

Talking football. Intersectional perspectives

Football is a common playground for grassroots players as well as fans, spectators and those for whom football is a form of community engagement in various places in Germany (from towns to villages). In this paper I am interested in how participants of football talk about their favored sport: How is *talking football* connected to their status as included/excluded persons especially in terms of gender and sexuality? Since the concept of intersectionality denominates reciprocities between gender, race, class and several other categories of distinction, it will be used here to analyse reciprocal effects between various categories people talk about – or not. Based on 24 group discussions with several groups connected to the culture of football, I am interested in how people construct a field of fairplay, and how football is able to connect as well as exclude persons and groups. Against this background, sexual minority football communities such as queer fan clubs or womens' teams, challenge the idea of a one-dimensional process characterized by standardization in terms of heteronormative structures and appearance as well as fan culture. There are three points to be made:

- Firstly, the inner structure of football as a basic principle is heteronormativity, which means that it is based on differences and hierarchies between men and women as well as between straight and gay people.
- Secondly, there are noticeable differences between group discussions and media: On the one hand, many similarities between the coverage of what is communicated in the mass media and conversations in group discussions about sex and race are obvious; on the other hand, a large difference can be found in the conversation about gay men in group discussion vs. in the media. (Even if the study was conducted before the widely discussed coming out of Thomas Hitzlsperger, such a gap still remains astonishing.)
- Thirdly, talking football offers an interesting case for a methodological reflection on different reciprocal effects and degrees of exclusion as well as making them empirically accessible. Accordingly, the hidden shared mindset (Orientierungsmuster) of people who talk about football will be reconstructed via theories and methods of qualitative research such as symbolic interactionism as well as the collective construction of affects (as it can be observed in group discussions).

As a consequence, the pendulum between inclusion and exclusion is swinging back and forth, and it will demonstrated, how degrees between specific forms of exclusion (such as sexism, racism and homophobia) can be observed.