

Football 4 Peace versus (v) Homophobia: A critical exploration of the links between theory, practice and intervention

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Introduction

In this chapter, we draw on our different biographies to explore the links between theories of sexualities and genders, and anti-homophobic, anti-transphobic and anti-biphobic intervention within UK University footballing contexts. Our critical discussion includes long-term involvement with scholarship and campaigning surrounding gender and sexuality in football (Caudwell) and long-term project development of the Football 4 Peace (F4P) International reconciliation initiative (Spacey). We seek to plot the ways sociological and pedagogical scholarship, especially related to discrimination, equity, gender and sexualities, informs grassroots provision and praxis at the level of student sport. We focus on the aim to make a difference when it comes to challenging social divisions and inequalities vis-à-vis Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI). During our discussions we draw from observations and interviews to demonstrate the ways participation in an annual football event can support anti-discriminatory practice and policy.

The chapter starts with a depiction of the project: Football 4 Peace (F4P) v Homophobia, and the connections between the initiative, the authors and student involvement. This includes a description of the research that underpins the empirical material presented in the two main sections of the chapter. The first main section considers the potential to 'make a difference'. In other words, the possibilities to interpolate a public sociology/pedagogy of anti-discrimination into student sporting/footballing practice. The second main section appraises levels of intervention to gain a view of how the project contests heteronormativity.

Football 4 Peace v Homophobia

On May 2nd and 3rd 2012 the inaugural F4P v Homophobia event took place at the University of Brighton, UK. The event and associated project represented a tribute to professional footballer Justin Fashanu (19.02.61 – 02.05.98); he was the first and only professional male footballer in the UK to publicly come out as gay. Tragically he took his own life on May 2nd 1998. The inaugural event involved a football festival (Justin

Student Football Festival) and a symposium (Justin Campaign Symposium: Campaigning for Change) as well as a weeklong art exhibition located in the main entrance to the University sport centre. The project entitled: *Taking a Stand: Sexualities and Sport Participation*, was funded by the University of Brighton Community University Partnership Project (CUPP). Jayne Caudwell applied for the funding and organised the art exhibition and symposium. Graham Spacey led the running of the football festival, including managing student volunteers.

The Community University Partnership brought together volunteers for, and followers of, The Justin Campaign (no longer active), the Football for Peace (F4P) reconciliation initiative, the Football v Homophobia initiative (now with Pride Sports), East Sussex Youth project: Tackle Homophobia, a number of County Football Associations (FA), The Rugby Football League, University of Brighton Sport Brighton (student sport provider), undergraduate and postgraduate students, and University staff.

The two days were a success in terms of participation and knowledge exchange. For instance, 30 people attended the symposium and roughly 130 people participated in the football festival (12 teams of 7 players, 24 student volunteers, and 30 plus spectators). Of the 24 student volunteers 20 were from BA (hons) Physical Education and 4 from BA (hons) Sport Journalism courses. The journalist students sent out two press releases to local papers, posted tweets and photographed/recorded the events. They produced two short video clips, which continue to be used (2013-present). A number of emails were received after this inaugural event, including the following:

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the Football versus Homophobia Festival. I thought the atmosphere was fantastic. You put on a fantastic afternoon where everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and most importantly, from what I could see, you got the message through to some people who had never thought about sexuality and football before (from a University student participant).

I am having an evening of introspection after fielding a string of innocent questions from my daughter. 'Why was Justin gay?', 'Why were people unkind to him', 'Is it wrong to be gay', 'Why was the football table pink?' It is so difficult to gauge readiness of children to grapple with some big life questions. Interestingly race and disability have never been questioned and I can only assume that in her world there is greater acceptance and equality than in ours (from a member of University staff).

Since its inception in 2012, the F4P v Homophobia football festival at the University of Brighton has taken place every year at the beginning of May. It has included high profile supporters and participants including Sophie Cook the first trans woman Labour party candidate (in 2017). Managed by Spacey and sustained through student volunteering, in particular F4P student volunteers, the project has had a reach beyond the University of Brighton. For example, a football festival led by University of Brighton student volunteers took place at Sussex Downs College of Further Education; the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills identified it as good practice. Although Ofsted represents the emergence of an education audit culture in the UK, their recognition of this anti-discrimination campaign reflects positive institutional attitudes towards LGBT and sport. Importantly, the recognition documents student engagement:

... to promote tolerance and understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues, the college established a successful learner-led project called 'Football 4 Peace', which resulted in a heightened level of understanding of LGBT values across the college. (Ofsted Inspection Report 12th June 2014, p. 12)

Level 2 business learners organised a successful college-wide football competition to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions around homophobia in sport. (Ofsted Inspection Report 12th June 2014, p. 11)

More recently (February, 2017), Spacey and University of Brighton students helped deliver a similar project at Bournemouth University. It involved a football festival and a symposium for students (BSc and MSc Sport Management), staff and community groups. The timing of this event coincided with LGBT History Month and Football v Homophobia (a Pride Sports campaign) Month of Action. The initiative Football v Homophobia was originally devised by The Justin Campaign and involved a day of action – 19th February: Justin Fashanu's birth date. The Bournemouth University 2017 event entitled: *LGBT Young People and their Sport and Leisure*, was badged as a partnership between Bournemouth University and University of Brighton. Speakers from Student Union, Pride Sports and Space (Dorset's LGBT+ Youth Project) attended.

In February 2018, another football festival and symposium (jointly entitled: *LGBT+, Sport, Leisure and Wellbeing*) took place at Bournemouth University. Speakers included

Commui-T (a local transgender group), Dorset police, and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue. The University of Brighton organised their 7th annual F4P v Homophobia football festival on 2nd May 2018 accompanied by a *Teaching Social Justice* symposium. All events aim to: further develop university–community connections; promote student awareness of abuse, discrimination, and prejudice; and build teaching and policy agendas vis-à-vis justice and equity.

Unique to the F4P initiative is the values-based pedagogy that underpins the delivery of football participation for co-existence. University student volunteers embed the values of equity, inclusion, respect, responsibility and trust into their coaching and officiating practice. This means participation is not based on traditional notions of sporting competition and winning through scoring goals. Instead participants are awarded points for on-field behaviours that reflect the five values. Behaviours such as players greeting each other with handshakes before and after games, collecting the ball for the opposing team, helping an opposition player to their feet, and admitting foul play are awarded points. These values have been carried over into the F4P v Homophobia projects, and in addition to player conduct, participants play under the banners of Football v Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (see figure 1 below). In this way, the values are not only displayed via gesture, they are visible through signs and symbols of equity, inclusion and respect.

It is this core pedagogy as well as the network of partnerships and community groups that provide the foundations for linking theory, practice and intervention. As a sustained and considered successful initiative the F4P v Homophobia football festivals and symposiums might be viewed through current UK Higher Education discourse under ‘impact’. Indeed the F4P initiative was graded at the highest level of 4* Impact Case Study in UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014. Clearly this grading is given through a ratcheted-up auditing of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK. Regardless, an important point is that academics cannot take sole credit for the achievement of impact. It is often students, research assistants and project officers (e.g., Spacey) that deliver university-based education initiatives into communities of the public.

In this chapter, we offer a critical reflection on the possibilities of the project and initiatives described above in relation to the aspiration to ‘make a difference’. We draw from previous scrutiny of F4P v Homophobia (e.g., Burdsey & Caudwell 2014; Spacey & Caudwell, 2012), including existing empirical research material from interviews with student participants, participant observation and observation. Spacey has attended all F4P v Homophobia events to date. Caudwell attended in 2012, 2013, 2016, 2017 and 2018; she played in the staff football team on all five occasions. Additionally, we rely on a recent interview dialogue between the authors that occurred on 22nd September 2017. The interview dialogue lasted about one and a half hours and followed a format that positioned Caudwell as the interviewer and Spacey as the interviewee. Although we have spoken about the projects previously, and asked ourselves a number of critical questions regarding the worth of F4P v Homophobia, we have not focused our dialogue and reflection in the way an interview affords.

Public sociology/pedagogy: Anti-discrimination through student football

JC: I’ve come to it from a background of activism and politics as opposed to pedagogy. And so, when I got involved with F4P in Israel (2005 & 2009) it was my politics around Palestine ... and it was very male, you know boy participation ... so I withdrew [from F4P]. But when this opportunity came up to do v Homophobia for me it was a political activist agenda: “let’s raise issues around homophobia and discrimination and Justin Fashanu”. It fitted in with my work for the Justin Campaign at the time (2011-13). I didn’t necessarily see it as training coaches. How do you see it?

GS: ... I’m from a teaching background, and actually I found it a male-dominated space: F4P especially in Israel despite trying certain things. It was a bunch of men including myself trying to do the right thing. Trying to retain females has always been an issue. ... it’s something I think we need to look at. But, I see F4P v Homophobia as another opportunity. In terms of those students that get involved that are political activists like you, it’s a chance for them to see and learn a different way of activism [through football]. From the pedagogical side, it’s students like the teacher-training student or PE student, or the sport-coaching student. It’s an opportunity to get them thinking about activism and politics. So many of them think it has nothing to do with them as the “social sciences teacher” would do it, or the “English teacher”, and “I’m PE”. And then they suddenly realise that there are links. It may not manifest itself at university, but it does when they go into school and they realise “ah”! If you look at our alumni that have done F4P in Israel or done F4P v Homophobia, a lot of them are becoming heads of departments or head teachers – especially the ones from the early days. It may not be quite clear ... It’s sort of “you’re a political activist you’re left wing”, you know, whereas “I’m not right wing and I’m not left wing I’m a

teacher and I'm going to teach the kids how to throw a ball and run round a field". And then it becomes "I'm going to teach values and life skills and try and teach them about issues that go on around the world, through sport, ... because now I understand those issues and why they happen I understand why there are political activists, and I'm becoming more of a political activist myself."

Anti-discrimination activism and protesting homophobic, transphobic and biphobic discrimination are complex activities. Students that study sport and physical education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels often learn the nature and theories of inequality, discrimination and equality in the classroom. As such, the process of learning—gaining knowledge and developing critical response—is often separate from their active involvement with physical activity. Participating in sporting events that carry anti-discriminatory messages changes this dynamic of separation. In this section we discuss anti-discrimination activism (through student-led football festivals), and the scope of public sociology and public pedagogy. First, it is important to get a sense of what is meant by public sociology and public pedagogy.

Public Sociology

Donnelly (2015) links public sociology with sociological work that 'makes a difference' (p. 419). He charts the development of the sociology of sport, discusses the production of sociological knowledge for its own sake and/or 'for the sake of humanity' (p. 420), and draws from Burawoy's four dimensions of sociological work: professional, policy, critical and public. Donnelly cites a specific sociological study of sport—Loy and McElvogue's (1970) account of racial segregation in men's sport in US and the concept of staking—that entered the public domain, albeit over a period of time, and changed the tone of public debate. According to Donnelly (2015), the original study, and subsequent replicated studies, provided meaningful research findings to incite change.

Cooky (2017) identifies the shift from studying inequality and injustice in sport to impacting the sporting domain as public engagement. She acknowledges the value of translational research in supplying evidenced-based findings, and extends the notion of public sociology to community-led activism and advocacy. She provides current examples (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter) of US athletes adopting visible forms of advocacy and activism, and argues that their activities offer a platform for sociologists of sport to launch a unique, contemporary public sociology. Moreover, that sport academics engage

with communities in ways that avoid being framed by University neoliberal impact measurements.

The idea that sport allows opportunity for social justice (Maguire, 2004), and that athletes can be activists (Kaufman & Woolf, 2010), is not a new phenomenon. There are a number of historical examples of a range of protests instigated by athletes. In this way, sport can be viewed as a field of play and protest (Kaufman & Woolf, 2010). Sport sociologists have worked with some of these athletes and/or made visible their actions to the academy (Kaufman, 2008). This work continues. Similarly, examples of the use of sport sociological research to inform sporting practices and cultures of equality and justice are apparent and ongoing (e.g., Women's Sport Foundations in US and UK). Critical dialogues are taking place, to varying degrees, between sport sociologist, athletes, investigative journalists and the myriad of governors of sport. This suggests that a public sociology of sport exists. Calls to action for a more influential public engagement might benefit from a consideration of the intricacies of public pedagogy.

Public Pedagogy

Commentators from the fields of sport studies (King-White, 2012), physical education (Kirk, 2006; Timing 2002) and health studies (Mansfield & Rich, 2013; Rich, 2011) sometimes refer to the work of Giroux (2000, 2001 & 2004) when they explain public pedagogy. In turn, Giroux (2000) draws from Stuart Hall, as well as Antonio Gramsci, to emphasize how an in-depth understanding of culture, power and cultural power can serve social and political transformation. Giroux supports Hall's point of view that '... culture is central to understanding struggles over meaning, identity and power' (p. 342) as well as struggles over subjectivity and ideology. From this cultural studies perspective, the focus is the public and popular domain. It follows that if we learn and teach how culture functions in formulating and defining our ideological and material conditions, we can also learn and teach how to re-make counter configurations to contest these conditions. Thus, the work of public pedagogy:

... as a struggle over identifications is crucial to raising broader questions about how notions of difference, civic responsibility, community, and belonging are produced 'in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies' (Hall, 1996: 4) (cited in Giroux, 2000, p. 352).

The details of when, how and where cultural power, and public pedagogy operate are varied, and this presents a challenge to defining public pedagogy. In simple terms, Sandlin *et al.* (2011) suggest public pedagogy is present at sites where teaching and learning processes occur outside of 'formal schooling' (p. 338). They go on to offer a coherent appraisal of public pedagogy through a useful review of existing literatures arranged under five conceptual themes: '(a) citizenship within and beyond schools, (b) popular culture and everyday life, (c) informal institutions and public spaces, (d) dominant cultural discourses, and (e) public intellectualism and social activism' (p. 338).

Making Public Football 4 Peace v Homophobia

F4P v Homophobia can be viewed as both public sociology and public pedagogy. Caudwell's research (1999, 2007, 2011, 2014) with LGBT community members together with similar academic research findings (e.g., Anderson, 2005; Griffin, 1998; Travers & Deri, 2011; Sykes, 2011) provides evidence of the extent and nature of homophobia and transphobia in sport and physical activity. Academics who study social inequalities often disseminate their work to non-academic communities. During 2011-2013 Caudwell was a volunteer with The Justin Campaign¹; she presented findings gleaned from academic research at public lectures (e.g., during LGBT History Month), and in schools, colleges and two men's prisons (Winchester and Lewes). Volunteers for The Justin Campaign identified as LGBT activists.

Spacey's physical education related work with F4P International (Spacey, 2016; Spacey & Sugden, 2015) draws from and informs on-going critical engagement with values-based coaching embedded within projects in The Gambia, South Korea, South Africa, Jordan, Israel, Ireland, Northern Ireland and in England. Working mostly with children participants, student-volunteers, local youth workers, teachers and coaches teach the values of equity, inclusion, respect, responsibility and trust. A number of partners, associations and ambassadors have adopted the approach to build and develop further opportunities for co-existence. Football 4 Peace has a significant reach in terms of advocacy, and the notion of 'public good' (Sandlin *et al.*, 2011, p. 340).

¹ Brighton-based LGBT+ and physical activity advocacy initiative established as a consequence of the circumstances surrounding the death of the professional footballer Justin Fashanu

The foreground of the project F4P v Homophobia reflects a combination of activism (e.g., Caudwell) and advocacy (e.g., Spacey). In this way, it can be considered public sociology. However, public pedagogy might be a more apt descriptor following the terms set out by Sandlin *et al.* (2001); more specifically, public pedagogy that involves ‘informal, yet *institutionalized* sites as spaces of learning’ (p. 348). In essence football as a sport is institutionalised and the football playing fields are public spaces. The F4P v Homophobia football festivals rely on players and participants performing contestation of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia through adopting embodied behaviours, and symbolic representations, of equity, inclusion, respect, responsibility and trust.

Giroux (2001)—citing Grossberg’s (1969) notion of ‘the act of doing’ (p. 7)—brings together concepts of public and of performance in his term performative pedagogy. For him, performing public pedagogy ‘represents a moral and political practice rather than merely a technical procedure. ... projects designed to further racial, economic, and political democracy’; he argues that public pedagogy involves a ‘socially engaged citizenship’ (p. 9). It is this premise that can be applied to evaluate F4P v Homophobia as public sociology/pedagogy. Clearly there is potential to make a difference, but does this happen?

Contesting LGBT discrimination: Subverting sporting heteronormativity?

Notably, the v Homophobia initiative developed from the infrastructures of Football 4 Peace. This means that an evaluation of the links between theory and practice involves aspects that do not initially align with discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation; for example, Football 4 Peace generates broader discussion that involves complex political/military milieu and co-existence.

JC: Do you think, in terms of students at Brighton and students at Bournemouth, they actually connect the theory and the practice?

GS: I think they begin to; it’s a learning process. Again, coming from an educational point of view, I think you’ve got to experience something to understand it fully. Some people get it [values-based coaching methodology] but the majority of people, especially if they’ve not been taught that way, don’t get it initially. But, we are beginning to have students that did F4P when they were in school and were taught by a F4P coach. I’m beginning to see a difference. More so on the pedagogical [PE and Sport coaching students] side.

JC: When we went out to Israel, I mean the history and the conflict is so complicated and I don't know if we, or the students actually grasp it [co-existence in Israel]?

GS: I know students who went to Israel and had their eyes open, read about Israel, and then didn't want to go the next year because they were like I don't agree with the politics of Israel. I have students who worked on F4P for a few years and then say I want to work in Palestine. There was one female student who was born in Iraq. She understood Arabic but didn't really use it; she fell in love with it in Israel and now speaks fluent Arabic. These are anecdotal conversation I have with students.

As Spacey highlights, student experiences of Football 4 Peace can operate beyond the established set of coaching methodology values (equity, inclusion, respect, responsibility and trust). The various contexts in which students deliver the values-based coaching can impress new parameters of learning. The conditions in Palestine and Israel provide one example of the project's reach to engender personal and political views, which are not directly related to sport participation. We discussed if this was the case for the focus on sexual orientation and gender identity:

JC: How would you say that students engaged with the issue of homophobia?

GS: One of the students, a big footballer, I didn't realise he has two mums and no one realized and he found it [F4P v Homophobia] good because it sort of validated that it was alright. Not that he needed validation.

JC: Do you think it [F4P v Homophobia] touched people more on a personal level than the co-existence stuff?

GS: It's when we get prominent people like Sophie Cook who's like 'yeah I'll come along and play'. When Sophie came, there were students who went: "I know gays, I know lesbians, I live with them I go to Uni with them. I've never met a trans person in my life." It's not that they're transphobic, it's just not in their realm of experience.

This disjuncture between 'knowledge of' and 'experience of' seems to be significant to the processes of public sociology/pedagogy that involve student culture. Students studying sport (coaching, development, management, science) and physical education can learn about LGBT participation through lectures, seminars, and popular culture. Within a classroom context we can discuss abuse, and discrimination, we can deconstruct stereotypes, identify barriers and constraints, and embrace stories of 'coming out' promoted by popular culture as well as critique associated crass backlash. Beyond key terms and issues, students are invited to engage with the complexities of concepts such as heteronormativity and its circulation of power (socio-cultural, economic and political), and the density of theory such as queer theory. A small number

of students, through reading intricate journal articles, produce excellent assignments that demonstrate lucid and coherent understanding of, for example, subverting sporting heteronormativity. However, the question remains, how does F4P v Homophobia provide a platform for performative pedagogy that is subversive?

Students who have participated in the football festival and agreed to be interviewed tend to talk about the intervention in terms of raising awareness and demonstrating support:

If you bring in the value of respect into the realm of football fans, the crowds are going to respect the players that come out as gay. (Athos)

... to build awareness, because, there's not many students who know about homophobia, and about Justin [Fashanu], 'cause I certainly didn't know anything, until I came [to university] ... my flatmates as well, ... it was nice to teach them, because they didn't learn it either ... they didn't know anything about it. (Fran)

I think it's very important for universities to have these events because, I know it's a bit of a stereotype, but sports students are generally [sports jocks] ... of course there are one or two who are completely not like that. But, to have such an event on a sports campus like this is really good. And it was nice to see everyone turn up and support it. (Kris)

Students and staff play under the banner of v Homophobia as well as v Biphobia and v Transphobia. This support is made explicit when teams pose for photographs with visual signifiers such as placards, T-shirts and bibs, and make verbal statements on camera justifying why they participate. Signifying participation in this way can be viewed as performance and/or acts of activism and points to the "politics of advocacy and possibility" (Denzin & Giardina, 2012) within Higher Education in the UK. The images and messages recorded continue to have currency when circulated on social media, and when they are used to promote subsequent events. For example, the flyer (see figure 1) captures aspects of 2013 and 2016 events and was used in 2017:

**February is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
and Transgender (LGBT) History
Month and Football v Homophobia
Month of Action**



Tue 21st February

Football v Homophobia 6-side Football Festival

BU Talbot Campus Astro Turf Pitches • 1.00-4.00pm

Play football to show your support for LGBT equality! To enter the football festival, please send your team list and contact person to: acadams1@bournemouth.ac.uk

Wed 22nd February

LGBT young people and their sport and leisure

Fusion Building FG06 • 9.30am-12.30pm

A morning of talks to celebrate the diversity of youth and young LGBT sport and leisure



Figure 1: Designed and produced by Alan Wares. Commissioned by Jayne Caudwell.

Raising awareness and signifying support for LGBT participation in sport, specifically football, through F4P v Homophobia becomes a collective endeavor. Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are often experienced at the level of the individual and frequently manifest as personal and/or private 'troubles' (to borrow from C Wright Mills). Collective action, according to Gane and Back (2012), is a critical response:

In a neoliberal world which seeks to tear asunder private troubles from public issues, and thereby turn social uncertainty into a personal failure that is divorced from any collective cause or remedy, the linking of biography and history is a vital part of a sociology that is both politically and publicly engaged. (405)

To date, the extent to which participants and on-lookers (both traditional spectators and social media followers) achieve an enduring critique of the structures of normativity, such as the socio-cultural, political and economic underpinnings of heteronormativity, remains elusive.

Detailed analyses familiar to scholars of gender and sexualities (e.g., Butler, 1993; Stein & Plummer, 1994) offer radical and robust debate of inequalities and injustices. Sport and physical education are prime sites for this type of analyses, but it is rare (Iisahunter, 2018). Consequently, it is difficult to convey detailed critique to students, and into public sociology/pedagogy. And so, advocacy and activism tend to produce public engagement that serves contestation, but not subversion. Through performative pedagogies of awareness raising and collective support, students and staff can publicly contest homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. This contestation tends to happen at the locale, although social media usage blurs the boundaries of local, national and international. How to subvert sporting heteronormativity is apparent in some academic scholarship (e.g., King, 2008), but to date there is little evidence of public sociology/pedagogy that accomplishes the subversion of sporting heteronormativity.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the links between theory, practice and intervention through a focus on F4P v Homophobia. The discussion identifies how our individual academic/scholarly biographies (PE pedagogy and sport sociology) have informed the development of the project, including values-based coaching advocacy and anti-discrimination activism. We have considered the ways the project can be viewed as

public sociology and/or public pedagogy. In the end, we use the term performative pedagogy to describe participation by students and staff, and the visual signification that marks this particular playing of football. Through performative pedagogy and aspirations to engage students and a broader public, we can argue that F4P v Homophobia successfully contests homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. As such it is an example of intervention that seeks social transformation of attitudes and behaviours towards marginalised sexualities. However, it is impossible to conclude that this performative pedagogy subverts the obdurate structures of heteronormativity.

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