Glitch i Idrottslandet
en kritiskkreativ undersökning av queeranden inom svensk idrott(svetenskap)

av

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Akademisk avhandling

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Opponent: Professor Fiona Dowling
Norges idrettshøgskole, Oslo

The dominant story in critical sports research is that sport is characterised by heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity norms. These norms are manifested in sexism, homophobia, homonegativity and racism which affect all athletes, regardless of identity. Although important, this is a story that risks reinforcing ideas of how all sport “is”. The thesis is a response to calls from feminist theorists and sport researchers who argue that we need to move away from a logic of negativity built into critical theory and instead put our analytical tools to the task of constructing alternative possible scenarios. The aim of the thesis is to explore what some major strands within contemporary feminist theory can accomplish in relation to dominating stories about gender, sexuality and scientific knowledge production in sport research. More specifically, I explore how the concepts of figuration and intra-action can open up for other possible sport (science) worlds.

The thesis consists of a frame-story and four articles, which in turn are based on three substudies. In the first substudy I interviewed boys and men who engage with horses and in horse riding. By engaging in a sport, equestrianism, that in Sweden is dominated by girls/women and female coded, they transgress and challenge – glitch – ideas of how Real sports boys/men should be, live and act. The interview stories from this study are enacted in various ways in article I and IV. In the second substudy I interviewed elite athletes with experiences of living non-straight and who in that way glitch heteronormativity in sports (sometimes also homonormativity). These stories make up the heart of the figurations presented in article II. In the third substudy, I explored athletic bodies that, due to intersex variations, glitch the idea that the only way of being a body (in sport) is to be male or female. This analysis is presented in article III.

The thesis is populated by horseguys who challenge stereotypical masculinity norms, sporting contexts that turn heteronormativity up-side-down and inside-out, athletic bodies that implode binary gender and a researcher I glitching a scientific (writing) genre. The figurations presented in the thesis open up for queering elsewheres, where engaging in sport can serve as a condition of possibility for same-sex attractions/relations and non-normative ways of being a boy/man, and where creative writing – in the form of fiction, poetry and genre mixing – can be used as a method of inquiry.

Through the concept of intra-action, the thesis also makes visible that “matter matters”. Firstly, I show how engaging materially with horses allow and encourage boys/men to be less constrained by dominant gender norms – in other words, that human-horse relations are entangled with, and affect, boys’ and men’s doing of gender. Secondly, I make visible how athletic bodies “strike back” in relation to ideas of binary gender, glitching a dominant medico-scientific story (in sport) telling us that the only way of being a body is to be male or female. Thirdly, I enact – in form and content – how the researcher is always already entangled in scientific knowledge production.

Keywords: sport, gender, sex, heteronormativity, queer, glitch, figuration, intra-activity, feminist posthumanism, creative analytical writing, equestrianism, intersex

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