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The book would have benefited from more of an overall conclusion of how these strands interacted and a theoretical model of those interactions resulting from this research and analysis. However, Newton provides a very valuable study that teases out the similarities and differences of various networks of men who gather together in various ways, often using aspects of male romance, to enhance their emotional lives and their relationships, which also benefits women, children, other men, and families of whatever configuration.

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Anderson, Eric. (2005). *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 208 pp., \$19.95.

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Eric Anderson's engaging and lucidly written book, *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity*, ushers its readers into another realm of changing gender relations in sport—the mainly hidden world of gay athletes and the not-so-hidden realities of homophobia and traditional masculinities in sport subcultures. Biographically, this book can be viewed as somewhat of a sequel to Anderson's *Trailblazing: America's First Openly Gay High School Coach* (2003), which detailed the saga of his coming out of the closet as an openly gay athlete and coach in 1993. Here Anderson's account of the "awful experiences" wrought by his public confrontation with homophobia, discrimination and violence was more visceral than intellectual, more descriptive than theoretical. The context in *Trailblazing* was more personal than sociological and historical. Since the mid-1990s, however, Anderson has studied up on the intersections between homophobia and the social constructions of masculinity in sport. *In the Game* provides a well-crafted theoretical analysis of sport, masculinity, and hegemonic oppression in sport.

The book is built on in-depth interviews with sixty gay male athletes from North American high schools, colleges, and professional sports teams. Forty interview participants were out of the closet, while the remaining twenty were closeted. The men were involved with a wide range of sports and there was a modicum of racial/ethnic diversity in the sample. Anderson puts the grounded theory approach to good use, and readers will find a solid array of empirical inferences and theoretical explanations. To his methodological credit, he seldom strays far from the data and uses ample description and excerpts from the narratives to illustrate a concept or shore up a theoretical claim.

Research during the last several decades of the twentieth century showed that homosexuality is part of traditionally male-dominated institutional hierarchies such as the military, sport, or the Catholic Church. Before the 1990s, normative institutional practices, prevailing cultural assumptions, homophobia, and the threat of stigma and ostracism kept most gay and lesbian voices silenced. Today, "don't

ask, don't tell" policies are in place that, ironically, while tacitly recognizing the presence of gay men in their respective ranks, maintain the muzzled status quo. Under past and current political and cultural conditions, therefore, it should come as no surprise that the voices of gay male athletes have rarely been heard, let alone taken seriously as fodder for systematic social scientific research. *In the Game* provides the most extensive outpouring of gay male athletes' narratives and experiences to date, and if they listen, both gay and straight male readers—whether they are athletes or geeks, scholars or recreational readers—will learn a good deal about themselves and the ways that manhood gets defined within sport and the larger gender order.

Anderson's writing is as direct and engaging as academic prose can get, making this book a gateway to insight for seasoned scholars as well as college students. He succinctly summarizes hegemony theory and deploys a powerful array of concepts to explain intricate interfaces among gender identity, homophobia, and sexual politics in sport. The book is unhampered by the abstruse, esoteric discourse of so many sport sociologists who have difficulty communicating with one another, let alone other academics, students, and people outside universities. Anderson dishes out insights and scholarly interpretations without getting lost in academic shop talk. The controversial content and fast-paced writing will make this book an attention grabber and discussion starter among undergraduates.

Anderson brings to life how taken-for-granted constructions of heterosexual masculinity and homophobia within the locker-room culture surround both gay and straight athletes. His interview participants are classic "outsiders within;" that is, gay outsiders within an overtly hypermasculine, heterosexual cultural domain. They talk clearly and openly about their experiences in high school, intercollegiate, and professional sports. The chapter on gay men's experiences in professional sport is particularly compelling, both because of the centrality of professional sports in the dominant culture and the rarity of any kind of insider discussions about the existence of homosexuality at this level of sport. Readers will find stories about prejudice and acceptance, varying degrees of stigma and homophobic censure, and coming-out experiences that were often liberating and positive.

An uncanny awareness resonates in, or perhaps behind, the voices of Anderson's interview participants. It is obvious that these gay men's narratives are located in their personal experiences with homophobia, the pressures to conform to "orthodox masculinity," to posture as a heterosexual, and to aspire to success in sport. And yet, straight readers will also find personal relevance in many of the gay male interviewees' insights and stories. Straight male athletes, especially in combative team sports, often experience pressures to lash out or ridicule gay or effeminate males, whether they really feel angry and condescending or not. Straight male athletes will also recognize the locker-room pressures to prove their heterosexuality and virility by behaving badly and exploitatively toward women. Straight male athletes also know they have to put up the tough, macho front for coaches and fans to establish their credibility and status within the male pecking order. And they are at least vaguely aware that

performing the on-the-make heterosexual and homophobic role can be a strategy for climbing a status ladder that stretches from waterboys and cheerleaders at the bottom to the head coaches and the men at the top who recruit, offer scholarships, sign contracts, and pay the big salaries. Indeed, Anderson's analysis sheds plenty of light on how the pressures to conform to "orthodox masculinity" in sport can shape *both* gay and straight male athletes' choices, gender identities, and behaviors.

As Ross Runfola and I wrote in *Jock: Sports and Male Identity* (1980):

While homosexual behavior has always been a part of western patriarchal society, it has been largely a covert phenomenon. One function of the secrecy surrounding it has been to preserve the tenets of traditional masculinity and patriarchal ideology. Though this ideology has been attacked by feminists, it has remained relatively unchallenged by males themselves.

Anderson's book is thus doubly transgressive and instructive. His critical analysis of sport and the gender order is built solidly on the narratives and life histories of gay male athletes themselves.

The author's research led him to discover that the oppressive gender politics and angry homophobia that pounded him to the pavement when he came out of the closet in the early 1990s is not so pervasive in today's sport circles. He found that the relationships between gays and sports are changing. His analysis of interview data showed that a variety of factors can influence the acceptance of a homosexual athlete within a sport setting. He shows how the leadership of a coach can powerfully shape a team's attitudes and behaviors. Friendship ties within a team may also keep a total backlash from developing. And the degree of heterosexual conformity can vary depending on the type and origin of the sport itself; e.g., football has different cultural roots and masculine norms than tennis or swimming.

In chapter ten, Anderson moves from the descriptive to the prescriptive. He identifies a variety of strategies for closeted gay men to come out within the current culture of homophobia in sport in ways that invite understanding and empathy rather than annihilation. Here readers will find a very different kind of game plan which, until the publication of this groundbreaking book, was nowhere to be found in the men's locker room.

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