (1999), the decentering of sexuality is the 'second phase' of normalising 'homosexuality'; 'it is described as a 'thread' rather than a core aspect of identity' (p.29). The 'first phase' represents the primacy of sexuality, for instance Sam's approach; 'if

they don't know, they soon will'.<sup>65</sup> Although Di does not adopt the same approach neither does she frame her sexuality in shame and secrecy.

Some of the women talk about being "out" in certain situations and not in others. This suggests a stepping in and out of the "closet".

JC - Does the rest of your team know about your sexuality ?

K - Er, I should think so. I don't know we don't really speak about it (...) all the ones who are gay know (...) The new girls, now I don't usually make it quite obvious to new people who are there, because I don't really want to scare them away (...) they'll think we're all a bunch of butch lesbians, you know, out to get them or something.

Here Kaz (aged 31) talks about deliberately staying in the "closet". She censors her sexuality so as not to intimidate new players. This is interesting, as it is their safety she positions as important, not her own safety, which is often the case when individuals conceal their true sexuality. Kaz is prepared to be "out" to other lesbians in the team although this is somewhat assumed since they 'don't really speak about it', however her fear of being read as a butch lesbian demonstrates her own anxieties surrounding lesbian sexuality.<sup>66</sup> She takes on the tensions the butch appears to invoke and uses the "closet" as a way to avoid upsetting new players. This strategy depends on the seemingly ubiquitous butch figure as she appears within the stereotypes and highlights the complex functioning of homophobia, whereby lesbians can be seen to be homophobic. By practising self-surveillance in relation to her sexuality Kaz situates herself in the 'glass closet' (Griffin, 1998). Her sexuality is neither central nor decentered, it is largely hidden.

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<sup>65</sup> Although Seidman's work is relevant here, it is worth considering the myriad ways in which being "out" can never be complete. For example, for one of the heterosexual women taking part in the research – Helen, 'coming out' as heterosexual needs to both occur (Hi – 'I'm Helen, I'm straight') and be continually reproduced (taking her boyfriend to matches).

<sup>66</sup> I discuss the figure of the butch, as she appears in football, at length in the next chapter.

Kaz continues to talk about her sexuality when she mentions work colleagues and family members - 'people at work, I'm sure they know, I'm sure my family know, but they haven't asked (...)' Here she is suggesting that her sexuality is in fact transparent. She continues to explain why she is not "out" to these groups - 'I wouldn't go round saying 'oh by the way I'm straight, so I wouldn't go 'by the way I'm gay'. Although Kaz is not "out" she indicates that she feels people around her must have some idea. In comparison Tamsin (aged 29) is definitely "out" to her family, friends and work colleagues, although there is still some reliance on others reading her as lesbian.

I've always been out at work. I've always taken the approach that I always assume people will know that I'm gay because (...) I look like I am and I act like I am. So I don't hide it. (...) I don't rush around declaring it - I just (...) would not hide it... erm.... and that's been so much easier since telling my parents

Like Di, Tamsin does not appear to be living a secret life, however unlike Di she assumes that people will figure out her sexuality. As with Kaz, the assumption is that if Tamsin's work colleagues cannot recognise the signs then not being seen as lesbian is their issue and not her responsibility. In this vein, Ruth Holliday (1999) argues 'in this way responsibility for being 'out' is shifted from herself (the author of her bodily text) to colleagues (her readers)' (p.485). Tamsin clearly believes she performs her sexuality: 'I look like I am and I act like I am'. This kind of display challenges and disturbs conventional discourses of outness. That is, is it solely the responsibility of 'non-heterosexuals'/queers to pursue sexual politics by providing public declarations to contend notions of 'compulsory heterosexuality'? By performing sexuality at certain times in certain situations, lesbians not only dislocate assumed heterosexuality in addition they challenge dominant discourses on "out". In other words, they challenge notions of who is responsible for registering 'non-heterosexuality'/queer subjectivity?

Sam, Di, Kaz and Tamsin offer four different testimonies of their experiences of sexuality. Sam promotes her sexuality explicitly, Di and Tamsin mostly rely on being read as lesbian and offer signs for interpretation, whereas Kaz decides not to be especially overt about her sexuality. All of the accounts demonstrate the power of heteronormativity since the women are forced to negotiate various strategies in dealing with how their lesbianism is positioned in relation to the dominant, the norm. As Eve Sedgwick (1990) notes:

[F]or many gay people it [the closet] is still the fundamental feature of social life; and there can be few gay people, however courageous and forthright by habit, however fortunate in the support of their immediate communities, in whose lives the closet is still not a shaping presence (p. 68).

For the women who identified as heterosexual, the same question - 'are people aware of your sexuality as you have described it?' engendered some interesting responses. For example, Collette's (aged 32) reply - 'oh yeah - well I'm getting married [laughter] so there's a public announcement for you (...) that's the largest public display of heterosexuality', and similarly Shirley's (aged 33) reply - 'yeah, because I'm married with children (...) you're kind of wearing it on your sleeve. (...)'. Both women make reference to marriage as a significant component of "out" heterosexuality. After a long pause Laura (aged 33) also comes to the same conclusion - 'I mean they don't know, they make an assumption that I am, because I am married to a man who is there and they've seen him'. Here marriage is positioned as marking the women in a way that is intelligible.<sup>67</sup> Their sexuality is made transparent via the institution of marriage. In this way heterosexuals do not always have to negotiate the process of being "out", "outness" is often assumed. Shirley talks about this a bit more and distinguishes her situation from others in her team:

I can't say that I would know the sexuality of the rest of my team. They would definitely know my sexuality because of my circumstances, but I

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<sup>67</sup> It is worth noting that in contemporary culture marriage is not always a marker of heterosexuality, for example marriage for immigration purposes and marriages of convenience between lesbian and gays.

can't say that out of the players I play with I could definitely pinpoint what the sexuality was of each one of those people.

Marked and unmarked sexuality are interesting issues for women who play football since it is evident through the stereotypes in circulation that the game has a sexual marking, namely lesbian. For the heterosexual players this causes tension. For Donna, (aged 30) who plays in a team which has many lesbian players, she is not active in marking herself as heterosexual, in fact in many ways she adopts a similar strategy to Di and Tamsin. That said, she contends that being seen as gay is not an issue whereas Di and Tamsin do not refer to how they feel if they were read as heterosexual.

Yeah, definitely, Everyone knows I think (...) not that I go round making a big thing of it (...) I mean it doesn't bother me if people don't know (...) it doesn't bother me if people think of me as gay or heterosexual, I don't give a toss (...) I'd never go walking in 'oh by the way I'm not....., I'm heterosexual, I'm not gay'.

In contrast, Helen (aged 23) is very active in marking her sexuality as is demonstrated here; 'yes, because I go out of my way to tell them, because I get pissed off with being called a lesbian that I'm like 'Hi, I'm Helen, I'm straight'. Like Donna, Helen plays in a side that is predominantly lesbian. Unlike Donna she does not want to be mistaken for a lesbian. She continues to talk about how and why she is so active in marking her sexuality - 'I make my boyfriend go to most games, so I throw it in their face as much as they throw their sexuality in my face'. Here it is heterosexuality that is used to disturb and challenge the inverted norm of lesbianism. Helen and her boyfriend ensure heterosexual desire is made visible. In effect, she is "out" about her heterosexuality and performs her difference by taking her boyfriend to games. This approach can be positioned as similar to Sam's although the context is very different. Helen is referring to her response within the constraints of her team, whereas Sam discusses her sexuality as it relates to wider networks of control such as her workplace, family and friends, as well as football. For Helen the process of being "out" as heterosexual within the context of football

is ongoing and has to be reiterated. That is why she makes her boyfriend go to most games. In comparison Sam does not have to continually mark her difference since lesbianism is often assumed within the context of football.

To find out more about the functioning of sexuality within football I posed the question - 'when you are with the rest of the team do you mention/talk about sexuality?' The responses suggest that sexuality is largely referred to in a non-serious way and as it relates to the act of sex. For instance, Shirley (aged 33) suggests:

It's talked about in that kind of jokey gossipy way and I think it is continually talked about (...) but not in a kind of 'let's sit down and discuss this', it's like a bit of a joke (...) 'fancy coming with her' or 'god, she's dropped him, and now she's with her' you know, that kind of thing'.

Some of the other women also refer to the non-serious conversations that go on. Donna and Tracy play for the same club, Donna identifies as heterosexual and Tracy as 'gay'. Both mention the exchanges that take place; 'on the level of more like a joke, (...) a pure sex level (...) just really funny as a joke' (Donna), 'you have a laugh and a joke about it (...) talk about anything to do with sex (...) what you done last night' (Tracy). The collapsing of the act of sex into sexuality and positioning it as a non-serious but central component is not uncommon. Here Helen continues to employ and allude to images of 'night-time activity':

Yeah, I mean, we always take the piss out of each other in that like 'who you been seeing?' We'll always talk about the night before, you know, who's been doing what, who's been going with who, what's the latest gossip (JC - is it mostly lesbian sexuality or is it heterosexual...) They'll always ask how me and Tony are (...) it's a two way thing, it's not just 'oh lets find out the latest gay gossip' (...) it's just because the majority of them are gay (...) they're all very open about it (...) we have a lot of jokes about it (...) ribbing people, but I don't think it's conscious 'well lets talk about it'.



The fact that many of her team members appear to be open about their sexuality influences the direction of rhetoric on sexuality. In sharp contrast Laura tells of how homophobia is used to establish and maintain dominant heterosexuality. She describes the rest of her team as:

particularly homophobic (...) if you were gay you would not want to play in our team, I would say you would have quite an uncomfortable time (...) it wouldn't be explicit, I mean we have had some women who didn't stay very long and I'm not surprised.

Laura is suggesting that hostility evident in her team can effectively exclude lesbians from the team. Here, heterosexuality is positioned as the dominant and powerful.

Some of the women's accounts suggest that at times dominant heterosexuality is dislocated and transformed as a result of deliberate and overt lesbian visibility. It is evident that the display and disclosure of lesbian sexuality varies, there are layers of "outness". The accounts also indicate that to discuss the processes of being "out" as complete is inaccurate, thus the extent of lesbian visibility within football culture is shifting and changing. In the next two sections I consider firstly how some teams and players have adopted an 'in your face' approach to marking their sexuality and the space they use to play football. Secondly, I consider how such blatant, albeit transitory presence effects heterosexual subjectivity.

### **Football's dykespaces.**

The use of the term 'dykespaces' draws on, and extends some of my initial theorising on women who play football.<sup>68</sup> Earlier in this thesis I have argued that space is gendered and that this is particularly relevant to a discussion on

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<sup>68</sup> For example see Caudwell, J. (1998) 'Sex and politics: Sites of resistance in women's football' in Aitchison, C and Jordan, F. (Eds) *Gender, space and identity*. Eastbourne : LSA Publication (No. 63), pp. 151-161.

women players. For example, there is considerable evidence in chapters five and six that the 'football fields', that is both the sport and the space available for its display, are controlled and dominated by men. Feminist geography and the work of Massey (1994) and Duncan (1996) provide similar analysis. In addition to this theory there also exists a critical analysis of space as sexualised (Bell and Valentine, 1995; Ingram, Bouthillette and Retter, 1997).<sup>69</sup> The above discussion on lesbian visibility provides evidence that some of the women destabilise, subvert and resist the construction of heterosexual space. Here I move on to argue that the process of marking sexuality and space is political.

Both lesbian and gay groups have appropriated the term 'queer' to symbolise a political strategy that embraces the otherness and pluralism of sexual styles. Queer has been used by activists since the late 1980s to assert and promote an 'in your face' attitude to lesbian and gay sexuality. Queer activism relies on a sexual politics that centralises a myriad of 'non-heterosexual' possibilities. Visibility and the penetration of public space are major strategies adopted by the queer movement, for example, the use of public space for mass kiss-ins and mock weddings. So that I can offer a specific representation of lesbian experience I have chosen to diversify queer. Here I refer to 'dykespaces' as a way to focus on lesbian 'space invaders' (Massey, 1994, p.185).

An example of the creation of dykespaces is provided in the work of Carrie Moyer (1997) and the Dyke Action Machine (DAM). DAM represents a working group concerned with providing 'lesbians on the street with the pleasure of seeing their own images in professional, well designed public art' (p. 440). DAM hijacked public advertising space and plastered a series of posters in Manhattan during 'Stonewall 25' in 1994. The posters aimed to 'articulate and represent a lesbian reality that dominating visual images ignore, deny, and repress' (p. 443). By using space and images to subvert and

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<sup>69</sup> In particular work on lesbian space, see for example; Lynda Johnston and Gill Valentine (1995); Carrie Moyer (1997) Sally Munt (1995); Joan Nestle (1997); Tamar Rothenberg (1995) and Affrica Taylor (1998).

destabilise the heterosexual norm DAM's strategy fits with what Sally Munt (1995) refers to as a 'politics of dislocation'.

The interview material provides some evidence that lesbian players challenge the conspicuous 'heterosexing' of the spaces they use. The two women who play for different "out" lesbian teams in the Greater London League provide the most coherent examples. Hackney and Phoenix are particularly active in their campaign to be visible. For example, Hackney appeared in the National press; 'Hackney Women's Football Club has blown the whistle on the whole game by coming out en masse' (Davies, 1991:p. 34). The utilisation by the team, of signs and signifiers of lesbian sexuality supports this public coming out. The players openly adorn symbols of lesbianism with the labris and triangle as part of the club logo, and the freedom rainbow colours as part of the summer tournament kit. Freedom flags, blankets and towels are also displayed to mark the communal social space the team use at venues. In addition, Tamsin refers to other ways the team establishes themselves and their space:

We sing gay songs and, you know get funny looks from some people, but most of them are sort of like, its an excuse, its actually because everyone knows we are an out team all the other lesbians in other teams will go past and, sort of like, smile at us (...) they know we are gay so they can join in a bit, it's a really positive feeling. (...) Its the whole thing about safety in numbers, I mean there's usually about 30 of us.

Here Tamsin describes achieving the recognition from lesbian players in other teams. This is significant as Moyer (1997) argues one of the important aspects of DAM was to accomplish the pleasure of recognition. Playing for an out team promotes the pleasure of recognition since lesbian visibility is inherent. Sam (aged 28) makes reference to how women in her publicly "out" team manifest lesbian desire; '[w]e talk about sexuality, like, who were we shagging at the weekend, who did you pick up, (...) most of the team are single (...) one of the girls plays right back and she never tackles the opposition, she just chats them up.' Here, the talk between members of the team reflects open displays of

lesbian lust on the 'football field'. Desire suffuses the sporting landscape and momentarily marks the terrain as lesbian/dyke.

The creation and carving of lesbian space by teams like Hackney and Phoenix, involves a variety of strategies that serve to brand sporting space. Bev Skeggs (2000) identifies such a process as 'symbolic presence and recognition politics'. Her work on the visibility of 'gayness' in Manchester's gay village shows how lesbians and gays, through entitlement and ownership, occupy territory within commercial city space. However, she also argues that commodification and capitalist exploitation of gay and lesbian culture regulate this branding. Unlike commercial city space, the dykespaces constructed by out players and out teams tend to be transient, they exist when the team plays and are more prevalent at one or two day tournaments. Although the footballing dykespaces tend to be transitory, the overt displays of lesbian sexuality dislocate the heterosexing of sporting space. The commercial market and processes of consumption do not regulate these moments of lesbian occupation of space. Instead, I argue they represent 'authentic presence and recognition politics' within footballing space.

### **Compulsory heterosexuality?**

This final section focuses on heterosexual subjectivity as experienced in relation to football by the women interviewed. I offer an analysis that exposes intricacies of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. Firstly, I demonstrate how heterosexuality is protected and maintained via regulatory practices, thus establishing it as compulsory. Secondly, I consider the testimonies of marginalised heterosexual players and the impact of this location on heterosexual subjectivity and compulsory heterosexuality. As Weeks (1998) argues it is important to take account of heterosexuality.

[I]t was becoming very clear that to understand homosexuality we had to understand the construction of sexuality as a whole - hence the

appeal of Foucault's own introductory essay on *The History of Sexuality* to many of us interested in exploring the history of homosexuality. If the homosexual condition was an invention of history, so too was heterosexuality and 'sexuality' itself (...) One factor was becoming increasingly clear: understanding heterosexuality was the key to understanding homosexuality (p.144).

As a way to explore the intricacies of compulsory heterosexuality I make use of Judith Butler's poststructuralist analysis of gender. Butler's (1990, 1993a and 1993b) approach to understanding gender positions sex, gender, sexual practice and desire within a matrix of intelligibility. This matrix is regulated according to a heterosexual logic. In this way, sex, gender and sexuality are defined by hegemonic heterosexuality. Butler argues that the heterosexual matrix supports and sustains 'identities' that are otherwise fragile. For example, it is the repeated stylisation of masculinity and femininity that gives sex and [hetero] sexuality meaning. Earlier I discussed the prevailing stereotypes of women who play football. From the research material it is evident that discursive practices such as the comments made by non-players, position lesbianism as a coherent sexual identity within football culture. That said, the homophobic response to lesbian presence and visibility monitors and controls what we understand as unequivocal sexuality, namely heterosexuality. This player demonstrates such a response.

I am not homophobic in the slightest. I have many lesbian friends. However, I feel that these players do give "the sport a bad name", as many males assume that all women footballers are gay (no. 266, aged 21-23).

This player claims she is "not homophobic", however she continues to argue that lesbians do give football "a bad name", in this way she is homophobic. Her contradiction can be understood in relation to the dominant discourse on sexuality that is, as Butler argues, hegemonic heterosexuality. Since heterosexuality is centrally naturalised via hegemonic practices, it appears as dominant in the [hetero]sexual imaginary. Therefore, "other" sexualities are automatically positioned in relation to the dominant as problematic. As with

the notion of popular racism (Back, 2000), everyday or popular homophobia functions at the core of the heterosexual imaginary. The ease of this player's assault on lesbian footballers demonstrates the point, thus illuminating homophobia as taken for granted or everyday. For example, she admits to having lesbian friends and yet she believes it is their sexuality that brings the sport into disrepute. There is no engagement with displays of heterosexuality as problematic since heterosexuality is positioned as dominant and therefore centrally neutralised.

The stereotyping of players as reported by the women taking part in the research alludes to practices that function to regulate women's [hetero] sexuality. One woman mentions - 'the obvious single minded lesbian comments, I have even had male partners being given a hard time for their involvement with me' (no. 77). Football clearly marks women as "other" to heterosexuality. This is then positioned as incoherent within the heterosexual matrix of intelligibility. Collette (aged 32) demonstrates this point - 'there's one... one bloke who always refers to women's physiques not suited, not suited to football, you know he wouldn't want his woman to look like a footballer'.<sup>70</sup>

Another regulatory practice that protects heterosexuality is the positioning of lesbianism as licentious and lascivious. Some of the women interviewed provide images of unbridled lesbian sexuality. For example Julie (aged 20) suggests that

I think it [football] can influence your sexuality (JC- how do you mean?). As I say a lot of people I've seen have gone from being heterosexual to bisexual, I think football has a lot to do with it [erm] mainly because of a lot of lesbian players influence them in some way. I definitely think it can effect you if you allow it to.

Similarly, Helen (aged 23) talks about her first impressions of lesbianism within football culture.

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<sup>70</sup> I discuss in detail the notion of '[not] to look like a woman' in the next chapter.

My best friend at home, she was straight about 4-5 years ago, and then she started seeing a woman, the woman played for City (...) I was just coming back from college (...) I really wanted to play for a team, and she [best friend] was like 'Yeah, yeah come and train for City', and I was like 'oh, are they scary? I mean, you know (...) you can get some really butch women that are just like, are complete, you know, and just make a beeline for you because you're new, and I was like 'oh, I'm really scared about going' and she's [best friend] 'Oh no, they're alright' she said 'there's a lot of gay people, but they're all, you know, they're fine, they're not scary or anything'.

This notion of the predatory lesbian disturbing and disrupting heterosexuality serves to highlight Butler's argument that gender and sexual 'identity' are imitations and in fact fragile. The fear of conversion, without consent, from heterosexual to bisexual or lesbian, challenges the construct of obdurate and unyielding heterosexuality. It is the threat of unrestrained lesbian sexuality that destabilises heterosexuality. This woman previously remarked that she 'make[s] her boyfriend go to most games'. Butler (1990) suggests that it is this visible repetition of heterosexual desire that marks heterosexuality as vulnerable because, as she argues heterosexuality only becomes discernible through hyperbole and repetition. In addition, to protect heterosexuality, lesbianism is marked as unintelligible, that is sexually immoral as is evidenced in the above comment. Helen continues to describe sexuality in this way.

[A]ll I'm saying is that I think a lot of the younger ones can be affected by the older ones, certainly within our team (...) we've had a couple of young girls, about 16, 17 who've been straight for as long as I can remember, then all of a sudden they've been hanging about with all the older ones who are gay, and they've been going to the gay night clubs (...) and got involved in the gay scene, then all of a sudden they're gay (...) it's just alarming the number of people that have gone from being straight to being gay, because they've played in the football team where the majority of people are gay (...) I don't think playing football affects how they feel, I think it's more the people they are socialising with because of football.

The research material highlights how lesbians who play are often positioned as abject and unintelligible. This positioning functions as regulatory practice and

serves to attempt to firmly locate 'compulsory heterosexuality' on the 'terrain of signification' (Butler, 1990); so that anything other than heterosexuality fails to exist as coherent on the gender/sexuality landscape. Heather Sykes (1998) identifies this process as heterocentrism, that is 'our ways of speaking, seeing, experiencing sexuality - presumes that heterosexuality is the most normal, natural form of sexuality' (p. 156).

Some heterosexual women taking part in the research mention how their marginalised location within particular football cultures has impacted on their sexual subjectivity. These testimonies offer further evidence of the lesbian challenge to heterocentrism and expose the actual fragility of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. In the contexts talked about by the women, heterosexuality is challenged and at times excluded. On these occasions, as with the creation of dykespaces, lesbian visibility interrupts the functioning of dominant heterosexuality and 'heterovisuality' (Veri, 1999).

When asked - 'do you think football affects how you feel about your sexuality?' - some of the heterosexual women interviewed allude to a re-thinking of the position of heterosexuality. For example, Donna talks about being referred to as 'the heterosexual (...) it doesn't bother me, but it's just like a total new terminology, until I started playing football I never really (...) I would never have used it [heterosexual]'. For Donna, the privileged positioning of heterosexuality is exposed as 'taken for granted' and her sexual location within the team becomes marginalised. She suggests that playing football has made her 'more aware (...) I suppose I do think about it [sexuality] more now', and goes on to mention her experiences of being marginalised. Here she talks about feeling excluded when the team she plays for had a particularly strong and visible lesbian presence: 'at one time in the club I was... it was a big problem for me because I thought I was being, I felt I was being alienated and pushed out (...)'.



Similarly Collette talks about her status as a heterosexual playing for an “out” lesbian team. She identifies specific occasions when she also feels excluded, however this exclusion does not engender the same discomfort.

Like there's terms I don't feel at liberty to use, I don't call any of the team 'dykes' (...) As a 'non dyke' I don't think it is my prerogative. (...) I mean there is a lesbian language that I'm not necessarily au fait with (...) it's not uncomfortable, only in the sense that the team often talk about either lesbian fiction, films - casually, that they assume I know and obviously I don't (...) it's reference more than language.

In the contexts talked about by Donna and Collette, the notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality' becomes fragile. Exclusion and marginalisation impact on heterosexual subjectivity. In a more detailed way, Shirley describes her experience.

I think it [football] makes you confront it [sexuality], erm, I think that certainly when I was playing, I've got enough close friends that are gay that it does make you think about it, I think that if you don't grow up in that kind of world, you probably don't think about it at all. (...) I think it does make you aware of it [sexuality], (...) in some ways it makes you more frightened of it and less frightened of it (...) it [football] makes you think about it [sexuality], and confront it.

Whilst it is not easy to establish exactly what Shirley means by 'confront', she is suggesting that within football, unlike other aspects of life, 'compulsory heterosexuality' is called into question. All three women cite their experiences of heterosexuality as it relates to an inverted sexual norm, namely lesbianism. Collette extends this discussion through her frank review of the impact of 'non heterosexuality' on her own heterosexuality and how her and her partner's heterosexual subjectivity have been destabilised by her involvement with an “out” lesbian team.

[I]t's made me re-examine, if I'm perfectly honest with myself, it's made me re-examine myself (...) I knew it was an out team before I joined, I didn't realise that I possibly was the only heterosexual (...) It hasn't been a problem for me, it's been a problem for my partner sometimes. I mean not that we have fallen out, but [pause] he's needed erm, he's needed

reassuring [laughs] he doesn't understand why I want to play for an out lesbian team. But that wasn't my motivation, I didn't go looking for an out lesbian team to play football for, it just happened that way. (JC - what bits didn't he understand?) Well we've had to confront his prejudices. He thinks ... he thinks I might be converted (...) you know the reverse of straightening me out.

As with Donna and Shirley, Collette's experiences confront her heterosexual subjectivity. Her involvement with an out team affords her the experience of both a dislocation and reification of heterosexuality. Collette's experience and reflection demonstrates how overt lesbianism can break 'compulsory heterosexuality', as evidenced in her re-examination of her own sexuality. That said, the testimony also exposes the workings of 'compulsory heterosexuality' through the assumptions made by Collette's partner. His inferences reflect male homophobia and return to a positioning of the lesbian as predator, as detailed above and the notion of 'straightening me out', thus locating only heterosexuality as coherent. Both the challenges of patent lesbian sexuality, and the ways this is read by heterosexuals, functions to highlight the fragility of prevailing 'compulsory heterosexuality', at the same time exhibiting the mechanisms by which heterosexuality is protected and maintained.

### **Summary.**

This chapter details the functioning of sexuality within the cultural arena of football. Through an analysis of the research material I offer an account that focuses on football's sexual peremptory, lesbian [non] presence and [non] visibility, football's dykespaces and 'compulsory heterosexuality'. I begin by acknowledging the social construction of sexuality and expose the tendency to categorise sexual identity. In many ways the discussion of the research material serves to re-categorise identity. However, the account goes beyond an analysis of sexual taxonomies and classifications by exploring individual behaviour and the myriad ways in which sexuality is experienced. For instance, the presence of jokey /gossipy accounts of sexual acts and desire, the conscious display of male partners and the suffusing of lesbian lust.

Through the stereotypes of women who play it is evident that football has a sexual marking. There is evidence that the seemingly lesbian imperative exists and is constantly challenged by 'compulsory heterosexuality'. The sexual peremptory particular to football in this country is dynamic and shifting, that said, lesbianism has real currency and functions to displace heterosexual dominance. Heterosexuality is protected, maintained and reproduced via the complex workings of homophobia. In this way heterosexuality can assume a position of dominance and 'normality', whereas lesbian presence, visibility and dykespaces represent challenges that are negotiated and transient. Lesbian players disclose and iterate their sexuality to varying degrees. The research material indicates there are layers and intricacies of disclosure. The very existence of the "closet" reflects sexual relations to power, namely heteronormativity. The research demonstrates that lesbians negotiate the disclosure of their sexual identity, this process is largely their responsibility, whereas, heterosexual women often assume an "out" [hetero] sexuality. That said, the conscious marking of self and space as heterosexual alludes to the fragility of sexual identity, thus exposing 'compulsory heterosexuality' as delicate and vulnerable.

Dykespaces not only marginalise and sometimes exclude heterosexuality they also offer lesbians the pleasure of recognition largely denied elsewhere. This subversion and transformation of space represents moments when the regulatory practices used to protect heterosexuality and reinforce heteronormativity are neutralised. Generally 'compulsory heterosexuality' in football is reified through the homophobic positioning of the figure of the lesbian as 'predator' and 'converter'. In this way lesbianism is positioned as abject and unintelligible. Such a strategy can be read from a Butlerian perspective as a manifestation of ailing heterosexuality. That is, heterosexuality is reinforced and protected by positioning lesbianism outside intelligible sexuality in order to maintain and reproduce heterosexuality as 'natural'.

There is evidence in this chapter that at specific times and within particular teams an inverting of the sexual 'norm' exists. That said, the structures of heteronormativity prevail and it may be useful to refer to 'leaky compulsory heterosexuality' as a way to register normalised lesbianism in this research on football.

## **Chapter Eight.**

### **[Not] To look like a woman : footballers, tomboys, butches and lesbians.**

#### **Introduction.**

This is the final analysis chapter. It follows on from the preceding three analyses chapters by extending previous discussion on gender and sexuality. Through an analysis of the research material and a continued engagement with poststructuralist theory I address the remaining two research questions that direct this thesis. Firstly, I demonstrate how gender and sexuality are conflated through an historical and cultural positioning of the active woman. In particular I highlight how masculinity in women is inextricably linked to aberrant sexuality.<sup>71</sup> I focus on what it means in the context of football, [not] to look like a woman through an analysis of 'female masculinity' (a term borrowed from Judith Halberstam (1998)). I attend to the currency of tomboy and butch, and illustrate how the women taking part in the research understand these subject positions. Within this discussion, tomboy and butch are discussed in relation to the corporeal. In all, the analysis addresses the fourth research question, that is, in what ways do gender and sexuality function together within football culture? Finally, I return to the work of Judith Butler as detailed in chapter two ('The review of theoretical approaches and literature'). By adopting a Butlerian perspective and considering some of the work of corporeal feminists, I highlight the ways in which the sexed body is also socially constructed within football culture, therefore addressing the final research question; how can gender and sexuality be theorised within the cultural arena of football?

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<sup>71</sup> To reiterate, the focus here on female masculinity reflects the field of study. As mentioned previously it is worth acknowledging the existing literature on sexuality and the lesbian femme (Harris and Crocker, 1997; Hemmings 1998 and; Nestle 1989).

### **Constructing gender and sexuality.**

Foucault's (1976, 1984a and 1984b) exploration of the history of sexuality provides an account of sex and sexuality in the Ancient, Christian and Modern Worlds. He claims the middle of the sixteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century are particular historical moments which reflect shifts in attitudes and understanding of sexuality. More specifically he argues that the latter marks 'advent of medical technologies of sex' (1976, p. 119) and initial defining of the sexual 'as we know it today'. In support of this claim, Eve Sedgwick (1990) highlights how these early discourses of sexuality gained impetus during the Victorian era. She selects 1891 as 'a moment from the midst of the process from which a modern homosexual identity and a modern problematic of sexual orientation could be said to date' (p. 91). At this time, sexual conduct became codified in a precise way. Such accounts expose the cultural production of sexuality. In particular, they illustrate how "homosexuality" is defined and codified by male discourses in medicine, law and psychology.

Sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing, Ellis and later Freud all relied, almost exclusively, on gender cues to assess and describe sexual identity (Somerville, 1998). These "medical experts" developed a medical discourse that omitted multiple expressions of gender variance and sexual variance (Halberstam, 1998), and squashed sexuality into a narrow range of identifiable categories. Foucault argues that such an approach transformed sexual acts, 'through complex discursive practices into stable notions of identity' (cited in Halberstam, 1998, p; 75). In this way, sexology established a model of homosexuality based on narrow definitions of gender role and object choice.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Through a critique of teratology - the science of monsters - Rosi Braidotti (1996) argues that '[t]he woman, the Jew, the black or homosexual are certainly 'different' from the configuration of human subjectivity based on masculinity, whiteness, heterosexuality, and Christian values which dominates our scientific thinking' (p. 141). According to Braidotti scientific knowledge-claims produce categories of otherness. In particular she highlights how teratological discourse positions 'race and gender as marks of difference' (p.141).

For example, within the model Eve Sedgwick's (1990) notion of a virile woman is collapsed into the image of the "mannish" lesbian. Conclusively, mannishness/masculinity in women became inextricably linked to lesbianism.

Physicians, such as Krafft-Ebing and Ellis, frequently and persistently listed evidence of masculinity in habits, abilities and features as relevant "facts" indicating "inversion" in women. In particular, Ellis presented lesbian as mannish and male (Bland, 1995). In relation to physicality, Ellis makes reference to well-developed muscles, and Krafft-Ebing cites childhood enjoyment of masculine pastimes as signs of inversion (Gibson, 1997). Both "characteristics" have a direct relationship with participation in physical activity. More specifically, Krafft-Ebing offers a means to identify what he refers to as Uranism (a term devised by Ulrichs):

Uranism may nearly always be suspected in females wearing their hair short, or who dress in the fashion of men, or pursue the sports and pastimes of their male acquaintances (cited in Munt, 1998b, p:62).

Similarly, Ellis's work characterises lesbians as having a 'dislike and sometimes incapacity for needlework and other domestic occupations, while there is often some capacity for athletics' (cited in Miller, 1995, p: 19). This notion of the "authentic" lesbian as active and therefore, masculine was highly influential at the time and continued to be significant during the early twentieth century. For instance, in Radclyffe Hall's books 'Miss Ogilvy finds herself' (1926) and 'The Well of Loneliness' (1927), the characters - Miss Ogilvy and Stephen, 'both occupy themselves with weight lifting and sports in their childhood' (Halberstam, 1998, p:84). In particular, Stephen's [homo]sexuality was portrayed most clearly when the character was taking part in sports such as horse riding and fencing. Interestingly, the depiction of 'Miss Ogilvy' and Stephen as sportswomen functions as confirmation of their "inversion".

It would seem, as Rita Laporte (1971) argues that there has been an uncritical acceptance of heterosexual male psychologist's pronouncements.

We have been thoroughly conditioned to think the adjectives, male and masculine, are interchangeable, as are female and feminine - this is a mental straightjacket under which not only lesbians but all of society suffers' (p.356, in Blasius and Phelan, 1997)

Esther Newton (1991) believes the conflation of gender role, gender identity and sexual orientation reflects the reluctance by sexologists to acknowledge active lust in women. Not only lesbians but also heterosexual women, who adopted a 'language of lust' (Newton, 1991, p: 285), were viewed as deviant. Since active sexual desire was considered "masculine" then, lesbians actively involved in sexual relationships with other women were not only seen as deviant, but also "inverted". In this way, nineteenth century discourse on sexuality constructed the enduring link between masculinity and the sexual. The medical profession labelled masculine women as "true" lesbians, "inverts" who suffered from a refusal to adjust to femininity. Female inverts 'could not be classified as an asexual, "normal" woman' (Gibson, 1997, p: 122). Doctors and psychologists through 'normalising structures' (Foucault, 1978, p: 454) devised a particular concept of sexuality, which served to place lesbianism as outside the limits of femininity, thus lesbian became marked as "pseudo-man".

Largely through the sexology movement, lesbian sexuality has been historically, culturally and socially constructed in a way, which prioritises the masculine over the feminine. The figure of the 'butch' has developed from the medicalised and pathologised figure of the 'invert' (Healey, 1996). Interestingly this predecessor of the mannish lesbian, has also become marked as pseudo-man, this time by the feminist political movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The largely white, middle class component of the movement vilified, maligned and condemned, the butch. The treatment of butch-femme culture by feminism during the 1960s and 1970s has been documented in a variety of ways (for example see Case, 1993; Crawley, 2001; Feinberg, 1993; Nestle, 1989; and Roof, 1998,). In particular, Leslie Feinberg's novel *'Stone Butch Blues'* powerfully articulates a social history of working class lesbian culture



in America immediately prior to, and during the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement. The account shows how the butch, irrespective of her politics, was alienated and rejected by an emerging feminist movement that positioned masculinity as an anathema and female masculinity as abject.

This collapsing of gender into sexuality does not occur within a 'culturaless vacuum' (Laporte, 1971, p. 358). I argue that female sexuality has been culturally produced via sexology and some strands of early second wave feminist politics in a particular way. In the final section of this chapter I explore this point more fully. Interestingly, both sexology and radical feminism adopt a white, middle class, heterosexist gendered lens to codify and define sexuality. The corollary is a paucity of sexual and gender identity for women, with the marginalisation and exclusion of particular aspects of lesbian sexuality. More specifically, it is the figure of the butch that has unequivocally represented the site of the collapse of gender and sexuality in women in contemporary UK and US sports culture.<sup>73</sup>

Unsurprisingly, within the specific culture of sport, sexuality has also been defined in relation to heterosexual notions of obdurate gender. More specifically, within football in the UK, the figure of the butch constantly and consistently conjures comment. Previous research demonstrates this point. For example, Kari Fasting and Sheila Scraton (1997) document the 'experiences and meanings of sport in the lives of women in England, Germany, Norway and Spain' (p:5). The findings highlight how; 'the English players used appearance and clothes to resist the stereotype of being a lesbian player. Most said that they often dressed up to avoid comment about being "butch".' (p:5). This strategy of using appearance and clothes to avoid or assert a gender identity demonstrates the 'mimetic relation of gender to sex' as described by Butler (1990, p.6). Here, issues surrounding gender appear to be relevant for

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<sup>73</sup> In this chapter I explore female masculinity in relation to women who play football. However, through an analysis of tomboy and heterosexual subjectivity, I contest the prioritising of butch subjectivity when discussing masculinity in women.

the English players but not the Norwegian players: 'again we notice the combination not-feminine = masculine = butch which doesn't come up in the Norwegian interviews' (Fasting and Scraton, 1997,p: 7).

It is evident that the women taking part in this research project face similar issues. Through a consideration of the tomboy and butch I now offer an in-depth analysis of female masculinity.

### **[Not] To look like a woman**

Halberstam (1998) argues that 'it is remarkably easy in this society not to look like a woman, but one finds the limits of femininity quickly' (p. 28). The 'limits of femininity' represents gender borders. At these frontiers women and femininity and men and masculinity are synonymous. Transgressing the gendered landscape incites scrutiny and none more so than within the public arena of sport. Take for example the arrival of Amelie Mauresmo a 'new' young player on the international tennis circuit in 1999. Tennis has a long history of participation for women largely because it is viewed as 'suitable' and hence a legitimate form of physical activity. The game has been, and continues to be used as a forum to mark and maintain femininity for the active woman. For example, the current media coverage of the 'tennis babe' Anna Kournikova.<sup>74</sup> Players entering this almost exclusively middle class sport have usually adhered to the Victorian notion of the 'lady-like' aesthetic. Athleticism and muscularity, although progressively more visible, have predominantly been within the bounds of 'acceptability'.

Mauresmo, like Navratilova, through training presents a body that challenges the contemporary 'aesthetic of womanhood'. During the Australian Open, Mauresmo beat Lindsey Davenport and then lost to Martina Hingus. Players

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<sup>74</sup> Anna Kournikova has been dubbed "Cor-nikova" by the tabloids. She is 19 years old and ranked no. 12 in the world. Last year she earned an estimated £7.5 million through the marketing of her 'babe' image (O'Brien, 2000).

and the media focused entirely on Mauresmo's physique as is illustrated here in *The Times* (31.01.99); 'The shoulders have caused all the comment (...) Lindsey Davenport (...) talked of the size of Mauresmo's shoulders and how it was like "playing a guy" ' (Evans, 1999). Sandra Bartky (1988) argues, and it is evidenced in this response to Mauresmo's size, '[t]oday, massiveness, power, or abundance in a women's body is met with distaste' (p. 132, in Conboy et al 1997). In *The Observer*; (31.01.99) it was reported that 'Hingus said to Swiss journalists: 'Look at her [Mauresmo's] figure, and the fact that she travels with her girlfriend - I'm sorry, she's half man'' (Bowers, 1999). Such comments animate Halberstam's (1998) claim that 'one finds the limits of femininity quickly'. As Susan Bordo (1993) posits:

[T]he rules of femininity have come to be culturally transmitted more and more through standardised visual images. (...) We are no longer given verbal descriptions or exemplars of what a lady is or what femininity consists. Rather, we learn the rules directly through body discourse: through images that tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behaviour are required (p.94, in Conboy et al. 1997).

In relation to gender, and as I argue later the sexed body, the comments made about Mauresmo being a 'guy', 'half man', illustrate the boundaries of gender. Her gender is positioned as outside 'the possibility of cultural articulation' (Butler, 1993b, p.8). It is significant that Mauresmo's body is read through the core of the heterosexual gender imaginary. That is, she is masculine and she is lesbian therefore she is intelligible after all. However, she is only comprehensible because she is excluded from that which is viewed as 'natural' i.e. heterosexual femininity. In many ways the reference to 'half man' makes links with the work by Rosi Braidotti (1994). Through her engagement with discourse on embodied difference Braidotti posits: 'it can be argued that Western thought has a logic of binary opposites that treats difference as that which is other-than the accepted norm' (cited in Conboy et al, 1997; p.62). Here, the treatment of Mauresmo demonstrates this point.

Unlike tennis, football has not been as susceptible to such conspicuous gendering of the game. This is partly because football has struggled to survive and exist as a legitimate sport for women to take part in. In addition football's working class roots and culture have, until the current explosion in the commodification and commercialisation of the game, meant less emphasis on the tradition of the middle class Victorian 'lady-like' aesthetic. After all, it was working class women, factory workers, who kept the game going during the First World War. That said, footballers have not escaped the imposition of the socially and culturally produced and maintained template of femininity. Reference to the 'non-feminine' appears eminently in the research findings.

As discussed in the last chapter, football is branded as masculine and in accordance, assumptions are made in relation to player's sexuality. Through the stereotypes mentioned, I have illustrated that playing is indicative of lesbianism. Here a woman made this comment on her completed questionnaire; 'but I don't look like the "typical" footballer so I get less stereotyped, but still get some teasing' (no. 139). Evidently, there exists a prevailing awareness of what a footballer looks like; there exists a corporeal stereotype. This must mean that the body of a player is ostensibly under examination. As with Mauresmo, player's bodies are inspected categorically in relation to gender motif and sexuality.<sup>75</sup> Another player's response from the questionnaire research makes reference to this process of surveillance. 'When I was at college I used to play with the boys and because I was better than some of them they used to call me a man even though I am small and petite' (no. 170). Clearly playing impacts on what it means to be a man, or a woman and transgression is discernible, imploring remark and self-surveillance. These additional responses reiterate this point.

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<sup>75</sup> Rosi Braidotti (1996) argues that '[w]e all have bodies, but not all bodies are equal: some matter more than others; some are, quite frankly, disposable' (p. 136). In this final section of the thesis I consider female embodied experience and remain mindful of Braidotti's point that categories of otherness are produced through racialized and genderized discourses and practices.

[D]idn't get to play for a while as a teenager because I felt it wasn't right (I had to be a girl!) (no. 35).

Was not allowed to play at school and when I hit my teens I did not want to play because I wanted to be a 'woman'! (no. 392).

When I was younger I stopped playing because I was called a tomboy, but now I don't care (no. 259).

Susan Bordo (1993) posits that it is the body that functions as a site for the reproduction of femininity. She views the body as a 'text of femininity' and those who are able and willing to cite the feminine aesthetic norm represent Foucault's (1975) "useful body". Sandra Bartky (1988) identifies three disciplinary practices that produce the body as recognisably feminine. In brief, these are body size, the use of the body as an ornamental surface and the bodily display of a repertoire of appropriate gestures and postures. In this way, femininity is regulated and emerges as an artifice. In short there are mechanisms through which the female body is invested with indicators of sexual difference (Gatens, 1992). Butler (1993b) argues that it is the achievement of femininity that produces the sexed body. That is, the body is sexed as female and is therefore intelligible. When women fail, or are unable to cite corporeal femininity the body is read differently.

The interview material provides detailed accounts of how players are recognised as not looking like 'real' or 'proper' women. In relation to femininity, their bodies are not intelligible (Butler, 1993b). For instance, here Laura (aged 33) talks about remarks from male spectators; '(...) "Well, we don't think that number 9 on the other side's female" (...) "Have you had a sex test, are you sure that she's female?"(...)'. Although not specified here, some of the research material does suggest that there are certain indicators of femaleness and maleness that are positioned as exclusive to either women or men, despite being apparent in both females and males. Here, I focus on the construction of femininity in relation to body size and body hair. The interview material indicates that it is impossible to disentangle femininity and sexuality, in particular the association between the non-representation of femininity and

lesbianism, and vice versa. The following discussion demonstrates how sexuality is collapsed into the corporeal gender aesthetic.

During the interviews many of the women talk about football's prevailing stereotype. Body size appears as significant. Here Donna (aged, 30) makes explicit and implicit reference to player's physical size - big and hulking. Her view is that women who play are understood by others to be 'gay'. This is further defined in relation to big - 'I think you immediately get labelled just because you play football (...) just because you play you are gay (...) and you've got to be ... and you are this big butch hulking around.' What this also suggests is that 'proper'/'real' women that is - heterosexual and non-big women, do not play.

In addition to 'bigness', the body is also read in relation to body posture and gesture (Bartky, 1988) i.e. 'hulking'. Similarly, Collette (aged 32) talks about her experiences within other sports and she makes the same point. She mentions 'acceptability' and suggests that some sports and in fact some women are viewed as unacceptable. This failure to have a legitimate sporting body is based on body size. She makes reference to the experiences of a friend of hers. This friend is positioned beyond the limits of femininity because she is big.

If we think of the stereotypes (...) I've always played sports that were acceptable, you know for women to play, so athletics. Mind you even within athletics it's, I was a long jumper, a sprinter not a thrower. I mean I've got a very close friend who is a thrower and she had different experiences to me. She was big, she was tall and she had big shoulders (...) it was just that she was big.

The focus on 'big shoulders' highlights the significance of the body surface (Bartky, 1988). Athletes who train to develop muscle for their specific activity change and adjust the surface of their body. Collette's friend is positioned as outside the boundaries of femininity because she fails to display

a body that can be read as within the socially and culturally constructed boundaries of femininity.<sup>76</sup>

Two of the women interviewed talked about their early experiences of women players. Their accounts offer insights that demonstrate their understanding of what it means to be a woman in relation to body hair. Here Sam (aged 28) suggests body hair is significant.

The women I first knew as a fourteen year old were very strong physically, these were big tough women, at one point when I walked into the changing room, I thought I'd walked into a man's football team, because everyone had hair, everyone didn't shave their armpits, everyone didn't shave their legs.

In contrast Kaz (aged 31) positions not having hair, that is a short hair cut as indicative.

I remember Chelsea playing on Hackney Marshes (...) I remember thinking men and women do play football when they're older together, but it wasn't it was two women's teams. (...) I must have been about twelve. Some looked like men (...) had their hair cut short.

Clearly body hair is a critical aspect of femininity. Bartky (1988, cited in Conboy, 1997) argues that 'a woman's skin must be soft, supple, hairless, and smooth. (...) Hair must be removed not only from the face but from large surfaces of the body as well, from legs and thighs' (p136). The non-removal of leg and underarm hair disturbs the citation of corporeal femininity. In addition, hegemonic heterosexuality ensures body hair is read in relation to [lesbian] sexuality. Tamsin provides an example of this here; 'I know for a fact that when I was thinking of joining Hackney someone said "oh my god you don't want to join them they're all big butch hairy lesbians'. This positioning of having hair within the simultaneous equation of butch = lesbianism is common. In addition, not having long hair is positioned similarly. Helen (aged

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<sup>76</sup> The work referenced in the 'Review of literature and theoretical approaches' (chapter two), on women body builders is relevant here.

21) demonstrates this point; '(...) that every one who plays is lesbian, every one who plays looks a certain way, has short hair, is very masculine, very butch'. Kaz (aged 31) continues to illustrate the durability of the association between short hair and the conflation of gender and sexuality, when she talks about a woman in one of the teams she plays for.

Kaz – She was the most heterosexual dyke I've ever seen. (...) She was quite butch.

J - What do you mean by butch?

Kaz - Short hair, quite muscular.

J - But heterosexual?

Kaz - Yeah, so she claims.

It appears that one of the reasons Kaz is unable to accept this players [hetero]sexuality is because of her hair style, as well as her muscularity.<sup>77</sup> Having hair in the right places, that is providing a hairy or hairless body text (Bordo, 1993), appears crucial to the intelligibility of femininity. If the author of the text fails to provide the feminine hair aesthetic she risks being read as non-feminine and non-heterosexual, that is butch and lesbian. To be big and muscular with[out] hair disturbs the re-production of gender. Like Mauresmo, if player's corporeality does not signify femininity, then they are positioned as male and masculine. This is because as Bordo (1993) argues femininity and masculinity have been 'constructed through a process of mutual exclusion' (in Conboy et al 1997, p. 97). However, I argue that 'female masculinity' is more complex than the dualism suggests. Through a discussion of the research material on tomboyism and butch I explore some of the intricacies that disturb the binary of femininity and masculinity.

Many of the women interviewed describe themselves during childhood as tomboys. Some continue to do so, for example, Di (aged 29) proclaims 'been a

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<sup>77</sup> It is interesting here that heterosexual is used as the qualifier for 'dyke' i.e. 'she was the most heterosexual dyke'. Kaz positions the player as dyke and masculine despite her sexual object choice. I move on to highlight how female masculinity does not always reside with the butch lesbian. In particular, I show how 'tomboy' disrupts notions of the sexed body but resists the butch subject position.



tomboy, always have been always will be (...) I'm a working class tomboy'. Similarly, Shirley (aged 33) admits that she would still – 'definitely describe myself as a tomboy'. Interestingly, football is often positioned, by the women, as a determinate of tomboyism. Collette (aged 32) remembers being told 'I was a tomboy because I started to play'. More specifically, Sam (aged 28) describes witnessing the process of marking girls as boys – 'I saw little kids round here, I saw 4 boys and a girl, and the girl came up and took the ball off the boys, and they said "what are you, some kind of tomboy?"' Generally, the findings show that tomboyism is understood in relation to football. That is, playing often marks girls and women as tomboys.

Some of the women discuss the connection between their tomboyism and their sexuality. For example, whilst talking about being a tomboy, Di mentions 'declaring my love to a girl when I was five – that I would marry her'. More explicitly, Tamsin relates her sexuality to [tom]boyism, when asked if she could describe a dyke.

T - Yes a dyke would probably be sort of quite boyish - tomboyish, short hair, you know drinking, "sorted", likes a laugh. Someone like myself, someone who's cute [laughs].

In contrast, Kaz does not connect tomboyism with her sexuality, although she continues to link football and tomboyism, as is demonstrated here.

J - You talked about being a tomboy when you were younger.

K - Yeah.

J - Does the idea of being a tomboy tie in with your sexuality at all?

K - Erm, no, I don't think so, because I've got friends who are straight who were tomboys, well I think they're straight, you know, so I don't think so, I think that just encouraged me to do the activities I did, like knock down ginger and football and make go-carts, I don't think it changed my sexuality.

The relationship between tomboyism and sexuality is not straightforward. Di, Tamsin and Kaz all define themselves as gay or lesbian or dyke. Unsurprisingly, all three position their sexuality differently in relation to

'female masculinity'. Di and Kaz do not centralise tomboyism, whereas Tamsim openly adopts a masculine lesbian gender. However, later in the interview Tamsin distances herself from the figure of the butch, and eventually identifies as 'camp'. Shirley's account as a heterosexual woman continues to make visible the complex functioning of masculinity for the women players.

S - When I was younger, as a teenager, I looked very boyish and whatever, and I think that not only did they assume sometimes that I was a boy (...) I would often get called 'sonny' (...) when they realised you was a woman, they assumed that you might be gay, because you look boyish. (...) I think in the end my boyfriend was more embarrassed by that, you know we'd go somewhere and they'd say 'come in lads' (...) as you get older, perhaps a wedding ring, and with kids, it just don't become an issue any more (...)

J - Would you describe yourself as a tomboy when you were younger?

S - Absolutely, yeah (...) I mean I don't wear dresses very often - very rarely - I don't wear skirts, or whatever, I would still describe myself as a tomboy erm... and I don't have any problem with that

J - And in terms of being heterosexual....

S - I don't relate the two at all, I don't relate being homosexual and being a tomboy. (...) I mean it would (...) perhaps... as you were getting into your late teens (...) you would worry about it (...) not now, it's not an issue for me any more. (...) I mean I got called a man this morning and I just laughed - it's not a problem.<sup>78</sup>

Although tomboyism has received some scrutiny within sports sociology (for example, see Hall (1996)), the focus tends to reside with the deconstructing of 'tom' as given through patriarchal institutions. Interestingly, 'tom' has been used historically to depict 'deviant' women. For example, prostitutes in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century were often referred to as 'toms'. This relates back to the arguments presented by Esther Newton (1991) that sexually active women are in effect marked as male. Tomboy however does not always carry a 'deviant' sexual connotation as the research material indicates. This is because as Rita Laporte (1971) highlights tomboyism tends

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<sup>78</sup> Although Shirley describes herself as tomboy she is read here as 'man'. This illuminates the complexities of female masculinity. Shirley's situation provides further support for the argument that masculinity does not always reside with the figure of the butch lesbian.

to be consigned to girlhood, which presents less of a threat to patriarchal power.

Let us begin with the “tomboy”. She is not as damned as the “sissy” boy, destined to become a more feminine homosexual, for females are not so important, and, anyway she will outgrow it. (in Blasius and Phelan, 1997, p.359)

In addition, Barbara Creed (1995) argues that it is the narrative of the tomboy that functions as a ‘liminal journey of discovery in which feminine sexuality is put into crisis and finally recuperated’ (p. 88). That said, some of the women interviewed do align a tomboyish style with adulthood. However, there is considerable evidence (Halberstam, 1998, Hargreaves, 1997) that at a particular moment, most women disassociate with female masculinity.<sup>79</sup>

Halberstam (1998) suggests that ‘tomboyism for girls is generally tolerated until it threatens to interfere with the onset of adolescent femininity’ (p.268). Sportswomen’s reference to having *been* a tomboy and the later rejection of this form of masculinity poses certain questions. For instance, do some sportswomen conform to gender ‘logic’ through fear of not being read as a woman or is it that sportswomen force themselves uncomfortably into prescribed femininity? In other words, is it as Butler (1993b) suggests a matter of ‘abject bodies’ or as Halberstam (1998) notes a matter of ‘abject genders’?

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<sup>79</sup> Freud’s narrative on femininity, in particular the emergence of the sharp distinction between masculinity and femininity during child development is of some significance here. In his thesis, Freud asserts the centrality of the phallic stage, Oedipus complex and castration complex. Specifically, gender differences do not exist pre-Oedipal, that is both girls and boys are masculine. It is girls’ realisation of castration that smoothes the way for the development of femininity. Although Freud’s theory on femininity (1932) is relevant in as much as it positions masculinity in girls as ‘normal’ and identifies a shift to femininity, his work is open to feminist critique. Unfortunately there is not the space here to engage in such a project. Suffice to acknowledge Freud’s contribution to our understanding of the emergence gender divisions.

As a way to further explore 'female masculinity' as it appears in football, I now engage with the figure of the butch more explicitly. In the previous chapter I draw upon research material to discuss football's sexual peremptory and lesbian [non] presence and [non] visibility. Butch is referred to during that account. It is evident that the game has a sexual marking and that butch is positioned as synonymous with lesbian. These responses from the questionnaire research further demonstrate this point.

...playing a traditional male sport people stereotype and assume you are a butch lesbian, which clearly I am not (no. 268).

Only the image that is portrayed - although it is improving women footballers have stereotypes attached to them e.g. butch, gay and it seems to roller coaster tarnishing all players (no.149).

Unlike the reference to tomboy, butch does not appear in the research findings without being attached to lesbian sexuality. This strong association functions in a way Sally Munt (1998b) describes as the 'gospel of lesbianism, inevitably interpreted as the true revelation of female homosexuality... Explicitly and implicitly the butch stands for the lesbian in the Lesbian Imaginary' (p. 54). This monolithic image of lesbian experience suggests that masculinity in women represents authentic lesbian sexuality.

There has been limited direct research on the butch identity in sport. Susan Cahn (1994) does however suggests that the 'mannish lesbian athlete has acted as a "powerful but unarticulated 'bogey woman' of sport" (p.41). The academic silence surrounding the butch in sports sociology is not evident within cultural studies. In fact Halberstam (1998) theorises butch to such an extent that she unpacks 'butchphobia' (p.103), explores butch variability (p.122) and provides a 'glossary of butch' (p.120). As yet, there is no evidence of such a contribution to making the butch identity functional for women in sport. However, as Cahn (1994) argues the butch is not only a figure of homophobic discourse, but also a real player trying to establish a social and psychic space.

None of the women interviewed confessed to being butch and many of them were keen to assert, and tell of how others asserted, a 'non-butch' identity. This distancing from the figure of the butch supports Halberstam's notion of 'abject genders'. For instance, Collette (aged 32) talks about her experiences playing against other teams - 'they want to show everyone that they are not butch dykes, they're girly feminines who can also play football'. This gendered visual strategy to combat the seemingly ubiquitous butch in football is used to 'turn the gaze away' (Halberstam, 1998, p; 270) from any signals of potential masculinity. The research demonstrates that butch as an indication of masculinity gives rise to tensions for women irrespective of sexuality. Here Tamsin talks about her understanding of female masculinity, in particular her own anxieties surrounding butch.

J - What are the differences - I mean for you - the differences between butch and tomboy.

T - I suppose it comes down to... for some reason I always think of someone quite big (...) well quite masculine I suppose, very strong. It's like butch I associate it with being ugly and I think tomboy is the sort of nice way of saying that its all those things but they're actually quite cute. So yeah, boyish is probably someone who is a bit of a lad but you know cute baby face sort of thing. Which I'd like to think I'd be more like. I just don't want to say that I'm ugly.

Tamsin's reference to body size makes links with the earlier discussion on the reproduction of femininity (Bartky, 1988). Instead of within the context of heterosexual gender production, Tamsin relates body aesthetic to the reproduction of lesbian gender. In this way the account supports Butler's notion of 'abject bodies'. That is the butch body is viewed as an object of abjection and aberration. In addition, Tamsin presents butch as a monolithic category. Clearly, this is open to challenge. For instance, Halberstam's (1998) exploration of butch variability and her provision of a glossary of butch suggest that there exist an array of butch identities. More specifically, Laporte (1971) highlights the significance of class in forging butchness.

There is a wide range of butchiness to begin with and the outward aspects of butchiness are variably modified by upbringing. The more “privileged” tomboy is apt to be far more pressured into learning to “act like a lady” than the freer, less “privileged”, sister (in Blasius and Phelen, 1997, p. 360).

There is considerable evidence that the butch-femme aesthetic predominant in the North America in the 1950s was largely prevalent in the working class (Case, 1993, Crawley, 2001; Laporte, 1971, Roof, 1998). For some working class lesbians, butch was a basic element of their identity. Tamsin’s distancing from the butch identity can be analysed in relation to class. Earlier in the interview she talks about her own class background and her parents response to her playing football.

My parents are actually quite, you know, middle class and snobbish and hockey is much more of a middle class sport in their eyes and football, is probably quite common to them. They were very interested in my hockey (...) They’ve never been [to watch football] its not an obvious snub, but I think it is definitely the case that hockey was far more middle class.

It is impossible to ascertain the extent of the influence of Tamsin’s family and her class background. Suffice to acknowledge her parent’s response and her registering of this response. It is clearly significant and may reflect Laporte’s (1971) claim that the ‘more privileged’ are pressured into ‘lady like’ behaviour thus impacting on ‘butchiness’.

The research material used in this chapter and to some extent in the previous chapter indicates that the footballing bodies of the women who play are positioned in relation to the reproduction of gender. It is evident that the research participants negotiate their corporeal intelligibility as it relates to the feminine that is to look like a woman. This negotiation makes links with notions of ‘abject genders’ (Halberstam, 1998) and ‘abject bodies’ (Butler, 1993b).

Within sporting contexts women and femininity and men and masculinity are made obdurate via discursive practice. However, I have highlighted some of the challenges to this arrangement. There is evidence that some of the women upset notions of femininity and masculinity as stable categories. To not look like a woman equates to looking like a boy or man and some of the women talk about how they identify in relation to masculinity. Some of them actively appropriate a corporeality that can be read as masculine. That said, the appropriation of masculinity is largely contained within the relatively safe boundaries of tomboyism. This juvenile style receives less 'policing' compared to the butch. Within sporting discourse the butch body is largely pathologised and abhorred. She represents a site/sight where anxieties surrounding women's gender and sexuality rest. The tomboy is less marked as an anathema. In addition, the butch is read in relation to aberrant sexuality, thus demonstrating how hegemonic heterosexuality continues to function through a collapsing of sexuality into gender.

This chapter began with an historical account of the social construction of sexuality premised on the heterosexual gender assumption. The research material offers evidence of the contemporary processes that drive the social construction of sexuality within the context of football. It is apparent that corporeal gender motif continues to inform the [hetero]sexual.

In the final section of this chapter I theorise gender and sexuality specifically as it relates to the sexed body. I refer back to some of the research material as a way to help illuminate an argument that contests the category sex. I draw on feminist writings on the body and provide an analysis that supports an argument that the sexed body, in addition to gender and sexuality, is "naturalised" to appear as pre-given.

**Gender, sexuality and the social construction of the sexed body.**

In this last analysis section of the thesis I offer a 'new' way to theorise gender and sexuality within the sociology of sport. In chapters five and six I consider gender as it relates to the women's everyday lived experiences of playing football. In the previous chapter I explore the functioning of sexuality through an exploration of football's sexual peremptory. In this chapter I consider the corporeal in the production of gender and sexuality. The research material indicates that players are stereotyped as 'gay' and 'butch'. In particular I highlight how women's footballing bodies are positioned within these constructs and show how lesbianism is understood in relation to corporeal masculinity. Therefore, I expose the discursive practices that impact on women who play football. For example, I apply Susan Bordo's (1993) notion of the body as a 'text of femininity'. I continue to develop such an analysis here. The following discussion contests "sex" through a feminist poststructuralist analysis, in particular I focus on some of the arguments presented by Judith Butler (1993b).

Social construction theory posits that the body is 'somehow shaped, constrained and even invented by society' (Shilling, 1995, p. 70). A range of social constructionist views exists. On the whole, feminist theorists favouring social construction are concerned with the ways women's and men's bodies are differently and unequally imbued with social meanings. Here I focus on the production of the sexed body through the regulatory practices implicit to sports' discourse.

A Foucauldian approach to the body positions it entirely within the realm of the social. As such the body does not exist as a biological entity, instead the body is produced and controlled through a series of regulatory practices. These practices can be linked through the process of genealogy. That is, they have functioned and developed over a period of time. For example, earlier I referred to Foucault's analysis of 'modern homosexuality' as produced through legal, political and medical discourse. According to Foucault the body is not beyond history but is produced in and through history. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) suggests



that '[f]or Foucault, the body is penetrated by networks and regimes of power-knowledge that actively mark and produce it as such' (p. 122). The body therefore is the object of power's operations and becomes marked by power relations. Some feminists have made use of Foucault's analysis of embodiment, power and knowledge as a way to rethink the stable identity "woman".<sup>80</sup> By understanding how the body is signified as "woman", feminists are able to challenge the concept as a natural given. For example, Luce Irigaray (1977) argues that within the economy of sexuality, 'women are marked phallicly by their fathers, husbands, procurers. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce' (cited in Conboy et al, 1997, p.255). As such, the concept "woman" is produced and constructed as an 'use-value' and an 'exchange value' for men. Irigaray demands a re-defining of "woman" through a focus on women's sexuality. The importance of her arguments here are the reference to how women have been signified through a phallogentric discourse on sexuality and illuminating the complex functioning of power within the process of inscription, as identified by Foucault.

Monique Wittig (1981) pursues a similar project to expose the category "woman" as a construct. Wittig argues that there is no natural group "woman" and that "woman" is a myth. In particular she posits that

A materialist feminist approach shows that what we take for the cause or origin of oppression is in fact only the mark imposed by the oppressor (...). This mark does not pre-date oppression (cited in Kemp and Squires, 1997; p. 221)

For Wittig the category "woman" is an imaginary formation, it is the corollary of a social relationship, in particular political, economic and ideological relations. She refutes the physical aspects of the sexed body and positions 'heterosexuality as the social system which produces the doctrine of the difference between the sexes to justify this oppression' (cited in Conboy et al,

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<sup>80</sup> See for example Bartky, (1988); Bordo, (1993); Butler, (1990); Gatens, (1992) and; McNay (1992).

1997, p. 317). In this way, her analysis reflects a Foucauldian approach by taking account of social relations and the process of categorising the sexed body through marking sex. For Wittig the lesbian body escapes sexual signification and challenges the assumption of the category “woman”, because lesbians do not have a socially sanctioned relationship to men. Therefore they do not exist within the same set of political and economic relations that heterosexual women do.<sup>81</sup> This focus on lesbianism, as a way to challenge the marking of the sexed body, moves beyond a Foucauldian analysis in as much as it begins to conceptualise pre-inscribed and/or re-inscribed bodies.

Judith Butler (1990, 1993a) also extends some of Foucault’s theoretical concepts. In particular, Butler considers abject bodies or those bodies that are unable, or do not cite an inscription. Wittig’s lesbian body and Butler’s abject bodies offer ways to move beyond the impasse left by Foucault’s notion of ‘docile bodies’. Foucault argued that bodies passively receive and accept signification. He failed to consider in detail bodies that avoid inscription, thus making it difficult to theorise corporeal challenges to the heterosexual gender imperative. Chris Shilling (1995) is critical of this shortfall, arguing that such a view ‘provides no room for recognising that different aspects of human embodiment may be more or less open to reconstruction’ (p. 80). In his conclusion Shilling suggests that within Foucault’s analysis ‘the body is present as a topic of discussion, but absent as a focus of investigation’ (p. 80). More specifically, Foucault paid little attention to the signification of the category “woman” in relation to the sexed body. However, he did offer a way forward and Judith Butler extends the theoretical possibilities poststructuralism offers through her feminist critique of discourse.

Butler (1993b) argues that the category “sex” and the notion of sexual difference are produced and materialised through time. She concurs with Foucault’s thesis to expose the body as a “regulatory ideal”, that is the body

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<sup>81</sup> That said, it is worth noting that Wittig has been criticised for her ahistoric account of women’s position within sexual relations.

has the power to produce and regulate itself. The body is presented as stable and fixed, however Butler argues that this process is incomplete: 'bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialisation is impelled' (p. 2). Hence there exists instability. This insight opens the way for a consideration of 'possibilities for rematerialisation' and the prospect of 'spawn[ing] rearticulations' (p. 2).

In relation to the research material on tomboy and butch we can see how "sex" is materialised through regulatory practices that position tomboyism in adults and the butch identity as not viable subject positions. The research findings demonstrate how sexual difference is materialised through discursive practices. For example the women refer to the education system, officials, spectators and the media as sites where gender relations codify femininity. The evidence suggests that the women are conscious of the limits of femininity. According to Butler (1993b) "viable" "subjects" are produced through the 'force of exclusion and abjection' (p. 3). As the research material indicates, some of the women distance themselves from the identification of mannish lesbian, butch, and adult tomboy. In other words they construct their gender and sexuality by excluding and foreclosing possibilities for female masculinity. In the research the women associate butch with "big", "ugly", "hulking", "hairy" "half man" and "lesbian". For Butler (1993b) it is the exclusionary matrix of the heterosexual imperative that also constructs "unliveable" and "uninhabitable" 'zones of social life' (p.3) such as lesbian and butch. Butler posits that through heterosexual hegemony, the sexed body is socially constructed to propel gender norms and vice versa. This argument becomes particularly useful to an analysis of the process of sex testing or gender verification in sport.

As mentioned earlier, one of the women interviewed recounts comments being made by male spectators.

(...) "Well, we don't think that number 9 on the other side's female" (...) "Have you had a sex test, are you sure that she's female?"(...) (Laura, aged 33).

This act of verbally challenging the player's corporeality serves to call into question the "naturalness" of the sexed body. The suggestion that the player take a sex test highlights a process used to discursively produce "sex". Sex tests exist in sport and are carried out on women but not on men. The stated intention is to prevent men gaining an unfair advantage by competing in 'women's events'. The test was devised by the International Olympic Committee's medical commission and represents a male medical definition of 'womanhood' and what constitutes 'woman'. As such, some feminists question the motives behind the test. For example, Mariah Burton Nelson (1994) suggests - 'maybe the concern is not so much that men will masquerade as women, but that women will no longer masquerade as women' (p.79).

The practice of sex testing was introduced at the 1966 European Championships in Budapest. In 1967, at international competitions, organisers first officially administered what have variously been called sex tests, femininity tests, and gender verification tests. In 1985, Mariah Jose Martinez Patino, aged 24, 'failed' the sex test at the World University Games in Kobe, Japan. Although other women had also 'failed' the sex test Patino was the first woman to publicly challenge the decision. The stigma attached to being defined, as not a 'proper', 'real' woman was enough to silence many of the previous cases (Burton Nelson, 1994). The sex test is premised on a scientific notion that men and women are distinguishable via chromosomal difference. As Maria Burton Nelson (1994) points out 'not all women have XX chromosomes, it turns out, and not all men have XY' (p. 71). Interestingly, her radical feminist analysis of the process of sex testing concludes that 'biology is not as simple as culture would have us believe' (p. 71), and that 'Patino's genetic anomaly is called androgen insensitivity. To understand it is to understand the mind-blowing concept that human beings do not fall exclusively into two categories, male and female' (p.72).

From a Butlerian perspective, sex tests represent a regulatory practice used to materialise “sex” and uphold the notion of sexual difference. The testing procedure marks “viable” subjects and erases other identifications and as such demonstrates the exclusionary means through which the sexed body and gender are produced. Within the context of sport, there exists a taken for granted notion that women and men have to be distinguishable (Cream, 1995). In addition there is the demarcation of sport as ‘women’s sport’ or ‘men’s sport’. Football in particular has been and continues to be positioned and defined as a ‘man’s sport’, as I have illustrated in previous chapters. In this way playing acts as a signifier of manliness for men, that is football offers a way for men to become “viable” sporting subjects. However, the process of gender signification, more specifically the construction of femininity, is dislocated by women’s active involvement. Nonetheless, the process of signification continues to operate by positioning women who play as “outside” the limits of dominant notions of sex and gender.

By considering the sexed body and sex testing it is difficult to avoid an engagement with the debate surrounding the limits of social construction theory. Like Fuss (1989), Butler (1990) problematises the essentialist/constructionist dichotomy through a focus on the ways the oppositional binary can be collapsed. Critics of a Foucauldian analysis of social construction highlight the lack of consideration of human agency, for instance his notion of docile bodies. In comparison, Butler’s analysis goes some way to addressing “agency”. She argues that constructionism does not prevent the possibility of freedom from and opposition to regulatory power relations.

To claim that the subject is itself produced in and as a gendered matrix of relations is not to do away with the subject, but only to ask after the conditions of its emergence and operation (1993a, p. 7).

To focus on the conditions of 'emergence and operation', it is evident that gender, sexuality and the sexed body emerge as cultural articulations that are made "viable" and "natural" through the heterosexual matrix. Therefore heterosexual hegemony is exposed as regulatory and disciplinary in the construction of gender, sexuality and the sexed body. It is also evident that abject bodies exist "outside" the boundaries of the matrix. In other words some bodies exist beyond 'the terrain of signification' (Butler, 1993a). It is these subjects that raise important issues. Firstly, do these bodies avert social construction and consequently can they only be discussed in relation to essentialism? Secondly, does the process of positioning the "outsider" represent a contesting of what has been constructed as "natural", thus opening the way for a discussion on "agency", for example Butler (1993b) writes:

These excluded sites come to bound the "human" as its constitutive outside, and to haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation (p. 8).

These questions are particularly relevant to an analysis of the lesbian body and female masculinity as they appear in this research project. The findings indicate that both are discursively positioned as abject in relation to sex, gender and sexuality. The findings support Braidotti's (1994) argument that within rational thought difference is treated as 'other-than the accepted norm (...) it is deviant, an a-nomaly' (cited in Conboy et al, 1997; p. 62). More specifically and in relation to Butler's ideas - is it that the lesbian body and female masculinity disrupt the signification of "woman", by offering re-articulations and/or re-materialisations of "woman"? Here what I mean by re-articulation and/or re-materialisation is a move beyond the pre-existing fixed categories of gender, sexuality and the sexed body that exist.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Eve Sedgwick (1990) refers to the categorisation of gender and sexuality as 'nounce taxonomies', that is the coarse classification of identities that hides the vastness of experience and behaviour

If we reconsider the arguments presented by Irigaray and Wittig, it is evident that the category "woman" is produced through power relations that are politically, economically and socially in favour of men. Although in different ways, both imply that the category "sex" is discursively produced in order to continue the oppression of women. Wittig advocates that lesbians escape this categorisation. She claims that lesbians are beyond the gendered power relation as they are not defined in relation to men in any way. From a Butlerian perspective such an argument suggests that lesbians 'emerge and operate' outside the heterosexual matrix.

In chapter seven I considered the presence of dykescapes in football. This re-appropriation of space represents a visual challenge to the heterosexing of the 'football fields' and regulatory heterosexuality. That is, there is evidence that lesbian players and teams present re-articulations of sexuality. In this way sexuality is re-materialised within the heterosexual matrix. Similarly, it is possible to consider the presence of female masculinity as a representation of the re-articulation of the sexed body and gender. Judith Halberstam's (1998) thesis on 'female masculinity' demonstrates the authenticity of the butch body. She provides evidence that illustrates the butch body disrupts the signification "woman", thus supporting a move to documenting the re-materialisation of gender. Recently Butler (1998) has argued:

Indeed, women's sports have the power to rearticulate gender ideals such that those very athletic women's bodies that, at one time, are considered outside the norm (too much, too masculine, even monstrous), can come, over time, to constitute a new ideal of accomplishment (...) ideals are not static, but constitute norms or standards that are surpassable and revisable (p.1).

Football as a popular cultural activity provides a site/sight for the signification of gender and sexuality and the rearticulation of gender and sexuality. That said, it is evident that the production of the sexed body is regulated through social and discursive practices, for example schooling, media coverage and the idea of sex testing. At the same time it seems that women's involvement

challenges gender norms. As such, there are possibilities for the footballing body to represent a re-materialisation of "woman". However, in this research it is evident that signification works to produce a culturally intelligible articulation of women's footballing bodies.

Returning to the notion of agency it is clear that the complex and circulatory functioning of power renders agency as problematic. As an extension of her arguments, Butler describes agency in the following way - 'as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power' (1993b, p. 15). "Agency" exists but individuals are never entirely free. Therefore the notion of agented responses emerges as significant. For example, Wittig's 'lesbian body', and Halberstam's 'butch body' are re-articulations that appear within the existing configurations of gender and sexuality but challenge the concept "woman", in this way they are agented. Through a re-materialisation of gender and sexuality the lesbian body and butch body do contest the notion of sexual difference. However, this is achieved within the dynamic power fields of gender relations and sexual relations.

Within this research the presence and visibility of the lesbian body, tomboy body and butch body disrupt the signification "woman". They provide re-articulations of gender and sexuality and significant possibilities for the re-materialisation of the sexed body. By applying a Butlerian perspective to football I highlight the processes that function to construct the sexed body. Throughout this discussion it is the regulatory practices that attempt to foreclose the re-materialisation of the sexed body that emerge as significant. By considering the complex functioning of regulatory and disciplinary power the analysis also exposes the possibilities for and challenges to the arrangement of sexual differentiation.



## Summary.

In this chapter I demonstrate how feminists have successfully exposed gender as an artifice (Bartky, 1988; Bordo, 1993), and sex as contrived (Butler, 1993a, 1993b; Irigaray, 1977; Wittig, 1981). In addition, through an exploration of the history and contemporary of sexuality I show how the construct gender functions to naturalise [hetero] sexuality. Hence sexuality is also exposed as produced through social and discursive regulatory practices. In particular, the research material indicates the currency of corporeal gender and the functioning of embodied femininity and embodied masculinity within the cultural arena of football. For some of the women aspects of 'female masculinity' are a lived experience, however it largely remains an anathema and this positioning works to foreclose new gender-sexuality-sexed body possibilities.

Through a feminist poststructuralist analysis I contest the categories "sex" and "woman" and the notion of sexual difference. Although this argument tends to reside in the theoretical realm, the discussion does illuminate the potential for the lesbian body, tomboy body and butch body to disrupt gender signification. I make use of some of Butler's (1990, 1993a) theoretical concepts to reveal the processes that mark bodies as inside or outside the cultural articulations of sex and gender. This consideration of the exclusionary means through which the players are signified, serves to account for the positioning of the lesbian "subject" and the butch "subject" as abject. The notion that players live outside the boundaries of "viable subject" is discursively produced and through a deconstruction of regulatory practices that exclude footballing bodies the possibilities for the re-articulation and re-materialisation of gender and the sexed body are exposed.

This final chapter offers a feminist poststructuralist analysis of gender, sexuality and the sexed body in the context of football. The discussion challenges the feminist positioning of sex and gender as distinct and the sex difference assumption. By contesting these existing feminist principles I aim to offer a

different analysis of the lived experiences of gender for the women taking part in the research. In particular, I make visible female masculinities as a viable subject position as they appear in the context of football in England and Wales.

## Chapter Nine.

### Summary and Conclusions.

#### Introduction.

As the last chapter of this thesis the following discussion seeks to close this research project. Since learning and knowledge production are dynamic processes I feel it is impossible to offer a final ending. However, I am able to offer a summative account to complete this piece of work. I begin by returning to the personal. As with the brief autobiography in the opening chapter I consider my personal engagement with aspects of the thesis. In this way I employ reflexivity to continue to situate myself in this research project. During the discussion I consider the “journey” I have endured and highlight Rosi Braidotti’s (1991, 1994) notion of a nomadic style of feminism.<sup>83</sup>

The feminist theoretician today can only be “in transition”, moving on, passing through, creating connections where things were previously disconnected or seemed un-related, where there seemed to be “nothing to see” (p. Braidotti, 1994, p:76).

In this thesis I make visible what may have previously appeared as “nothing to see”. In this chapter I delineate the ‘new’ knowledges I contribute. In particular I highlight how the ideas and arguments presented expand our existing understanding of gender, sexuality and the sexed body. This is achieved through a return to the research aim and research objectives as set out in the opening chapter. Through a consideration of the research questions I offer a summary of the key findings. That is, the empirical, methodological and epistemological, and

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<sup>83</sup> Here I focus on Braidotti’s work (1991, 1994, 1996) as it provides useful insights that make sense of my current position. In particular the various theoretical journeys I have navigated. That said I remain mindful of criticisms of the “nomad” as undifferentiated from the “tourist”. For example Elspeth Probyn (1990) writes – ‘the nomad unfortunately recalls some of the more unsalubrious aspects of tourism’ (p.184). Her critique is in relation to locale, location and local in the feminist production of knowledge.

theoretical contribution this research project makes to the field of feminist sports sociology and feminist gender theory. Finally, I consider further and future research possibilities in the areas of gender and football.

### **A personal account of the research odyssey.**

I started this thesis with a brief autobiography that served to contextualise my intent to complete a research project on women's experiences of gender within sport. In a similar vein, I draw this thesis to a close by offering a personal account of my lived experience of the research process. This inclusion of the personal provides insights that would otherwise remain invisible.

In many ways the content of the thesis alludes to the various journeys I have navigated over the last four and a half years. For example, my interrogation of gender theory within both structuralist and poststructuralist feminist epistemology reflects the negotiation of often-complex theoretical pathways. This exploration has not been confined to sports sociology but has taken place beyond the bounds of my 'home' discipline. Previously many of these avenues were unknown therefore making navigation very difficult. However, as I explored the theoretical landscape I uncovered the unfamiliar and tentatively investigated the relevant openings and ways through. At times, I have felt the lack of certainty, confidence and patience difficult to live with and there have been moments of real despair.

Rosi Braidotti (1994) describes this 'passing in between different discursive fields, and through discursive spheres of intellectual discourse' (p. 76) as "transdisciplinary". As is evidenced both explicitly and implicitly in the chapters of this thesis, I "travel" the theory and embrace a "transdisciplinary" approach to documenting the everyday lived experiences of the women who play football. I focus on the local (Probyn, 1990) and located (Haraway, 1991) and provide an articulation that reflects a particular time and place.

For example in chapter five I highlight the political nature of knowledge and make use of feminist standpoint theory to challenge existing footballing discourse. I wrote this chapter ('The normalisation and routinisation of football in the lives of women who play') at the beginning of 1999, it was the first analysis chapter and third chapter I drafted. Some eighteen months later I drafted the final analysis chapter (chapter eight) – '[Not] to look like a woman: footballers, tomboys, butches and lesbians'. Here I adopt a feminist poststructuralist approach to contest sex and sex difference. I expose the social construction of sex and sex difference in and through a particular sporting context. Whilst I acknowledge that the purpose and focus of chapters five and eight are different, by comparing the theoretical underpinnings of these chapters I am able to observe my own developments and theoretical shifts. In particular my dissatisfaction with a wholly feminist structuralist interpretation of gender as it relates to sexuality and the sexed body. At times I have felt uncomfortable with this move from key and obdurate theoretical concepts such as the sex/gender distinction and sex difference. However, by contesting sex as pre-given I have been able to excavate existing figurations of sexuality and the sexed body and offer a particular analysis of women's footballing bodies. It is through an engagement with the research material that I highlight the shortfalls of feminist structuralist theory on gender in sport. In this way I develop new ways to explain women's experience of sport that take account of gender, sexuality and the sexed body.

I am not suggesting that this theoretical journey has been linear and can now be mapped as a complete route from "a" to "b". My learning has not been straightforward. I continue to roam the theoretical landscape. My satisfaction with aspects of feminist theory continues to ebb and flow. In this way the thesis is incomplete. The point being that some months earlier, I was largely unaware of the intricate theoretical arguments I later present in chapter eight. Thus by travelling the theory and adopting a transdisciplinary approach I have reached significant places.

In a feminist context it [transdisciplinary] also implies the effort to move on to the invention of new ways of relating, of building footbridges between notions. The epistemic nomadism I am advocating can only work, in fact, if it is properly situated, securely anchored in the "in between" zones (Braidotti, 1994, p:76)

As Braidotti (1991, 1994) argues such an inductive style to knowledge production requires 'the effort to move on to the invention of new ways of relating'. My engagement with feminist poststructuralism, in particular a move beyond the legacy of Enlightenment's positivism and binary opposites has challenged my existing ways of relating. At times I have felt stuck and the "in between" zones are not always comfortable places to be. However, as a feminist within the sociology of sport it is the 'new ways of relating' that have drawn and held my attention. In my quest to document women's experiences of playing football I have been unable to avoid and/or ignore a consideration of sexuality and the sexed body. By making the effort to build 'footbridges between notions' of the footballing body and feminist poststructuralism I am able to offer a particular analysis of the women's experience of gender, sexuality and the sexed body. This now feels satisfying given my starting place.<sup>84</sup>

To continue, the women's testimonies confirm the centrality of issues surrounding sexuality and so consequently I have wandered into an academic place previously unfamiliar. That is I have moved beyond a wholly gendered focus and become aware of the theoretical issues that drive contemporary feminist debate on sexuality. In relation to theory and returning to Braidotti's work, this reflects epistemic nomadism. Braidotti argues that such a style offers a rigorous approach to 'putting real-life experience first and foremost' (p.76). Throughout I have been keen not to reduce the women's part in the research. During the discussions on gender, sexuality and the sexed body I have attempted to use the women's words throughout to offer accounts that are particular and located. That is, I focus on 'real-life experience' (Braidotti, 1991) and this makes connections with an 'epistemology of the everyday' (Code, 1993). By focusing

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<sup>84</sup> Refer back to the personal rationale in the introduction chapter.

on the located testimonies the women offer, I have found it possible to conceptualise and animate often-complex theory.

Throughout the analysis I remain aware of my role as interpreter and writer of the women's stories and I acknowledge that this thesis represents a particular narrative. I have crafted a feminist epistemology that reflects the limits of my own knowledge and understanding. The departures and arrivals I have experienced over the last four and a half years are original and unique.<sup>85</sup> My education and learning prior to the onset of this PhD provided limited preparation for such a long and arduous journey. I have visited new ideas that have provoked my own thoughts. At times I have been unable to grasp these notions fully first time and this has meant return visits. Some of these re-visits continue despite the closure of this work.<sup>86</sup> In short, the completion of this thesis has driven my own learning and I have accessed knowledge previously beyond my own imagination. This personal development has been accompanied by times of uncertainty and real struggle. The completion of this thesis has not been easy and I continue to allude to some of the tensions, conflicts and resolutions in the following discussion on the empirical, methodological and epistemological, and theoretical aspects of the thesis.

### **The contribution to feminist sports sociology.**

#### ***Empirical.***

This research project seeks to explore and document the everyday lived experiences of women who play football in England and Wales. It is the

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<sup>85</sup> My learning has not been confined to academically rigorous text. Authors such Patricia Dunker (*Hallucinating Foucault*, James Miranda Barry), Jackie Kay (*Trumpet*), and Sarah Waters (*Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*) have stimulated my ideas in relation to both the content and the creativity of their narrative. The mention here of these authors supports a notion of the researcher as nomad in relation to the various sources and forms of relevant information elucidating women's experience of gender.

<sup>86</sup> For example I continue to engage with the feminist discussions on the relationship between feminism and postmodernism. Very recently I have considered some of the work presented by Sara Ahmed (1998) and her proposition that feminism should 'speak back' to postmodernism.

questionnaire and interview findings that provide extensive empirical evidence to support this aim. Through an exploration of the women's shared and non-shared, past and present footballing experiences this thesis offers theoretical arguments that are underpinned by a large body of empirical material. Previously, this empirical contribution remained unregistered within the field of the sociology of sport in this country. The empirical material collected during this research project is meaningful in relation to the five research questions set out at the onset. For example, it contributes to an exploration of the 'position of football in the lives of women who play' (research question one), by establishing how active involvement is normalised and routinised by the women taking part in the research.

As I argue in chapters three and five the experiences of men have been documented and contribute to the production of legitimate knowledge within sports sociology. These accounts serve to mark the history and contemporary of football and indeed culture as male. Politically this is a significant issue to feminists keen to carve a feminist epistemology. This thesis adopts a feminist methodological approach that seeks to challenge existing male epistemologies of football. The women taking part in this research provide animated accounts that serve as evidence of their ongoing and continuous active involvement in football.

More specifically issues surrounding gender and sexuality have been addressed through an analysis of the material provided by the women. It is this inclusion of, and focus on the women's accounts, that accredits the various theoretical discussions evidenced in the analyses chapters. In particular the application of feminist poststructuralism to the everyday. In this way the empirical material underpinning this thesis is original by its presence *and* its currency within the explication of theoretical debate.



### *Epistemological and methodological*

In order to plot the epistemological and methodological contribution this thesis offers, it is important to consider not only what knowledge is produced but also how this knowledge is produced. In this vein, firstly I delineate new knowledge by referring back to the research questions. That is, I consider the first four questions in turn.

1. What is the position of football in the lives of women who play?
2. How central is gender to the experiences of women who play?
3. How do issues surrounding sexuality impact on the women?
4. In what ways do gender and sexuality function together within football culture?

Secondly, I discuss the research material in relation to issues surrounding feminist methodology. Finally, I consider how we understand and make sense of women's everyday experiences. That is the theoretical contribution this thesis offers.

Through a consideration of the key points each analysis chapter contributes, it is possible to delineate new knowledge. As mentioned above, chapter five draws extensively on both the questionnaire and interview material to establish women's past and present relationship to football. Over half the women taking part in the questionnaire research have played for over 15 years. Of the 14 women interviewed 11 (aged between 20 and 43 yrs.) started playing when they were girls (aged under 14 yrs.). Most of the women cite informal play and the spaces within playgrounds and housing estates as sites where they developed their active involvement in the game. Interestingly during the interviews when asked explicitly about their early memories of football the women tend to focus on playing at tournaments and attending matches as spectators. Many of the women continue to be avid fans of the teams they first watched as girls. For those who mention tournaments, it is the public display of themselves as footballers as well as the feeling of being an active part of a team and/or event that sticks in their minds. These memories illustrate the importance to the women of being viable footballing subjects.

This serious approach to themselves as players is further demonstrated through a consideration of their current relationship to the game. The questionnaire material indicates that as adults three quarters of the women respondents commit between 4-10 hours a week to football. 11 of the 14 women interviewed refer to football as either very central or quite central in their lives. For the women taking part in the interviews, the response from their family and friends is generally supportive and positive. For those women who mention their partners, playing exists as a normalised and routinised aspect of the relationship (both heterosexual and lesbian), and football appears as an integral part of friendship networks for all but one of the women interviewed.

Chapter five clearly addresses the first research question (What is the position of football in the lives of women who play?). It provides empirical material that illuminates women's relationship to football and shows how the women adopt various strategies to fashion their participation. In an attempt to explore further the women's everyday experiences of playing, chapter six moves beyond a descriptive analysis. Through a critical discussion on gender as central to these experiences the chapter addresses the second research question (how central is gender to the experiences of women footballers?).

The discussions on 'schooling', 'the football fields' and the women's 'located accounts' demonstrate the operations of power within the network of gender relations. The findings expose the various configurations of social relations and indicate the sites where the women experience material, social and discursive practices that discipline and regulate their participation. It is evident that the women share experiences of the operation of disciplinary power. For example, social and discursive practices that construct football as a 'boy's game'. These practices contribute to power/knowledge regimes and it is apparent that schooling works to make natural boys' active involvement and discipline girls' active involvement. That said, the research material also illuminates social and material practices that function to deconstruct the naturalisation of football as a

'boys' game'. In relation to material practices the findings that represent the women's experiences in higher education demonstrate that social relations of gender continue to produce power/knowledge regimes. For example, the women share experiences of marginalisation in relation to lack of facilities, equipment and funding compared to men in the same situation.

The discussions on how the football fields are policed by officials, spectators and the media illustrate the processes that formalise women's position in the game. The women talk about being ridiculed by and receiving abuse from organisers, providers, referees, spectators and passers by. Their statements support analyses of sporting space as gendered and highlight the verbal and visual strategies, that is the social and discursive practices, that are employed to mark and maintain the football fields as male territory. Some of the women mention the sexist attitude of spectators and referees, and the media is discussed in relation to how the gaze functions to trivialise and sexualise players. The evidence suggests that the women share experiences of gender relations that regulate and discipline their participation. However, there are also non-shared experiences of power's operation and the accounts offered by Collette and Nadia illustrate the multiple sites where women can experience regulation. For example, for Nadia, there are discourses within the family related to religion and culture, and on the football field related to notions of race and ethnicity that impact on her experiences of playing.

In all, chapter six introduces and seeks to promote the idea that social relations are non-fixed and women's location within social relations is shifting. In this vein chapter seven offers a specific focus on, and explores how sexual relations impact differently on women who play football (research question 3). Through an analysis of the women's accounts I offer a discussion on football's sexual peremptory. It is evident that the sexual imperative particular to football in England and Wales is dynamic. Through [non] presence and [non] visibility, that is the myriad processes of [non] disclosure of sexuality, lesbianism has real currency and serves to dislocate and invert the sexual "norm", namely

heterosexuality. Some players risk being “out” and at certain times in certain spaces dykespaces emerge, disrupting and displacing heterosexuality. For example, Hackney women’s football team mark themselves and the spaces they occupy through visual (rainbow flags) and verbal (singing lesbian songs) strategies thus dismantling heterosexual space. However, heterosexuality is often protected, maintained and reproduced via the complex workings of homophobia. Heteronormativity operates to regulate the display and disclosure of lesbianism. For instance, some of the women interviewed highlight how lesbian sexuality is positioned as licentious and lascivious. That said, the testimonies the women provide suggest lesbianism is recognised and in some cases normalised. Both heterosexual dominance and non-heterosexual/queer subversion exists and it may be more useful to refer to ‘leaky compulsory heterosexuality’ as a way to acknowledge the intricate functioning of heterosexual hegemony.

In chapter eight I demonstrate how gender and sexuality function together within football culture (research question 4). It is evident that gender and sexuality are conflated through an historical and cultural positioning of the active woman. I highlight how the social construction of gender functions to regulate sexuality and “naturalise” heterosexuality. More specifically, I illustrate the social and discursive practices within the context of football that produce and protect [hetero] sexuality. From the research material it is evident that the body emerges as central to our understanding of “naturalised” gender and sexuality. In other words, women’s footballing bodies represent a site for the conflation of gender and sexuality. For example, the comment made about the tennis player Amelie Mauresmo ‘Look at her figure, and she travels with her girlfriend - I’m sorry, she’s half man’ (Hingus cited in Bowers, 1999). Bodies that do not cite the heterosexual gender motif are positioned as abject in

particular the butch lesbian body is pathologised.<sup>87</sup> The research material demonstrates how the butch is not viewed as a legitimate footballing body and in this way she lives in the 'excluded sites [that] come to bound the "human" as it constitutive outside' (Butler, 1993b; p. 8). Despite this location I argue that the butch body and lesbian body reflect possibilities for the re-articulation and re-materialisation of gender, sexuality and the sexed body.

The above discussion offers a summary of the new knowledge each chapter contributes to sport social theory. The research findings are a result of a feminist engagement with epistemology and methodology (as outlined in chapter three). The collection and interpretation of the material is informed by debate within feminist theory. For example, chapter three outlines the political nature of knowledge production and I adopt Gunew's (1990) territorial notion of knowledge as a way to contest existing footballing epistemologies. To some extent I offer "successor science" (Harding, 1993). However through an engagement with standpoint theory I move on to support Code's (1993) notion of an; "epistemology of everyday lives" and Haraway's (1988) arguments for "situated knowledges", that is, the recognition that knowledge production is located and the process of discovery is in context and should be transparent. In this vein, chapter four offers an account of the research process particular to this thesis. I highlight the methods employed to gather the data and explore both the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire and interview research. In particular I make visible the limitations of the research through a discussion on the interview research sample,<sup>88</sup> the researcher-researched power dynamic, and my location as both insider and outsider within the production of

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<sup>87</sup> The reference to Mauresmo as 'half man' makes links with Rosi Bradotti's work on 'Mothers, monsters and machines' (1994). Bradotti argues '[t]he discourse on monsters as a case study highlights a question that seems to me very important for feminist theory: the status of difference within rational thought. (...) The monster is the bodily incarnation of difference from the basic human norm; it is deviant, an a-nomaly; it is abnormal' (p.62).

<sup>88</sup> As mentioned in chapter four the interview sample is not random but selected by way of expressed interest in the research topic. As such it is impossible to universalise the women's experiences.

knowledge. Nevertheless, it is evident that the research offers rich and in-depth material on the women's lived experiences of gender and sexuality.

By considering Avtar Brah's (1996) work and the contribution of queer theory I consider new ways to take account of women's experience. I employ an approach that seeks to highlight both shared and non-shared experience and acknowledges the shifting structures of power relations. For instance Brah's kaleidoscopic representation of the power dynamics of social relations as changing configurations that at times assume specific social differentiation. In addition, I challenge the traditional notion of structures of power by advocating the importance of contesting the hierarchical ranking and/or binary positioning of differences. For example, Brah's interrogation and critique of fixed notions of identity based on 'race' and the challenge made by queer theory to the confining of sexuality within a fixed hetero-homo dichotomy. The analysis in chapter seven on women's different experiences of sexuality challenges the housing of gender and sexuality within dichotomous structures. In this way I support Braidotti's (1992) call for a release of difference from the dualistic logic of Enlightenment.

Through a consideration of Haraway's (1991) and Bhavnani's (1994) feminist overhauling of objectivity and a critical analysis of the traditional epistemic sphere I continue to develop the notion of a feminist epistemology from the standpoint of the marginalised. For example, by making visible the process of discovery (feminist objectivity) I take account of the role of emotion (Jaggar, 1989) and transformative experience (Babbit, 1993). Such an approach contests traditional 'ways of knowing'. This inclusion of the researcher's experience of the research process and the impact of the researcher on the knowledge produced is further explored through an engagement with reflexivity. In chapter four I make use of reflexivity to critically reflect on the research methods and methodologies employed as well as my location within the research.

For example, during the discussion on feminist methods of inquiry I highlight the debates surrounding the power dynamic in relation to interview research. I illustrate the feminist critique of traditional sociological research and consider ways in which the power differential between researched and researcher can be eradicated. That said, it is evident that there are times when the power dynamic operates beyond the control of the researcher and I make use of Bhavnani's notion of micropolitics to demonstrate the impact of my position on the interview process and hence knowledge production. For instance, the critical reflections on individual interviews make visible the functioning of sexuality and class as well as my position as both insider and outsider in relation to football culture. More specifically I illustrate how my location as a sexual person impacts on both 'speech' and 'silences', thus influencing the production of knowledge.

More recently some feminists (Kelly, Burton and Reagan, 1994) have supported a more flexible approach to research by not asserting the primacy of interviewing. Instead they advocate combining methods, in particular the inclusion of questionnaire research. Through a discussion on the wording and categories used on the questionnaire I make explicit the decisions that inform its design. For example I aim not to exclude the voices of marginalised women and avoid categorisation that assumes heterosexual relations. In addition, I discuss the power dynamics particular to the questionnaire research. I highlight my role as academic researcher and the role of the club secretaries as gatekeepers. In this way I demonstrate how power circulates beyond the researcher-researched couplet. In addition, I further interrogate my position as both insider and outsider that is as footballer and academic.

In all, this thesis contributes new knowledge; it offers a particular footballing epistemology. The production of this new knowledge reflects a particular methodological approach to the collection, interpretation and presentation of research material and in chapter four I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of

this approach.<sup>89</sup> In a more complex way methodological and epistemological issues are extended and linked via the engagement with feminist poststructuralism. In other words the analysis of the women's everyday lived experiences reflects a particular approach to framing and understanding gender. In this thesis poststructuralist epistemologies and methodologies emerge as relevant to the analysis of and discussions on gender (chapter six), sexuality (chapter seven) and the sexed body (chapter eight). It is evident that a purely structuralist reading of gender falls short of a comprehensive and useful, in relation to women who play football, analysis of the complex social construction of gender, sexuality *and* the sexed body. The research material indicates that gender is a property of both sexuality and the sexed body. Through a poststructuralist excavation of sexuality and the sexed body I demonstrate the centrality of corporeality to our understanding of gender. In this way I support Braidotti's (1992) claim that it is in fact corporeal materiality that propels the sexually differentiated structure of gender relations. Such a theoretical approach represents a new way to consider the experiences of women within the field of sports sociology.

### *Theoretical*

Through a return to the research objectives and final research question (how can both gender and sexuality be theorised within the cultural arena of football?) it is possible to highlight the theoretical contribution this thesis offers. This contribution is discussed in relation to the aspects introduced in chapter one within the academic rationale for the research. In other words a consideration of the theoretical issues this thesis addresses in relation to the sex/gender distinction, structure/agency and social constructionism/essentialism dimensions.

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<sup>89</sup> It is worth noting that both the questionnaire and interview research have their limitations. Refer back to chapter four for a critical discussion on the interview research sample, the power dynamics evident within the research process, and my location within the research process.



Importantly, I start this discussion with an inclusion of debate on what constitutes feminist theory.<sup>90</sup>

Recently Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (2000) posed 'awkward questions' for feminists to consider, for example one question they ask is – 'what precisely does 'feminist theory' mean and for what groups of people?' (p.261). In particular they are critical of what they perceive as a shift towards what they describe as mainstream masculinist social theory. In considering their seven-point feminist critique of social theory, two points are worth further scrutiny here.

(iv) a distinctive 'language game', concerned with theory as 'abstractions abstractly related' (how the *Oxford Dictionary* defines 'theory as such'), in which the defining preoccupation and so 'the data' worked with are the work of other theorists.

(v) the absence of 'real world' criteria for assessing the adequacy of its in-passing 'descriptions' of the world. (p. 263)

Stanley (1999) argues that contemporary 'Feminist Theory' appears to be concerned with topics that are 'largely abstract ones abstractly discussed using other abstract discussions as 'the data', rather than material drawn from 'the world out there' (p. 92). As compared with traditional 'feminist theory' as a 'means or a tool for understanding, and also in some way helping to change, the situations of women' (p.95). In many ways this point of view continues to highlight the ongoing debates within feminism on what constitutes feminist work/research. In chapter three I engage with the debates in relation to feminist epistemology and methodology. I problematise concepts such as women's experience, women's ways of knowing and women's knowledge. In this way I contribute to the challenges to traditional feminist standpoint theory.

Stanley and Wise (2000) posit that feminists have effectively reworked epistemology and methodology, but theory has missed out in relation to feminist intervention. However, it is evident that the feminist engagement with

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<sup>90</sup> See Stanley and Wise (2000) 'But the empress has no clothes! Some awkward questions about the 'missing revolution' in feminist theory.' *Feminist theory*. Vol. 1 (3), p.261-288.

epistemology and methodology is ongoing, thus challenging the completeness of the process as suggested by Stanley and Wise. In this final section I explore the notion that the production of feminist theory is also dynamic and incomplete. In other words I make use of the arguments presented in this thesis to contribute to the development of and debate on feminist theory.

This thesis offers an analysis that engages with significant feminist issues, namely the sex/gender distinction, sexual difference, and the structure/agency and constructionist/essentialist dimensions. In the review of theoretical approaches I problematise the constructionism/essentialism binarism through an engagement with the work of Diana Fuss (1989). I use the arguments presented by Fuss as an example to highlight how the binary opposite can be collapsed. Similarly I contest the structure/agency dichotomy, sexual difference and the distinction between sex and gender. In the past these couplets have provided useful ways for feminists to explain women's experience of gender relations, thus advancing 'feminist theory'. For example, the notion that sex and gender as distinct allows for a critique of the social construction of gender (de Beauvoir, 1972; Oakley, 1972). It is the research material, that is the women's accounts, that drives this challenge to existing feminist theoretical concepts thus meeting important feminist criteria (Stanley and Wise, 2000).

The mode of theorizing deploys categorical reifications – for example, 'sexual difference', 'agency', 'identity', '(non-essentialist) embodiment', 'subjectivity', 'the psyche', 'desire' – of 'real world' phenomena but stripped of their specific, located and grounded content and replaced by a preoccupation with how these categories have been developed in prior theoretical work. 'The data' have become the writings of other 'feminist Theorists', not the social phenomena themselves (p.268).

It is through an exploration of the women's everyday lived experiences of playing football ('the social phenomena themselves') that I problematise the structure-agency dichotomy. Chapters five and six demonstrate women's active involvement in football. The women taking part in the research participate regularly and many have done so for a number of years. However, the analyses of

their experiences demonstrate the complex functioning of power within the dynamic networks of social relations. There is evidence that the women experience the multi-layered policing of the football fields by the education system, 'officials', spectators, passers by, the media and through self-surveillance. The women have both shared and non-shared experience of regulation. In all I demonstrate how power is exercised and transmitted to regulate gender and football. The women are both subjects and objects of power. Power functions for the women on both macro and micro levels, it is omnipresent and dynamic and is reflected in shifting configurations of gender relations. In this way I contest the structure-agency opposition.

This consideration of gender is followed by a focus on sexuality. The women's testimonies indicate the collapsing of sexuality into gender, thus supporting the view that sexuality is also a social construct that serves to reify hegemonic heterosexual gender 'norms'. There is evidence that heteronormativity functions to regulate lesbian sexuality despite the existence of, albeit transient, dykespaces. In addition, lesbian presence and visibility inverts the sexual 'norm' within some teams. The sexual structures within football culture are both reinforced and subverted. Some heterosexual women display their heterosexuality, for example Helen takes her boyfriend to games, and some lesbians disclose their sexuality, for example Tamsin sings lesbian songs at tournaments. In comparison, Donna is not out as heterosexual, although heterosexuality is somewhat assumed given the functioning of compulsory heterosexuality, and Di is not out as lesbian, although lesbianism is somewhat assumed given the sexual marking of the game. In all, the women experience shifting sexual structures of domination. There is evidence that self-surveillance plays an important part in the disclosure of sexuality, thus supporting the Foucauldian notion that we are never entirely free agents.

The discussions on sexuality not only problematise the structure-agency dichotomy they also contest the essentialist notion of sexual identity. Sexuality is defined in this thesis as an historical, cultural and social construct. Whilst I remain aware of the political ramifications of a disregard for identity politics, the

research material illuminates the various sexual subjectivities experienced by the women. This engagement with social construction theory is further extended to incorporate an inclusion of the sexed body. Within this analysis the debates surrounding the theoretical concepts sex/gender distinction and sexual difference are developed in relation to an analysis of women's footballing bodies. This discussion is anchored to the accounts offered by the women thus the analysis is of the everyday ('the world out there' (Stanley, 1999, p.92) 'the social phenomenon' (Stanley and Wise, 2000, p.268)).

The theoretical contribution offered in chapter eight focuses on the materiality of the body and the regulatory practices that discipline footballing bodies. I demonstrate the ways in which the sexed body is socially constructed and implicitly challenge the notion of an essential sex difference and a sex/gender distinction. I draw upon theory presented by Foucault (1974, 1976, 1984a, 1984b) and Butler (1990, 1993a, 1993b) to interrogate the materiality of the body. More specifically, I consider female masculinity and the analysis contests the annexing of masculinity to the butch lesbian. That said I make use of notions of the lesbian body, tomboy body and butch body to explore re-articulations of gender and possibilities for the re-materialisation of gender and sex. In all, the previous chapter opens the way for further discussions that would serve to further illuminate feminist poststructuralist theoretical engagement with materiality. That is the ways poststructuralist theory can be applied to the women's everyday lived experiences of corporeality.

Theoretically this thesis demonstrates that gender is pivotal to our understanding of the sexed body and sexuality. For me, the last chapter ironically signals the beginning for further work.

#### **Further and future research.**

As Stanley (1999) advocates feminist theory must be about providing a 'means or a tool for understanding, and also in some way helping to change, the

situations of women' (p.95). This thesis demonstrates existing situations experienced by some women who play football. It is evident that the women taking part in this research face discrimination, prejudice and abuse for entering the football fields.

It could be argued that women's current involvement in football is unproblematic. In many ways the 1999 World Cup in the US; boasting a spectatorship of over 90,000 for the final game, is often used as an indicator of women's current opportunities to succeed in football. In reality, women in this country have struggled to play for over a century, facing exclusion and inequality throughout this period (Duke and Crolley, 1996). The 1991 'take over' of the Women's Football Association (WFA) by the Football Association (FA) represents an ironic twist in women's footballing history. As does the proposition by Joao Havelange of Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) that the 'future of football is feminine'. Such efforts to include women, and we can read this as feminine women, in football by predominantly patriarchal institutions can be seen to reflect a move towards equality. However this inclusion requires feminist scrutiny since both the FA and FIFA have the political and economic power to define, influence and shape the future for women players. Most importantly and in relation to the contents of this thesis they have the power to define, influence and shape the concept of the 'female footballer' as it relates to the feminine.

To date, I have explored the existing conceptions of the 'female footballer'.<sup>91</sup> Through a discussion of the quantitative and qualitative research material I show how 'butch' and 'tomboy' have real currency for the women playing. I offer an

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<sup>91</sup> Caudwell, J. (1998) 'Sex and Politics: Sites of resistance in women's football', in C. Aitchison and F. Jordan (eds) *Gender, space and identity. Leisure, culture and commerce*. Eastbourne: LSA publication (no. 63), pp. 151- 161.

Caudwell, J. (1999) 'Women's football in the United Kingdom: Theorising gender and unpacking the butch lesbian image', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 390-402.

Caudwell, J. (2000) 'Football in the UK: Women, tomboys, butches and lesbians', in S. Scraton and B. Watson (eds) *Sport, leisure and gendered spaces*. Eastbourne: LSA publication (no. 67), pp. 95-110.

analysis of female masculinity as it functions within sport, specifically football and highlight the conflation of gender 'deviance' with aberrant sexuality and abject bodies. It is evident that lesbianism, in particular the butch lesbian, is positioned as an anathema; an abject footballing body. As such an important question to ask is 'will female masculinity continue to be socially excluded from popular football culture?'

There is evidence that the increasing popularity and commercialisation of the game impacts on the images transmitted of women players. For example the figure used as the Women's World Cup 1999 logo included a ponytail to signify femininity (Cox and Thompson, 1999).<sup>92</sup> As I have mentioned previously, recent television coverage in England re-presented three international players through an analogy with 'Charlie's Angels' – 'England's Angels'. This marking of women and football as feminine serves as a regulatory practice in the social construction of gender and football. Griffin (1992) argues that in sport 'feminine' serves as a code word for heterosexual. As indicators of the future context for women players, these examples suggest that footballing discourse will operate to produce, reproduce and reinforce heterosexual femininity via a disciplining of women's footballing bodies. Thus reifying the category 'woman' in relation to gender, sexuality and essentialist notions of the sexed body. Clearly further research is needed to expose the situations faced by women who are unable, or do not want to cite heterosexual femininity.

The FA has announced plans to support a professional league for women players (planned for 2003) and currently women who play for Fulham receive salaries. With these changes emerging it is important that research continues to take account of girls and women's experiences. In particular their lived experiences of gender within the context of football and in relation to heterosexual hegemony. In this vein, research that considers the different experiences of many women and takes account of diversity in relation to class, ethnicity and sexuality is called for.

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<sup>92</sup> From a Foucauldian perspective such a move demonstrates how the footballing body is signified as "woman".

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# **APPENDIX I**

## **The Questionnaire.**

## NATIONAL FOOTBALL SURVEY- WHO PLAYS

Dear player,

I am doing academic research on women and football at the University of North London. I am particularly keen to explore the social and cultural worlds of women players. As a player I am aware that little is known about women who play. I want to increase our understanding of women footballers, and the following questionnaire aims to achieve this. I hope you can find the time, and energy to fill it in : it should only take about 10 minutes.

The questionnaire covers some sensitive issues and I would like to reassure you that the information you give will be treated in confidence. The questions are personal and focus on you, therefore it is important that you fill it in on your own. Please can you return the questionnaire to me in the pre-paid envelope enclosed.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, and 'good luck' for this season.

**PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX (please tick one box only for each question)**

1. How old are you ?  
18-20 ☐ 21-23 ☐ 24-26 ☐ 27-29 ☐ 30-32 ☐ 33-35 ☐ 36-38 ☐ 39+ ☐
  
2. How long have you been playing football for ?  
up to 6 months ☐ 6 months - 12 months ☐ 12 months - 18 months ☐  
18 months - 2 years ☐ 2 years - 5 years ☐ 5 years - 10 years ☐  
10 - 15 years ☐ 15 - 20 years ☐ 20 years + ☐
  
3. How were you introduced to the game ? (please tick one box only)  
mother ☐ female friend ☐ school playground ☐ or lessons ☐  
father ☐ male friend ☐ football scheme ☐  
sister ☐ youth club ☐ watching television ☐  
brother ☐ football club ☐ other ☐ please give details.....
  
4. Roughly, how many hours per week do you dedicate to football ?..... (to the nearest hour)
  
5. In which regional league does your team play;  
Eastern ☐ East Midlands ☐ Greater London ☐ Northern ☐  
North West ☐ South East ☐ South West ☐ Southern ☐  
West Midlands ☐ York. and Humberside ☐ Universities league ☐
  
6. Are you in paid employment ?      yes ☐      no ☐ (if no, go to question 10)
  
7. What type of employment is this ?      full time ☐      part time ☐
  
- 8a What is your occupation ? .....
- 8b Please describe what it is you do at work.....
  
9. How much do you earn after tax i.e. 'take home' weekly ?  
£50-100 ☐ £100-150 ☐ £150-200 ☐ £200-250 ☐ £250-300 ☐ £300+ ☐
  
- 10a Do you have any formal educational qualifications ?      yes ☐      no ☐
- 10b If yes, are they (please tick highest qualification) ;  
O'level/GCSE/GNVQ 2 ☐ A-level/Nat. Dip./GNVQ 3 ☐ HND ☐ Degree ☐



- 11a Are you currently a student undertaking a course of study ? yes ☐ no ☐  
 11b If yes, is it; full time ☐ part time ☐  
 11c What is the level and subject of the course you are studying ?.....

12. Would you describe yourself as;  
 Black-African ☐ Black-Caribbean ☐ Black-Other ☐ please describe.....  
 White ☐ Indian ☐ Pakistani ☐  
 Chinese ☐ Bangladeshi ☐ Any other ethnic group ☐ please describe.....

13. Would you describe yourself as;  
 heterosexual ☐ bisexual ☐ gay/lesbian ☐ prefer not to answer ☐

14. Would you describe yourself as;  
 not in a relationship ☐ in a serious relationship ☐  
 in a casual relationship ☐ in a serious and permanent relationship ☐

15. Do you;  
 take care of children alone ☐ share child care ☐ have no child care responsibilities ☐

16. The following is a set of statements. For each statement please tick indicating whether you strongly agree, agree, are neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
Socialising with the rest of the team is as important as playing with the team.					
Going to pubs, clubs, smoking and drinking, are part of being a footballer.					
Lesbian/gay players are given a hard time by other players and coaches.					
Lesbian/gay players give the sport a bad reputation.					
Women's Hockey and tennis are middle class sports, but football belongs to working class women.					
More working class women play football than middle class women.					

17. Have you experienced any difficulties as a woman wanting to play a traditional male sport? If yes, please give details.....

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**

## APPENDIX II

### The results for question 17 on the questionnaire.

Have you experienced any difficulties as a woman wanting to play a traditional male sport? If yes, please give details.

Theme	Frequency	Percent	Rank
<b>Childhood experience.</b>			
- not allowed to play at school	36	10.8%	1st
- adverse response when did play at school	12	3.6%	12th
- lack of opportunity when girl/young woman	27	6.6%	4th
<b>Direct sexism.</b>			
- receiving sexist comments	16	4.8%	8th
- prejudice based on sex	28	8.4%	3rd
- discrimination based on sex	24	7.2%	5th
<b>Ridicule/not taken seriously.</b>			
- men's response	33	9.9%	2nd
- referee's response	12	3.6%	12th
- general response	22	6.6%	6th
<b>Issues surrounding sexuality.</b>			
- assumption that players are lesbian	22	6.6%	6th
- discrimination based on sexuality	3	0.9%	21st
- harassment based on sexuality	4	1.2%	18th
- direct homophobic response	2	0.6%	24th
<b>Deficiencies.</b>			
- lack of support - generally	4	1.2%	18th
- lack of support from the FA	3	0.9%	22nd
- lack of funding/finance	7	2.1%	16th
- lack of sponsorship	6	1.8%	17th
- lack of media coverage	8	2.4%	15th
- shortage of teams/clubs	12	3.6%	12th
- shortage of quality coaching/management	4	1.2%	18th
- shortage of quality refereeing	4	1.2%	18th
- lack of football kit for women	3	0.9%	22nd
<b>Receiving verbal and physical abuse for playing.</b>	13	3.9%	11th
<b>Other.</b>	14	4.2%	9th

# **APPENDIX III**

## **The interview participants.**

Interview participant.	Age (at time of interview)	Year and age first started playing	Initial influence on participation (as identified by participant)	Class background (as described by participant)	Sexuality (self definition)	Race and ethnicity.
Tamsin	29	1994 aged 25	University	Middle class	Dyke	White
Di	29	1993 aged 24	University	Working class	"Me" & used Lesbian	White
Julie	20	1983 aged 5	Father	Middle class	Heterosexual	White
Collette	32	1996 aged 30	Friend	Not mentioned	Heterosexual	Black
Donna	30	1975 aged 7	Council estate	Working class	Heterosexual	White
Tracy	23	1980 aged 5	Brother	Working class	Gay	White
Bev	43	1968 aged 13	Family	Working class	Not described	White
Sam	28	1984 aged 14	Poster	Working class	Gay	White
Helen	23	1978 aged 3	Father	Not mentioned	Heterosexual	White
Laura	33	1994 aged 29	Father	Middle class	Heterosexual	White
Rachal	34	1971 aged 6	Brother	Middle class	Not described	White
Kaz	31	1971 aged 4	Brothers	Working class	Gay	White (described self as Welsh)
Nadia	26	1978 aged 6	Boys at school	Working class	Gay & used "bi"	Asian Hindu (self description)
Shirley	33	1970 aged 5	Council estate	Working class	Heterosexual	White

**APPENDIX IV**  
**The Interview Letter.**



UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTH LONDON

20.2.98

Dear

I am currently undertaking research for a doctoral thesis at the University of North London. My area of interest is the cultural arena of women's football, with a specific focus on issues surrounding gender and sexuality. I would very much like to interview you as part of my research.

I have enclosed a topic guide that lists the questions I would ideally like to cover in the interview. It is only intended to give you an idea of what to expect if you decide to take part in the research, so please don't feel you have to spend time studying it. Some of the areas covered are of a sensitive nature and it may be that you are unable or unwilling to answer all of the questions. That would be fine as we do not have to cover everything on the guide.

If at any time before during or after the interview you would like to ask me any questions about myself - the research - or the interview, then please feel free to do so. I would like the whole process to be as informal + relaxed as possible.

Finally, I would like to assure you that any information you give will be treated as strictly confidential. I do hope you will feel able to take part in this research. I will contact you shortly.

Yours sincerely,  
Jayne Candwell.

The Business School

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# **APPENDIX V**

## **The interview Guide.**

What follows is an 'interview' guide, it is a list of topics which I would ideally like us to cover. It may be that we do not cover all the topics. If you feel unwilling or unable to answer some of the questions we can move on. Likewise if you would like to spend longer on any of the questions we can do this. It is important that you feel comfortable during the discussion, and that we can both be relaxed and talk as informally as possible. I'd like to remind you that the information you give will be treated in confidence. I expect our discussion will last about an hour or an hour and a half. Finally, I'd like to thank you for your contribution to this project.

### Women who play football -topic guide

- Can you talk about **when** and **why** you first started playing football?
- Do you have any strong or vivid footballing memories relating to either;  
yourself  
other people  
an event or incident
- What do you think it means to be a sportswoman?
- Would you describe yourself as a sportswoman?
- Can you explain how central football is to your life?
- How do you feel when you are playing football?
- How does this compare with when you are doing other activities in your life?
- Have your family responded in the past to you playing football? How do they respond now?
- What about your friends have they responded in the past? How do they respond now?
- Is there anything in your social background which has made it difficult/easy for you to play football?
- Is there anything now which makes it difficult/easy for you to play football?
- What do you think other people think about woman who play football?
- What stereotypes of women footballers are there?
- How true do you think the stereotypes of women footballers are?
- Are you aware of any hostile or violent behaviour between women when they are playing football?  
Has any of this behaviour appeared to have been racist?
- Why do you think there are fewer women than men playing football?
- How do you feel about men being involved in women's football?

The next topic area is concerned with issues surrounding football and sexuality. I'd like to remind you that it is important that you feel comfortable during the discussion, so if you feel unwilling or unable to answer some of the questions we can move on.

- Can you talk about what you, or what you think other people, understand by the term sexuality?
- How would you describe your sexuality?
- Are other people aware of your sexuality as you have described it?
- Does the rest of your team know?
- Do you think playing football affects how you feel about your sexuality?
- When you are with the rest of your team do you mention/talk about sexuality?

Finally, are there any comments you would like to make about the discussion we have had?



**APPENDIX VI**  
**Sample transcript.**

Transcript 4 \_\_\_\_\_

- JC The first question is can you talk about when and why you first started playing football.
- C Well I'm a relative newcomer really, I've only been playing.... for... this is my second year, my second year with \_\_\_\_\_ women, so it's less than two years really. I fell into it accidentally really, I've played other sports to reasonable levels, I use to do athletics, I use to do netball, I went to volleyball and then I got injured quite badly and I had this knee operation. And, it was through association, through \_\_\_\_\_ really. I needed to get fit I needed to rehabilitate and \_\_\_\_\_ said..... I didn't want, I didn't want a pressure situation because all the sports I'd played had been sort high level and quite intensive training. Like volleyball was 3-4 nights a week and I didn't want to go back to that. I wanted a team game, I'm no good at things like aerobics and weight training where I have to go on my own. So \_\_\_\_\_ just said to come along to a training session, so when I joined \_\_\_\_\_ I just started training I said I didn't want to play sort of in the matches or anything. So I just use to go along to a Wednesday and I, I just like, the atmosphere was quite relaxed and then I started playing. I mean liked football, I'd always liked football cos, (umm) my family, my brothers are really into it and my sister was I suppose (umm). So yeah that's how I came to football. Participation you mean rather than interest?
- JC Yeah
- C OK that's how I participated, so it hasn't been that long really, just less than two years.
- JC And it was local, it was within \_\_\_\_\_?
- C Yeah, it was... (umm) another reason was purely on (umm) you know, vicinity, because I teach in \_\_\_\_\_ and it was a \_\_\_\_\_ team and I could go straight from school, work. I could go straight there. So yeah, it was local I didn't want to go too far.
- JC OK. Do you have any strong or vivid footballing memories related to either yourself, other people, an event or incident? They might be memories that are about participation or about just being interested in football. Because it sounds like you had an interest when you were younger.
- C Yeah I have, all the time really. [pause] How far back to we need to go ....I liked football at primary school, but we didn't really... girls... girls didn't really... not that we weren't allowed, we didn't do football at primary school as, you know as a lesson as far as I remember, but I use to play in the playground sometimes with the boys, occasionally (umm). I was a bit of a tomboy I suppose when I was little, and I got told that I was a tomboy because I started to play football. But it was alright because I had 3... I don't mean alright in the sense that I agreed with it, but alright in the sense that I had 3 older brothers who were there as well, so I had a protective shield, so although I was called a tomboy I kind of rode the storm because I liked football, well I liked sport I suppose I use to play lots of sport. And the boys... you know the terrible situation where you use to get picked at primary school, captains picking teams, I use to get picked by the boys which was a major fete. So I have those kind of memories of football, you know I wanted to like it, I wanted to play it, but I didn't really, you know, I didn't go for like the school teams or anything because there weren't any at that time. [pause] And then, I had a friend at secondary school and she was really into football, but it wasn't..., it didn't seem fashionable then as it is now. So she use to (umm)... we supported the same team, we both supported Aston Villa so we use to go and watch the games. But that was a bit traumatic at that time as well.
- JC Why was that?
- C (umm) [pause] Well at that time, I mean it doesn't seem that long ago, but at that time two girls going on their own didn't seem quite right. So that was hard work sometimes, we use to get unwanted attention from boys – men sometimes. (umm) And it was just a bit fascist really. A bit... and there weren't many black... there were black players at Villa. I use to... we both use to collect football cards, I remember we both use to swap cards at school. And then we just stopped going. I can't remember a time when we actually said we weren't going to go. I use to go to big games like if Liverpool came, you know games like that, but...

- JC Was your friend white or black?
- C She was white. Yeah, we use to get... it wasn't overt, we, cos we were young you know I'm thinking, how old were we, we must have been about 14, 13 or 14, third year or fourth year maybe. And we only use to go to home games we never travelled away or anything. But yeah it just became uncomfortable really, came a bit uncomfortable for her probably more than me, but, cos we didn't you know, even I at the time, I didn't know how to deal with it then, so... so we just stopped going.
- JC With the comments or with the chanting?
- C Well the chan.... Yeah well just unbelievable. Yeah there would be people next to you or around you chanting you know, fascist racist things, chucking bananas crap like that. And then you know they would see you and some would just ignore you and carry on because they couldn't connect kind of thing, and then some would look at you, but because, I don't know maybe it was because I was female or just a girl that some of them tried to temper their language, I mean it was still offensive but they tried to keep it down. And it was uncomfortable sometimes it really was.
- JC Was this in the early eighties?
- C Must have been... lets see I went... I was 11 in 77... yeah 80, 81, 82, so yeah early eighties. There was (umm) and they had this initiative at school, not school, where they tried to get young fans in and there was a separate section at the Villa for young people if you were accompanied by an adult, my brother use to go sometimes, that was better there. Less aggressive. It kind of put me off going to matches, I've only ever been to one other, two others since then really, premiership sort of stuff. So, yeah that's an unpleasant memory really, because, you know we were quite into football and it just kind of drifted away, it just drifted yeah so.. (umm) My other memories... go to watch my brothers who are into football and rugby (umm) and then I got waylaid by other sports by the time I got to about 15 or 16 I started doing more myself then, I started doing athletics, I was training about 5 times a week and there didn't seem to be time for anything else, so... not that I lost my interest in football but I diverted to... from there really. It seems a long gap.
- JC What do you think it means to be a sportswoman?
- C [pause] I think someone whose central, must be their central, focus is sport. Either they may work in sport like I do, or they work with sports people or... or sport is quite high on their agenda. Like, there's a couple of people who I know, mainly teachers who live for their hour, 2, 3 hours of sport in the week, that they do. Yeah someone whose main focus, or one of their main focuses is sport in their life, any sport, any physical activity.
- JC OK. So would you describe yourself as a sports woman?
- C [laughs] Yeah definitely, even before I came into teaching, yeah. It's all ever wanted to do, definitely, I didn't mind which sport, any sport, whatever, any time of day, yeah.
- JC When do you think you became a sportswoman – when you were 15, 16?
- C [laughs] Maybe before that, everyone at school use to tell me I'd be a PE teacher, it use to really wind me up. So even then, even at primary school, I was just consumed by sport really. I remember my parents evening, they always use to say to my mum she needs to concentrate on academics and forget sport for a while. I don't know if you can be a sportsgirl, I was a sportsgirl before I was a sportswoman.
- JC This kind of ties in with what you have just talked about, can you explain how central football is to your life?
- C (umm)
- JC You talked about sport being central, now obviously football is one of a number of sports that you have done, I just wondered how central it is.
- C (uhh) Its not as central as the other sports were, but I think that is because it's a different time in my life now. If I'd played, if I was fortunate enough to play football when I was younger I think I would, and I was talking to you now, I would say it was much stronger than it is but, presently there's too many other things going on at the moment for it to be as central as I think athletics use to be. You know, I wanted to go to the Olympics, so at that time everything would revolved around when I would train, I use to have diets and different training programmes

when I was on my period, you know that's how, that's how central sport has been, and I don't think football is there. Not because I don't have a passion for it, but because it's just a different time for me. Work seems to consume me more, more than I want it to. But I don't know where to place it, it's more than a liking I look forward to it, I do look forward to it [pause]. It's like... it's hard to separate football from the social aspect, just, you know the people who are there, that's quite good (umm). I'd hate to give it up, but I don't know if that makes it any clearer, I still want to do it, I quite look forward to Sunday's games.

JC How do you feel when you are playing football?

C Well I often think football changes people, I mean I say that because I can't really see myself on the football pitch but I see other people that I know, who are just totally... they get on the pitch and they just turn into, [pause] not necessarily negative, but they just... mmm what's the word I'm looking for... I feel more confident now because football isn't my first sport, I had to get over the hurdle of not being as good as I was previously at other sports, which was quite, you know, something I had to come to terms with slowly, and I also had to overcome this injury which has, you know taken more of a toll than I thought it would, so it's very hard to separate those things, but (umm). I generally, now I'd say I feel... I feel confident, I feel (umm) I don't know really I feel good. I don't know how to say it but [pause] I don't feel over confident. I often find, not often at all, I found that some people's personalities just change, they just turn into 'louty' sort of, you know like male football 'yobby' behaviour, that start gobbing at you and 'F'ing and blinding when normally, you know on a day to day basis they wouldn't. Because I know other footballers, not just from \_\_\_\_\_ I know some other people that play the sport, I don't know if it's just sport or is it just football, I can't really decide, but the football's quite unique.

JC Can you compare it to another sport?

C I can compare it to the ones I've known it is totally totally different to athletics, it's totally different atmosphere, totally different, but I think you can sort of separate them because athletics tends not to be a team game it's quite an individual sport. But, I've played netball, I've played a little bit of hockey, I can compare it to hockey. [pause] It's just more, it is it's just more loutish, I don't know if that's a loaded word, but (umm). There's two women who I know who play for another team, who teach, they don't play for \_\_\_\_\_, I know them vaguely, and I just can't believe it it's like they are schizophrenic. It's like they suddenly... I don't know if they think they have to behave like that but... it amuses me to see it but... It doesn't compare to netball there's a different atmosphere in other sports.

JC So, you say that when you play you feel confident and you feel good, and how does that compare with when you are doing other activities in your life?

C Yeah it compares, I feel confident.. [laughs] not most of the time.. a lot of the time. Do you mean other sporting activities or just general?

JC Any activities.

C (uhh)

JC Are there any differences?

C Oh yeah well, football is... I feel confident at work, but work is stressful and there isn't that kind of stress in football, you know I don't feel stressed at all really in that sense, it's quite... relaxing sounds like you know you're not making an effort but it's quite a relaxing activity. Not that there is no adrenaline or anything before a game or during or whatever. Yeah, it doesn't compare to work. [pause] Yeah I feel OK, I feel fine about football.

JC OK.

Have your family responded in the past to you playing football and how do they respond now?

C Well because it's been such a short time, they haven't, there's been no response, because I've always played sport. My mum just told me to be careful. She said are you sure it's a good idea with your injury, I said yes. It was only a sort of, you know motherly, you know caring interest. No, no raised eyebrows really. Purely because I've played sport ever since they've known me so it's just carrying on playing another sport. No my family have been good, fine.

JC And what about friends how have they responded? How do they respond?

- C Well my friends tend to be sporty and most of my friends I'd say haven't raised any eyebrows at all. My partner has raised eyebrows, because he thought, well mainly to do with my injury, he didn't think it wasn't a particularly good idea. [pause] I haven't no, not really, no one has really batted an eyelid. Kids at school have, you know made comments about sort of, sexist comments about women playing football, but they do it quite discreetly which sort of, gives it credit. Yeah just boys, little boys at school making comments but you deal with them. No there hasn't been a major reaction.
- JC Is there anything in your social background which has made it difficult or easy for you to play football?
- C [pause]
- JC This might be a short answer like the others because...
- C My social background...
- JC Yeah....
- C (umm) No not for me, easy for me to play, no.
- JC Nothing has made it hard and nothing has made it easy?
- C It's been made easy only because of my sporting background really, but my social background... is because I am surrounded by 'sports \_\_\_\_\_' really is my only, was my social contact to football.... (umm) difficult...
- JC What about class or race?
- C (umm) Race hasn't been, I don't think, I don't think [pause]. Class certainly hasn't presently. We're being specific about football aren't we?
- JC Mmmm
- C [pause]
- JC Were you going to talk about something else?
- C No (umm) Has made it difficult... no I've kind of slipped into it quite stress free really I haven't had... race hasn't reared its ugly head to be honest, not at \_\_\_\_\_ anyway, you know not at... (umm) Well when I first went there was an absence, well I thought there was an absence of black players, but I don't necessarily think that now because there are, but not as many as I possibly thought there would be. I don't know the reasons for that I wouldn't like to assume, I don't know the reasons for that. But it hasn't been a barrier to me, I don't feel, I haven't felt that I've been excluded or ostracised. There's been, there's been (umm) [pause]... there's been, what's the word I'm looking for, there was once an assumption I think based on that, that I should (umm). Because I hadn't played before so I didn't know where I should play or wanted to play, and they assumed, someone assumed, that I should be upfront. Automatically assumed that I was going to be super fast, which is an assumption, it is a stereotype you know, black athlete – super fast, not good at stamina and stuff. And that, you know I mean it hasn't stuck in... you know it hasn't, it hasn't been a barrier but I made a point of not wanting to play up front then. It wasn't a bad... it didn't make it difficult.
- JC And the next question, is there anything now which makes it easy or difficult to play, and that would be things like (umm) possibly childcare or work commitments, commitments elsewhere.
- C They're not really, they are only minor things, my partner he plays football on a Saturday and I play on a Sunday, and we both do school sports sometimes in the morning, so since I've started playing... I use to play sport that was on a Saturday the same as him, so we had more time together, so we both noticed... I don't think it's been a, it hasn't been a difficulty but we seem to spend less time together. I don't know we've just agreed to agree I suppose, it's just unfortunate that they are opposite days and not the same days. But it hasn't made it difficult, just made it marginally, marginally inconvenient. No.
- JC OK. This kind of relates back to how people have responded to you and it asks what do you think other people think about women who play football?
- C Do you mean what I've come across or what I know, or both?
- JC Both really what you think other people think.
- C OK... OK I'll throw some.... (umm) wasting your time, it's a man's game, butch dykes, (umm) messing around, mad feminists (umm), can't really play, no skill.... (umm). Yeah, where do I get these from, they're not from friends, not necessarily friends, but just you know, you're in different social circles sometimes and you



hear, I mean they don't necessarily know that I play football, they know I'm sporty but not football. It seems to be alright to play some sports but not other sports, so it's OK if they knew possibly that I was an athlete that's OK, tennis maybe is OK (umm)... football you see that's delving into male, you know domain, it's their last bastion isn't it, well apart from cricket. So yeah it's often from men, but often from women too. You know I sense... I'm less aggressive than I use to be, like if I'm out socially I use to... when I was younger, not that I'm that old now, I use to, you know, jump down people's throats and I use to find that it didn't necessarily persuade them or change them or make them listen to me. Now I listen, you know I listen more than I use to. I find it hard not to challenge things that you know that you hear. Yeah they're mainly negative things, I mean occasionally I come across people who think yeah you know good for them, but not as often as those other things I've said, it's often negative.

JC And this just sharpens it up really, what stereotypes of women footballers are there?

C Usually that you are lesbian, butch (umm) [pause] There's one... one bloke who always refers to women's physiques not suited, not suited to football, you know he wouldn't want his woman to look like a footballer. You get things about how you look. (umm)

JC Too muscley?

C Yeah, you know the physique for footballer is generally too muscley which you know often shows how much, how little they know of most female footballers I come across are not. Yeah, they are the stereotypes unfortunately.

JC Are you aware of any hostile or violent behaviour between women when they are playing football?

C Hostile yeah, hostile not violent, not really violent (umm). Do you mean when I've been playing?

JC Mmmm

C (umm) Occasional yeah, hostile, yeah it goes back to that thing when people change. This woman lashed out at me actually [pause]. Yeah I mean I can't divorce myself from what I say, you know people change, cos I... I didn't lash out at her, but I... I didn't lose it but I swung round at her, you know I pushed her away. And then from then on, that was really early in the game, and from then on it was just a bad atmosphere between her and me. Which I hate really... I hate not being in control, do you know what I mean I hate losing it and thinking... (umm). In women's football you mean don't you?

JC Mmmm

C Occasional I'd say not, not overly.

JC And has any of this behaviour appeared to have been racist?

C (umm) No, touch wood not towards me no (umm)... no. I just kind of assumed she didn't like me because I got the ball rather than the fact that I was a black woman who got the ball. No.

JC OK If you are aware of violent or hostile behaviour how do you feel about this behaviour?

C (umm) How do I feel (umm) I think it is demeaning [pause] you know I would be really angry with myself if I lost it, if I you know hit someone, pushed someone or language was vile, I'd just think it's really beneath me, beneath them. And that's not to say women are like that, but I just find it's (umm) it's really vile in the men's game and I just hope... I often think that people, that women mimicking that behaviour to be accepted. I'm probably talking off the top of my head here but (umm) I just think it's unnecessary.

JC OK. Why do you think there are fewer women than men playing football?

C [pause] Can I just say society? [laughter] I don't know, well there's lots of, there must be lots of reasons, there must be social reasons, there must be childcare reasons, family commitments, there are... there's prejudice, there's access reduced access for women, it's better now I mean I, if I think at school we teach girls football, you know and I just think ten years ago, five years ago maybe that schools didn't do it. So there's, they just haven't had the experience. I always say to girls in the first lesson, because we teach them separately presently and we are moving towards you know completely mixed, and often the girls think that they are not any

good you know, they listen to the stereotypes and say we're not... that girls aren't good at football. I try and tell them that it's all to do with experience you know, when you were playing with little dolls at 3 what was your little brother doing? He was out playing football with whoever. I don't know how much gets through but... (umm) There's just too, there seems to be lots of barriers, the stereotypes we talked about before (umm). Girls who chose football at school tend to be very confident, the strong ones, they tend to be the ones who can I mean, we the staff can't always protect a girl who chooses football because a lot of things are said out of your... you know lots of things are just very discreet, very covert things are said which makes it unfeminine to play football. Unless you are in a group of, I mean I was fortunate at school we had a group of sporty... I had sporty friends, so you know it didn't really bother me specially in secondary school I just did it because all of us did it, we did different sports though. But it's just hard, just harder to do it, you know.

JC How do you feel about men being involved in women's football?

C Oh well you see I'm a bit confused about that one really. I don't, I don't see [pause] I do see... not problems but I'm not against men being part of, you mean part of women's structure of football? (JC - Mmm) As long as they, as long as their contribution is informed, that they know where women's football is coming from. You see I've come across men in women's football and unfortunately I've had lots of poor experiences of male coaches who have come in to do specifically girls' football in school and they've been negative because they have been extremely patronising, extremely patronising. Which I think takes it a step back rather than moving it forward. So that kind of input we don't want, you know that patting on the head - poor things we'll give them a chance. I don't like... that's not positive. So I don't know how you would stop, I don't know... but if it was just somebody imparting knowledge and somebody who is aware of all the gender issues then I don't see necessarily a problem there, it would take some... men in football I mean I just can't... off the top of my head I couldn't think of any men [laughs] who were that informed and ... I'm not against it but they would have to be... educated.

JC (umm) It's kind of the next section now.

C Hmm hmm

JC (umm) And it relates to how you feel about your sexuality, and how that relates to football. (umm) And there's a list of questions here now we don't, it may be that we don't spend long on some and spend longer on others (umm) you know some of them may not be relevant. (umm) Don't feel that you have to... you know, kind of... give stuff that you might not want to. So the first one is an opener if you like, can you talk about what you, or what you think other people, understand by the term sexuality?

C Sexuality (umm)... it is one of those words that people use, I don't, not that I don't know, it's like (umm) it's to do with sexual preference I think, like the same sex or opposite sex (umm). I don't know it also has something to do, I feel it always has something to do not necessarily your lifestyle but... [pause] yeah that's as far as I've got with that one - your sexual preference (umm). I don't know if that's my view or other people's view... sexuality, it defines you, who you are to some extent.

JC The lifestyle idea is interesting is there anything else?

C Not really I don't know how to elaborate, but always think it's more than just the person you sleep with. Sexuality just seems to be a wider term, how you conduct your... I don't know, not your sex life necessarily, but how you conduct your, your intimate relations (umm) [pause] yeah, cos I often think you can sleep with anybody but it doesn't necessarily define your sexuality if you see what I mean [pause] and I often think it's (umm) it's for you to define your sexuality rather than other people, I think it's quite personal, quite personal thing. It's very hard for somebody else to define your sexuality, because it might mean something totally different to you.

JC How would you describe your sexuality?

C Well (umm) I'm heterosexual, yeah heterosexual.

JC Are other people aware of your sexuality as you have described it?

C Do you mean everybody?

JC Yeah

C Oh yeah [laughs] (umm) people I know generally, oh yeah well I'm getting married [laughter] so there's a public announcement for you. I often say that doesn't necessarily mean anything but (umm) yeah that's the largest public display isn't it of heterosexuality – that you are getting married, so yeah. The people I work with know, people at football know, I suppose they are my main two circles, my friends, my close friends they have always know me know.

JC So does the rest of your team know (umm) and that's quite interesting because you actually play for an out lesbian team.

C Mmm

JC So (umm)

C Yeah they do know yeah [pause]. And I knew it was an out lesbian team before I joined. I didn't realise that I possibly was the only heterosexual, which I think I am, I'm not sure I think I am (umm). Has it been a problem? It hasn't been a problem to me, it's been a problem to my partner sometimes. I mean not so much that we have fallen out, but [pause] he's needed (umm) [pause] he's needed... he's needed reassuring [laughs] he's needed reassurance, he doesn't understand why I want to play for an out lesbian team. But that wasn't my motivation, I didn't go looking for an out lesbian team to play football for it just happened that way. I haven't really found a reason to leave it which is what I say to him so... That's been difficult sometimes.

JC What bits doesn't he understand?

C (umm) [pause] Well we've had to confront his prejudices. Which perhaps I hadn't realised and he hadn't realised either. That's been... not difficult, but it's been interesting. He thinks... he thinks I might be converted and I have to try and keep a straight face because if I laugh it annoys him so. I do... I do have to laugh sometimes, I have to reassure him that I'm not... I don't think I'll going to be converted. I feel quite confident in my heterosexuality. Getting married isn't a masquerade or anything, I'm getting married because I want to. So, I've had to say that a couple of times, but you know, he... maybe... I think sometimes he thinks that it's going to be, not out of my control, but you know that I'm going to get lead astray.

JC It's interesting isn't it because there is a common notion that... this idea of conversion.

C Mmm. I know.

JC Sometimes it's done in a way that it is older players that convert younger players.

C Younger ones, yeah or straight... you know the reverse of straightening me out. I don't know, he thinks... I don't know. It didn't surface straight away (umm) I mean I don't find it uncomfortable being in the team personally. I think I make people, I think I make some people in the team feel uncomfortable, not in a major way, but I sometimes feel [pause] that a few people, not many, you know one or two, may think that... or wonder why, what my motivation is to be in the team. I don't necessarily think that they are convinced that it is just football. [pause] I think sometimes [pause] some people in the team think I won't understand because I'm not lesbian, which is a really strange feeling for me, you know, being not in the minority, yeah in the minority (umm) [pause]. So sometimes things get explained to me not patronisingly. But generally in the team I'm just someone who's there really I don't really... sometimes I feel excluded because... it's not intentional, so I don't feel you know, I don't feel upset or aggrieved about it, but sometimes I feel excluded because the team have a very strong social bond. They socialise out of, you know Wednesday and Sunday and lots of people see each other on lots of other days, but that's just a friendship group rather than a sexual group if you see what I mean, that's just a group of friends so I have to decipher whether I feel excluded because that group is a group of friends or that group is a group of lesbians. So [pause] I do. Yeah [pause]. And then the opposite of that is people are aware of my heterosexuality so it's often included in jokes or conversation, which is more comfortable for me, I'd rather you know, it was talked about rather than people didn't talk about it because 'she's heterosexual, she won't want to know, she won't understand'. [pause] I don't... but I don't feel too perturbed by it.



- JC Do you think playing football affects how you feel about your sexuality?
- C How I feel about my sexuality? (umm) It's made me re-examine, if I'm really honest with myself, it's made me re-examine myself – yeah.
- JC Do you think that's because you play for an out lesbian team or because football has an image – lesbian, dyke, butch?
- C (umm) [pause] If we think about the stereotypes first, I've always, I've played sports that were acceptable, you know for women to play, so athletics generally. Mind you even within athletics it's, I was a long jumper, a sprinter not a thrower. I mean I've got a very close friend who is a thrower and she experienced, she had different experiences to me. She was big, she was tall and she had big shoulders, it didn't seem to matter that she was beautiful I always thought, it was just that she was big. So she had different experiences. And then I played volleyball which is fairly, which is acceptable. I now play a sport where there is more [pause] not dispute, but you know there's more, more obvious stereotypes. And I notice teams, I notice teams who go to extremes to be feminine, and that amuses me, you know they [pause] I don't know if that's because they are not, I don't know, they are ladies rather than women. I mean sometimes that's not a conscious choice, but lots of times it is a conscious choice, you know they want to be girls and they want to be girly, they want to show everyone that they are not butch dykes, they're girly feminines who can also play football. It quite often amuses me because I feel you shouldn't have to do that, but sometimes I can still see why they do because they want to be accepted. And then [pause] because my partner wasn't comfortable, at first me playing for a lesbian team, not necessarily talking about my conversion, it has made me think about my own sexuality. Yeah, I have re-examined it. I mean... I'm still heterosexual. But it's made me think about other things you know, it's challenged my language, it's challenged (umm) [pause] I've come across another (umm) another marginalised group. You know I have similar experiences from a black point of view, so perhaps I feel, I mean without sounding too, you know too patronising I have empathy, because I can see the prejudices that lesbian women come across. You know I've been called a 'fucking dyke' because I play football and that's been strange to react to. I don't, I just laugh really. I don't really know, I don't really know not how to deal with it, I mean I don't feel uncomfortable with it so it doesn't seem like a major insult you see, so I just find it more amusing. I suppose they're wanting a reaction from it and I don't, I obviously don't react in the right way so it doesn't seem to have the effect that it's meant to. But yeah, it's made me... it has... opened my eyes.
- JC When you are with the rest of the team do you mention/talk about sexuality, you've already alluded to that can you expand a bit?
- C Yeah, I'm an out heterosexual I suppose, in the team.
- JC Is there a dominant language within the team around sexuality?
- C Yep, sexuality, sex two different things (umm) dominant language [pause] there is yeah. Like there's terms I don't feel I'm at liberty to use, I don't call any of the team dykes because, because it's used as an insult often outside of it. As a 'non dyke' I don't think it's my prerogative. So I'm mindful of my, not mindful of my language, I don't think I use the term anyway prior to being with \_\_\_\_\_. Dominant language....?
- JC I just wondered how bisexuality fitted in or any other apart from lesbian and heterosexual?
- C Bisexuality? (umm) [pause] that... has that come up? [pause] Not really, someone made a throw away comment about me... maybe she swings both ways. That was in a pub it was in a different setting, it was away from football, but it was with footballing people. [pause] Not really... I mean there is a, there is a lesbian language, that I'm not necessarily au fait with, although I'm... it's not uncomfortable, only in the sense that the team often talk about (umm) either lesbian fiction, films – casually, that they assume you know and obviously I don't... So. But it's not... a language... it's references more than a language.
- JC OK. This is the last question – do you think your sexuality affects your football in any way?

- C Affects my football...? My heterosexuality affects my football...? [pause] No I don't think so, I don't feel the need to be heterosexual – to prove my heterosexuality necessarily... is that what...?
- JC It might be... questions might not be relevant all the time to you.
- C I don't feel the need to prove to anybody that I'm heterosexual within my team. I don't feel the need, I mean I get called girlie because I've got a wash bag with things, you know combs and... I just think that's funny, you know I've got things in it you know – makeup. People say what's this we haven't seen it before, I suppose it's just a... it's just a joke really. It doesn't bother me being 'girlie'. But I don't feel that I make a point of being openly, you know heterosexual, that I have to wear makeup or I have to wear skirts to prove that I'm not stereotyped lesbian. Does it affect my football...? No, not really. It's made me think, it's made me... it's challenged me it has, I don't mean that negatively, but it has challenged me.
- JC OK. Do you think I have an honest understanding of your relationship to football from the questions I have asked?
- C Have you?
- JC Yeah... obviously within the bounds of an hour's interview.
- C I think so... I've been quite honest I think... yeah.
- JC And are there any comments about the questions you have been asked at all?
- C Not really, no... I'm interested to know what your title is of what you are doing... but... if you have on because I know it might not be...
- JC Yeah, I think the title is a bit fluid, but there's research questions and (umm) I suppose my main research question is how women footballers, or women who play football (umm) understand and negotiate gender and sexuality... so it's trying to look at women who play, any woman who plays... and... their understanding of gender relations and notions around sexuality... (C – right, OK) and how people either negotiate representation of their sexuality... and what the discourses are within women's football around... probably more sexuality than gender, (C – right) because I think the women who are playing have probably already transgressed some of the gender (C – gender issues – yeah) issues. Whereas I think some of the sexuality issues... (C – are more challenging) yeah... (C – yeah they are) yeah (C – yeah they are I agree with you). And also the connection between gender and sexuality, so once you transgress the boundaries of femininity... how there's (umm)... it starts to centralise sexuality within that move... which isn't, you know where does that come from. And how do people negotiate trying to break common notions.
- C Are there any other questions you'd like to ask at all?
- C No, no I just needed to know where, where... you know either where it was leading or where it was coming from.