

Respect and Responsibility? Hetero-Masculine Drag and Australian Football Culture

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In Australia, hetero-masculine drag is a generally accepted cultural practice associated with laddish behaviour. This mode of drag consists of hetero-masculine, cisgendered men performing deliberately erroneous feminine imitation with the intention of being funny. For example, a crowd of mates out on a stag night might wear dresses and wigs to enliven a pub-crawl. It is a mode of drag enacted for the purposes of fun and comedy, and neither demonstrates an exploration of gender nor celebrates the feminine. Instead, it articulates stark distinctions between the 'wholly masculine' performer and their 'badly' performed femininity. I argue here that in its parody of femininity, hetero-masculine drag as it manifests in Australian social traditions and mainstream media functions to verify a specific form of hegemonic Australian masculinity and devalue femininity. This article establishes that in Australia this ostensibly amusing practice is aligned with Australian football culture. Footballers are often criticised in the media for offensive/sexist behaviour, yet this particular custom of derisively parodying femininity receives little if any negative attention. I contend that certain cultural structures render the gendered discriminations of this activity all but invisible. This article investigates the socio-cultural functions of this mode of drag and the reasons it is sheltered from public condemnation.

To determine drag's current cultural positioning, this article first examines contemporary attitudes to drag, particularly in relation to how these are expressed and debated in online realms. It then utilises Judith Butler's influential work on drag to discern that the subversive potential of drag depends on its specific context; while queer drag is often able to effectively disrupt gender constructions, non-queer drag (that is, drag that occurs in heteronormative frameworks) can work in support of heteronormativity and oppressive gender binaries. I argue that in relation to Australian footballers, the problematics of this popular practice are obscured by the pretense of comedy and an association with the nationalised masculine ideals of the 'ocker' and larrikinism. Additionally,

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these problematics are also clouded by public perceptions of positive changes in football culture and the media's relationship with footballers' misogynistic behaviour.

This article proposes that in its derisive treatment of femininity, this form of non-queer hetero-masculine drag is actually a manifestation of a pervasive fear of and compulsion to avoid male femininity, which Julia Serano (2014) terms 'effemimania'. Furthermore, as an activity that fortifies gender identity that a group of men share, non-queer drag in Australian football contexts becomes an instrumental component of male homosocial relations; that is, nonsexual social relations and bonding practices between men within patriarchy. I assert the key impetuses of this 'blokey' drag include male homosocial bonding and eschewing what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1992) refers to as 'homosexual panic'. To explore these issues, this article takes as a case study a 2014 *Herald Sun* listicle (article presented as a list) that compiles and celebrates ten photographs of footballers in drag from a range of eras. The hetero-masculine drag discussed here is understood as a homosocial practice in which femininity is not only belittled but also becomes the currency with which men's bonds are negotiated. Its generation of humour and homosocial interaction occurs at the expense of femininity and, by extension, women, both cis and trans. This troubling brew of misogyny, transphobia, and homophobia contributes to broader discourses that devalue, and actions that threaten, women.

Mainstream attitudes to non-queer drag

In March 2015, the UK's National Union of Students (NUS) Women's Conference caused controversy because some of the motions it put forward were considered too extreme in their political correctness. One of these was Motion 406, which asserts, in part, that "[t]ransphobic fancy dress should be met with the same disdain with which we meet other prejudiced or appropriative costumes," and condemns "the use of 'drag' as fancy dress" (NUS Women Conference 2015, 17). The motion makes a point of distinguishing "drag as a fancy dress costume" for the purposes of "humour" or "shock-value" from queer drag and instances in which the gender of the 'cross-dressed' character aligns with the performer's identity (NUS Women Conference 2015, 17). Subsequent opposition to Motion 406 exposed current popular attitudes toward such drag.

Criticism of Motion 406 tended to take the stance that such a caveat unfairly limited gender expression in an era that celebrates gender play

and gender inversions, and the defense of footballers in drag featured heavily in such responses. For example, Martin Daubney (2015), writing for *The Telegraph*, expresses discontent at the prospect of a society without “the undeniably amusing sight of big, hairy blokes staggering around on pub crawls while harmlessly squeezed into a dress or tutu.” He asserts that:

it is every man’s right to dress as a woman if he chooses, even if they are bad, unshaven and deliberately unconvincing women. Indeed, in my own experience, some of the most laddish, foul-mouthed, rugby-playing oiks I’ve ever known made for the best cross-dressers (Daubney 2015).

Pushing a similar barrow, other commentators invoke the rhetoric of queer theory to defend all men’s rights to wear feminine clothing in whatever capacity they judge desirable. Writing for the *New Statesman*, Helen Lewis (2015) takes issue with Motion 406, asserting that “[c]ross-dressing is *always* an exploration of queer identity – because it makes obvious the fact that gender is a performance.” Like Daubney, Lewis erroneously conflates queer and non-queer, and male-to-female and female-to-male drag. Lewis claims that all forms of drag destabilise gender norms, including burly straight men crossing-dressing for shock or humour. Indeed, she states, “we all know what the elephant in the room is here – or rather, the rugby player in the tutu,” and asks, “[w]hat about the rugby players who choose to wear tutus? Why are we denying them their ‘agency’?” (Lewis 2015). Such mainstream commentary on the issue indicates some progress has been made in that it advocates freedom of gender expression. However, upholding queer and non-queer drag as equivalently (or even similarly) transgressive obscures the derisive implications of certain modes of non-queer drag and forestalls important discussions about these issues – for not all drag is created equal.

Drag and queer theory

Though it is not without its critics, the practice of drag has been valorised in queer studies. With the birth of queer studies, drag was located as that which could dismantle male-female and masculine-feminine binaries, held up as emblematic of the instability and constructedness of gender. This veneration of drag can be largely attributed to Butler’s (1999) discussion and application of drag in her celebrated and formative work on gender performativity in *Gender Trouble*. Butler reassessed the stance taken by many earlier feminists that all, even queer, male-to-female drag mocks

femininity and uncritically plays out problematic gender stereotypes. Explicating the theory of gender performativity, Butler opposes critics of drag and suggests that drag is an exemplary practice in the denaturalisation of heterosexualised gendering. Butler (1999, 174) claims that "drag fully subverts the distinction between the inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity." Butler (1999, 174) maintains that the double truth claims made by drag's layering of gender identifications cancel each other out to entirely remove the enactment from the "discourse of truth and falsity." For Butler, in the performance of drag, it is not the 'opposite' gender that is parodied, but the construction of gender itself. It might thus appear that Butler is asserting that any form of drag is necessarily subversive, and certainly her arguments have been (mis)interpreted that way. However, Butler does impose limits on the transgressive potential of drag.

Butler (1999, 177) understands that forms of drag and other "parodic repetitions" can become "instruments of cultural hegemony." Butler (1999, 176–7) affirms that "[p]arody by itself is not subversive ... parodic displacement, indeed, parodic laughter, depends on a context and reception in which subversive confusions can be fostered." Also acknowledging that the gender-play of drag relies on dominant cultural paradigms of gendering, Butler (1999, 176) concedes that "the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynistic culture," but asserts that while this is so "they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization." Butler clearly places the drag she deems to be properly troubling/disruptive in a queer context, stating "parodic replication and resignification of heterosexual constructs within non-heterosexual frames bring into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called original" (in Hall 2003, 73). Directly responding to misunderstandings arising from her discussions of drag, Butler (2011, 125) writes:

I want to underscore that there is no necessary relation between drag and subversion, and that drag may well be used in the service of both the denaturalisation and reidealization of hyperbolic heterosexual gender norms. At best, it seems, drag is a site of certain ambivalence, one which reflects the more general situation of being implicated in the regimes of power by which one is constituted and, hence, of being implicated in the very regimes of power that one opposes.

Hence, while one cannot be removed from gender entirely, in certain circumstances gender parody can redistribute masculinity and femininity to reveal their fundamental instability. Butler places the drag she deems to be properly disruptive in a queer context. Non-queer gender parody, on the other hand, can function to re-idealise binary gendering.

While still significant, Butler's voice is now just one among many within debates regarding drag. There are scholars who over-determine the revolutionary nature of drag (in a similar vein to Lewis) and, on the other hand, some take the stance that male-to-female drag is always a destructive appropriation of femininity. There is also academic work that judges male-to-female drag's transgressive and/or regressive qualities in consideration of relevant individual contexts. As Julia Serano (2014) observes, "[d]rag is not inherently conservative, or subversive, or assimilationist, or liberating." Likewise, this article finds different exhibitions of drag to have differing meanings, motives, and socio-cultural functions. It agrees with Butler's argument that a drag performance that is queer (in production and reception) is a transgressive act that reveals the constructedness of gender, demonstrating that *anybody* can enact either masculinity or femininity, or a coupling of both. This article also works with Butler's assertions regarding the potential for non-queer drag to work against queer ideals. Although the implications and effects of all drag are subject to their individualities and contexts, a general distinction exists between queer and non-queer modes of male-to-female drag. While queer drag correlates queer performances with the performers' queer identities, hetero-masculine renderings of female imitation can function to separate the performers from their feminised performances, reinvigorating binary gender constructions, often with misogynistic and transphobic connotation.

Non-queer drag and Australian culture

In Australia, derivative male-to-female drag is a part of the nation's (masculine) cultural history (see Chessner) and it continues to be a customary 'Aussie' activity. The drag that is the focus of this investigation is in many ways the legacy of theatrical, particularly pantomime, traditions (Chessner 1998). In my personal experience of this practice in contemporary Australia, it tends to be associated with young, white, otherwise respectful men who unquestioningly assume it is simply an entertaining ritual performed for its comedy value. For example: as a student in 2010, my brother was a resident at an all boys college

attached to one of Australia's leading universities where he attended an annual college 'booze cruise' that required male revelers to, humorously, wear dresses and makeup; my Facebook newsreel often features 'hilarious' group photos of scantily clad men dolled up in women's garb for a party; and in early 2015, one of my youthful male students earnestly declared to the class that he and his mates dressing up as girls at parties is 'so funny'.

Representations and discourses of such drag also manifest and circulate in mainstream Australian media, particularly in relation to football culture. Players belonging to Australia's two main football codes and their leagues, the Australian Football League (AFL) and the National Rugby League (NRL), have long been associated with 'all in good fun' drag shenanigans. Significant to Australian media's dissemination of this custom are Channel Nine's long-running football-focused variety shows *The Footy Show* (AFL) (1994-) and *The Footy Show* (NRL) (1994-). These shows consist of retired footballers hosting live panel discussions, which are interspersed with comical pre-recorded segments. They are renowned for crass, lowbrow humour and a well-known aspect of their repertoire is the burly hosts and/or their footballer guests donning feminine attire to perform comic skits. In doing so, these popular shows perpetuate footballers' affiliations with non-queer drag but also reflect its place elsewhere in football culture. When the traditional end-of-football-season (usually heavy-drinking) Mad Monday celebrations come around, club and professional football players alike can be found in the pubs and in the news carousing in fancy dress. Among other 'silly' costumes, women's clothing is a common fancy dress choice. Football-associated drag is not automatically problematic; the non-queer drag I am referring to here is that which is devoid of any sincere expression of feminine gendering and has the sole intention of being humorous and/or shocking.

Certainly this type of non-queer drag exists in non-football-related forums, as mentioned above in regard to my personal experiences, yet it is repeatedly captured in the media in relation to footballers because of the public interest in, and the veneration of, football and its players in Australia. The footballer in drag is not a cultural trope unique to Australia – indeed, as mentioned above, when writing about drag in the UK both Daubney and Lewis evoked the image of rugby players in tutus. In Australia, however, this 'blokey' non-queer drag is further normalised and embedded in the cultural landscape because it is understood to belong to broader traits of Australian humour and national identity, largely through its affiliation with the masculine 'Aussie' ideals of the 'ocker' and

larrikinism. Nationalised comedy is an important tool of self and group definition. Writing on Australia's national sense of humour, John McCallum (1998) argues that Australia's colonial history has significantly affected how and why Australians joke. McCallum (1998, 205) writes that comedy can be "thought of in terms of the aggressive laughter which has a bonding role in the exclusion of the out-group and the creation of in-group solidarity, and its correlative, the self-deprecating laughter which has a role of self-definition in relation to the out-group." The group solidarity and self-definition Australian humour offers is often entwined with Australian cultural mythologies and values relating to the 'ocker' and larrikinism. Bruce Molloy (1990, 89) states that "[o]cker' is a slang term for an unsophisticated Australian male, whose behaviour is characterised by crudity, insensitivity and bad taste." Relatedly, writing on the history of the larrikin, Melissa Bellanta (2012, xii) asserts "for a little less than a century now, larrikinism has played a key role in myths about what it means to be Australian." Defining this important 'Aussie' figure, Bellanta (2012, xii) explains:

To be larrikin is to be skeptical and irreverent, to knock authority and mock pomposity, engaging in a practice known as 'taking the mickey' – or more often, 'taking the piss'. To call someone a larrikin is also to excuse their bad behaviour, offering an affectionate slant on their disrespect for social niceties and raucous drunkenness with mates.

With its strongly anti-bourgeois attitude, larrikinism has its roots in white working-class suburbia, and still "enjoys a close relationship with masculine sports, most notably boxing and football" (Bellanta 2012, 190). Indeed, the presenters on *The Footy Show* (AFL and NRL) are seen to embody the 'ocker' and larrikinism; Bellanta (2012, 190) observes "it would be impossible to count the times that the waggish humour of *The Footy Show* has been described as larrikin in bent." While homosexual men are not always shunned from the category of larrikin, Bellanta (2012, 189) observes, there is a "flagrant heterosexuality long associated with larrikinism." The group solidarity and self-definition non-queer drag offers is only really open to white, working class, heterosexual 'Aussie' men – preferably larrikins. Yet, because it has been inducted as part of an Australian national sense of humour, such drag and its values are naturalised and prioritised.

Under the radar

Despite affiliations with football, the 'ocker', and larrikinism affording it a privileged place in the Australian cultural imaginary, such hetero-masculine drag has not entirely escaped critique. In the 1990s, Australian feminist scholars interrogated this form of drag as it manifests on *The Footy Show* (NRL). For example, Heather Brook (1997, 8) asserts that *The Footy Show's* presenters use comical drag "to construct their own masculinity through a kind of elaborate performance of denial – to show what they are not, what they 'cannot' be. Not-women, not-objectifiables, not-'poofters'." She writes:

On *The Footy Show*, [Paul] Fatty Vautin is a hoot in wig and mascara, and [Peter] Sterlo [Sterling] is an absolute scream as the little French girl in the yoghurt ads. The hilarity of the drag antics of these former Rugby League internationals is situated precisely at the *inadequacy* of their attempts to perform femininity. Steve 'Blocker' Roach looks funny in a frock because he could never pass as female – his dress-ups underline rather than contest his masculinity. (Brook 1997, 7)

Similarly, Kelly Farrell (1999, 157) argues that "drag on *The Footy Show* is safe: the straight audience can be comfortable in the knowledge that this is a fictional 'queer' and these bodies are 'really' heterosexual." She asserts that in these circumstances it functions as "the embodied performance of patriarchal privilege, and in this case the maintenance of a specific form of Australian masculinity" (Farrell 1999, 157). These are important analyses that remain pertinent and can be built upon in relation to contemporary demonstrations of this custom, yet little work has been done on the subject in recent years.

This lack of critical attention is perceivably affected by broader cultural influences that obfuscate the problematics of this mode of drag. Firstly, as discussed above, flawed conflation of queer and non-queer drag can appear to function in defense of derisive non-queer drag. Furthermore, in relation to Australian football players, the damaging aspects of such drag have been further clouded because of shifts in public perceptions about football culture. 'Aussie' football players have long been renowned for antisocial behaviour and often excused for it with a 'boys will be boys' sentiment. In the new millennium, however, a run of widely publicised scandals involving football players meant their off-field antisocial behaviour encountered public criticism and, consequently, institutional

reform. After a series of allegations of sexual assault and harassment against professional players in 2004, both the governing bodies of the two main football codes introduced measures to improve standards of conduct. In 2005, the AFL introduced their Respect and Responsibility Policy to promote respect for women, shift players' attitudes, and take a stand against violence against women. In 2009, the NRL instituted the Sex and Ethics program to educate players on issues such as consent and sexual intimacy. Although scandals involving footballers still make headlines and there have been reasons to question how effective these initiatives have actually been (Watson), contemporary popular opinion supports intolerance toward football players treating women disrespectfully. As Suzanne Dyson (2014) states in relation to shifts in Australian football culture since 2004, "there has been a major change in public discourse and media scrutiny of violence against women, so that any hint of a scandal fires the media into action and the organisations involved into harm minimisation mode."

The effect of these changes on broader understandings of footballers' hetero-masculine drag is twofold. Firstly, when the media does publicise and scrutinise footballers' off-field misconduct, it often involves extreme behaviour, physical harm, and crimes such as rape, assault, and illegal drug abuse; by comparison, footballers playing dress-ups can seem entirely harmless. Secondly, the current arrangement encourages the assumption that 'these days' if football players do something degrading to women, the media will expose and, rightly, condemn their behaviour. Because the media treats footballers' drag with no contempt and instead celebrates it as a humorous 'Aussie' tradition, in the public consciousness it is removed from that which degrades women. As such, drag for the purposes of humour or shock value remains a notable feature of *The Footy Show* (AFL and NRL) and any given Mad Monday celebration is as likely to include a 'bloke' in a frock as it ever was. Nevertheless, this behaviour and the ways in which it enacts a devaluing of femininity is deserving of interrogation.

Hetero-masculine drag and effemimania

This article now takes as its focus a *Herald Sun* listicle? from August 2014. This listicle comprises and is titled '10 classic photos of AFL footballers in drag from Herald Sun vault'. Not only is the listicle itself an artifact of contemporary Australian media's representation of footballers' non-queer drag, the incidents it archives also exemplify this Australian

custom. The listicle's author, Warwick Green (2014), observes that with Mad Monday "events comes the certainty that some footballer somewhere will think it's a good idea to throw on a frock, high heels and some rouge." To remind readers of the longevity of this tradition, the compilation includes a black and white photograph from 1929 of a football team wearing full ballet regalia. A more recent example is a photograph of then Magpies team member Sharrod Wellingham at the pub after winning the 2010 premiership. A beer in one hand and giving the 'thumbs up' with the other, Wellingham wears a pink satin gown with puffy sleeves and pearl beading. Wearing no make-up or wig, he poses confidently in the dress, which is unzipped at the back because it is too small. The caption asserts that Wellingham "rocked up looking like some kind of fairy, complete with a Crown lager for a wand" (Green 2014). Just as Brook and Farrell observed of drag on *The Footy Show* (NRL), this 'blokey' non-queer drag displays the performer's exaggerated femininity as inadequate and in doing so aligns him with hetero-masculinity, dissociating him from the consequences of feminisation. The humorous implications of this drag rely on the intentionally marked discordance between the brawny, hirsute performer and his exaggeratedly feminine costuming. Ironically, wearing a dress in this way actually emphasises the performer's masculine subjectivity and ultimately derides femininity. To achieve this removal from that which is feminine and/or queer, femininity as a trope is diminished and used as a negative counterpoint in the veneration of masculinity. Here, femininity is parodied (badly) by one bearing patriarchal privilege. Such drag works in reverse of the subversion Butler ascribes to queer drag; that is, this form of drag exemplifies Butler's assertions regarding the processes of gender naturalization – because as a hetero-masculine man Wellingham 'cannot' perform femininity 'properly', the implication is that gender does indeed belong to the sex to which it is culturally designated. In this way, such masculine and inadequate imitations of femininity become part of a particular catalogue of hetero-masculine performativity.

The listicle also features two photographs of Billy Brownless playing female character Joybell in *The Footy Show* (AFL)'s parody soapie *The House of Bulger*. In this long-running weekly five-minute segment on the show, Brownless wore a wig, makeup, and women's clothing, yet his hairy chest and legs were consistently on display and his character would speak in a gruff voice, walk in a 'manly' fashion, and sit with knees wide apart. In one of the listicle's two photographs of Joybell, a fully made-up Brownless holds a crocheted bikini top to his chest and sits with his dress riding up and his hairy legs crossed 'alluringly'. The second photograph

presents Brownless in a wig, makeup, and a low-cut leopard print blouse that shows off his hairy chest. The intention here is not to blur gender boundaries or even showcase earnest acting ability, but to offer a rudimentary portrayal of a man *obviously* pretending to be a woman. As discussed above, because of the very secure place of the larrikin and his comrade the 'ocker' in Australian culture, non-queer's drag's association with these ideals gives it a privileged status and helps shield it from being questioned. Those who perform such drag are, in 'true blue' larrikin style, seen to be evoking the Australian characteristic of comical self-deprecation, or 'taking the piss out of' yourself. Yet larrikin behaviour is not always jovial and lighthearted. John Rickard (1998, 83) argues that humour "is integral to the modern larrikin" but there also exists historical ties to the larrikin being an aggressively dominant force; "the larrikin can not only take 'the piss out of people' but stand in judgement over them." While Brownless dressing up and performing femininity poorly may be the 'all in good fun' joking of an irreverent larrikin, the butt of this joke is femininity. Furthermore, a significant element of the comedy associated with this character is that Brownless is 'taking the piss out of' himself, indicating with this self-deprecation that dressing as, or being, a woman is demeaning. This manifestation of larrikin humour thus establishes an 'out-group' of anyone whose identity encompasses femininity.

Such hetero-masculine drag offers up femininity as 'funny' because it is apparently demeaning to be feminised. Transfeminism offers insight into the forces at play in these contexts. Serano (2007, 294) discusses the devaluing of femininity that arises in Western societies due to the typically "enforced ignorance and the mystification of femaleness/femininity in those who are socialized as male." She introduces the term "effemimania" to describe society's "obsession and anxiety over male expressions of femininity" (Serano 2007, 286). She asserts that different from homophobia and transphobia, "[e]ffemimania specifically targets femininity" (Serano 2007, 133) and is "a real and pervasive form of traditional sexism" (Serano 2007, 287) that affects trans and cis women alike. Perhaps ironically, this fear of femininity and appearing to be feminine is a driving motivation of the drag being discussed here. As discussed above, the purposefully unconvincing nature of these imitations actually serves to reinforce the performer's masculinity and the 'joke' is that the men have demoted themselves by pretending to 'be like a woman'. For example, Green's (2014) listicle works from the premise that these men are humiliating themselves; one caption describes the footballers dressing up this way as "embarrassing" and another makes a quip about a 'cross-dressed' footballer looking like "the

great Australian crocheted toilet roll doll." The non-queer hetero-masculine drag performer is required to acknowledge they are 'taking the piss out of' themselves, for they cannot appear to 'like' it or be demonstrating an actual affiliation with femininity. Serano (2007, 293) states, "perhaps no aspect of femininity is more mystified than women's clothing." Hetero-masculine drag appropriates this mystified element of femininity to exert control over it. Serano (2007, 315) implores:

don't be fooled by thick-necked macho men who pretend that 'girl stuff' is boring or frivolous, because that's just an act. Because as soon as you ask that guy to hold your purse for a minute, he will start to squirm, as if your handbag were full of worms, as he holds it as far away from his rugged body as possible.

Working to the same principles but in reverse, the non-queer hetero-masculine drag performer implicitly acknowledges the 'danger' femininity poses and confronts the prohibited trappings of femininity to mock and defang them. In these circumstances the objects of femininity themselves become objects of ridicule – make-up appears silly, high heels look awkward, and dresses seem ridiculous. It is an aggressive action that diminishes femininity and women.

Hetero-masculine drag, homosociality, and homosexual panic

While this form of drag may effectively institute an 'out-group', examining the dynamics among the 'in-group' is also crucial to understanding this cultural practice. The fact that such drag is a group activity is critical to its effects and functions. As a male homosocial tradition, its acceptability is conditional on it being a group activity that guards against any homosexual insinuation; together a group of men approach the limits of heteronormative boundaries of masculinity only to reconfirm them. *The Footy Show* (AFL) and Mad Monday celebrations are inherently group forums, and photographs in Green's listicle capture drag occurring in group contexts. For example, one shot from 2008 shows four players posing together in wigs, makeup, and satin skirts before performing on a Grand Final edition of *The Footy Show* (AFL). Another from 1996 depicts three players backstage at a talent show laughing together in wigs and frocks. The necessity of the communal nature of these activities is exactly what precludes this form of drag from homosexual implication. In her work on the structures and processes of male homosociality, Sedgwick (1992, 1) argues that male homosociality in Western society can "be characterized by intense homophobia, fear or hatred of homosexuality."

Sedgwick (1992, 2) proposes that all male homosocial relations are underpinned by men's desire for other men, with desire in this context defined as "the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship." She persuasively contends that the entire spectrum of male homosocial desire – that is, men's emotional connections with one another – can be understood as an unbroken continuum between homosociality and homosexuality along which exists differing opportunities for the negotiation of power, meaning and desire fulfillment (Sedgwick 1992). As she asserts, "[f]or a man to be a man's man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being 'interested in men'" (Sedgwick 1992, 89). However, in a "brutally homophobic" society, the "visibility" of a continuity between male homosocial and homosexual relations "is radically disrupted" (Sedgwick 1992, 1–3). According to this paradigm, then, male homosocial desire is at once compulsory and prohibited. Homophobia manifests as a rupturing that obscures the continuity between male homosociality and male homosexuality. Sedgwick (1992, 88) emphasises that the presence of homophobia has become a constitutive element of Western culture, as homophobia has come to function as an effective social "mechanism for regulating the behaviour of the many by the specific oppression of a few."

With the ubiquitous power of homophobia present in public ideology as well as the internalisation of such ideology, Sedgwick (1992, 88) asserts that many Western men experience the social pressures arising from homophobia in the "private, psychologized form" of "homosexual panic." Only self-accepting homosexual-identified men are exempt from homosexual panic while the rest are left to constantly and anxiously guard their masculine, heterosexual subjectivities against homosexual bonds. Sedgwick (1990, 185) states that "the continuum of male homosocial bonds has been brutally structured by a secularized and psychologized homophobia," and has thus excluded particular "segments of the continuum from participating in the overarching male entitlement." Yet the self-contradictory nature of homophobia means that it is not necessarily homosexuality that is the cause of homosexual panic, but the very same homophobia that oppresses homosexual men; homophobia is always already waiting for heterosexual men when unavoidable investments in male-male social bonds lead them into "the treacherous middle stretch of the modern homosocial continuum," terrain which perpetually threatens to turn this oppression against them (Sedgwick 1990, 186–8). As a practice that works to maintain male homosocial

bonds while suppressing homosexual panic, non-queer hetero-masculine drag reasserts its performers' heterosexuality. Australian football culture's embrace of this intrinsically homophobic practice is particularly troubling in consideration of Erik Denison and Alistair Kitchen's (2015) international study of homophobia in sport that found Australia to have the highest percentage of gay men who felt totally unaccepted in sport.

In addition to the homophobic aspects of hetero-masculine drag, it is a practice in which femininity is not only devalued but also put into the service of male homosocial relations, exploited as a mediating force. Sedgwick (1992) emphasises the propensity for male homosocial bonding to take on a triangular structure, in which 'woman' is the conduit through which male-male bonds are expressed. Correspondingly, with the implementation of homosocial hetero-masculine drag, woman becomes the conduit through which men negotiate their male-male bonds, but rather than appearing in any physical sense 'woman' is worn (badly) by the men themselves. As such, hetero-masculine drag's dismissive, diminishing treatment of femininity and women draws a worrying parallel with another misogynistic practice for which Australian footballers are notorious; that is, the now widely-publicised, and apparently not always consensual, off-field bonding custom of footballers having sex with the same woman in turn. In her narrative-journalistic piece on the treatment of women in Australian football culture, Anna Krien (2013, 50) observes that while these 'gangbangs' are about sex, "they're also about 'being with the boys' – the woman involved is no more than a 'vehicle for bonding'." This disturbing ritual has been widely condemned since its public exposure. In contrast, the related problematics of homosocial hetero-masculine drag consistently go unnoticed. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that such blatant, public parody of any other marginalised subjectivity would be so readily accepted. This type of drag prioritises men's homosocial bonds and the exhibition of masculinity over the considerate representation of social groups to which they do not belong. Moreover, discounting phenomena such as this, which cultivates sexism in masculine sporting realms, potentially has serious repercussions. In a report prepared for the AFL's Respect and Responsibility Program, Dyson and Michael Flood (2008, 5) observe "[s]exist peer norms and cultures are a key risk factor for men's perpetration of sexual violence," and another suggested risk factor in professional sport is that "codes of mateship necessary for team work may intensify sexism and override personal integrity." Hence, as a male homosocial activity that promotes a devaluing of femininity and, therefore, women, homosocial hetero-

masculine drag is a practice that underhandedly fosters dangerous attitudes and ideologies.

Conclusion

Homosocial hetero-masculine drag removes its performers from association with feminisation and queerness to firmly situate them on the masculine side of a seemingly stable gender binary. Such drag actually emphasises the performers' hetero-masculine subjectivities and ultimately derides femininity. Australian footballers performing this mode of drag escape any significant public scrutiny with the help of it being understood as a manifestation of the revered masculine ideals of the 'ocker' and larrikinism, as well as a general sense of reform in football culture and that the media actively responds to footballers' misdeeds.

Socially-sanctioned hetero-masculine drag is a symptom of broader issues of gender inequality. Manifesting effemimania, this mode of drag repudiates the ability of hetero-masculine, cisgendered men to 'properly' take on femininity and mocks the trappings of femininity and femininity itself. The impetus of this 'blokey' drag is also male homosocial bonding and the eschewing of homosexual panic; it uses female parody to reconfirm hegemonic male privilege, revel in homosocial bonding, and reject homosexual implications. With the enactment of such drag, at the same time femininity is foregrounded as a device used in the negotiation of male homosocial desire, it is also degraded. Buttressed by certain hegemonic 'Aussie' discourses, homosocial hetero-masculine drag is insidious in its persistence and apparent acceptability. It is at junctures such as this that hegemonic configurations of Australian national expectations regarding sexism can and should be called into question. Homosocial hetero-masculine drag is not the most dangerous or destructive practice currently threatening Australian women, yet in its executions and the attitudes it perpetuates it is a damaging cultural force. In the past decade, Australia's two football institutions have implemented significant changes – whether for "ethical responsibility or brand control" (Dyson 2014) – to eradicate disrespectful treatment of women. While this is indeed a worthwhile trajectory, in the interests of advancing gender equality and duly respecting the feminine, homosocial hetero-masculine drag also needs to be comprehended in terms of respect and responsibility.

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