

Queer Amateur Sports as a Challenge to Western Sporting Hegemony

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Abstract

Sport can be inclusive and transformational, and it can also be exclusionary and harmful, based off the behaviors of those that participate. More often than not, it trends toward the latter: elitist, competitive, and masculine in nature. In this paper, I examine forces pushing back against this: queer amateur sporting leagues, which have become increasingly common. Organized queer sports clubs gained popularity in the 1970s, and have spread across the United States in the half century since. Going from the frontrunning Frontrunners in the 1970s to the Gay Games in the 1980s to today's popular Varsity Gay League, more and more queer people are turning to these organizations for fun and exercise. In doing so, they create a sporting environment centered not on the need to win, but on a desire for health and friendship. Such an atmosphere has even attracted straight amateur athletes, who find it more enjoyable to play in queer leagues. Drawing on archival research, existing literature, and interviews with current participants, this paper combines sport history with sociological gender and sexuality studies to argue that existing queer amateur sporting leagues have the potential to upset the current sporting milieu in positive ways.

Keywords: sport, history, masculinity, queerness, interviews.