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Kristi Tredway
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JUDITH BUTLER REDUX – THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX AND THE OUT LESBIAN ATHLETE: AMÉLIE MAURESMO, GENDER PERFORMANCE, AND WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL TENNIS

Kristi Tredway

Lesbian athletes, no matter their gender performances, are viewed as masculine. The on-court persona of Amélie Mauresmo illustrates this. Even though Mauresmo's gender expression was indistinguishable from other women on the pro tennis tour, her sexuality, being an out lesbian, led the public to view her as masculine. Judith Butler's 'heterosexual matrix' (a sex-gender-sexuality tripartite system) accounts for how we make assumptions based on what we see. Her theory explains the experiences of most people, where sex and gender are the known categories, so the viewer, then, assumes a particular sexuality. However, the concept does not work for people who are out, when the known categories are sex and sexuality. This leads the viewer to assume a particular gender and, for Mauresmo, the assumed gender was masculinity. This paper transforms Butler's theory, extending the usefulness of her 'heterosexual matrix'.

KEYWORDS lesbians; athletes; masculinity; femininity; homosexuality; feminist theory

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Introduction

Gender ideals are staged and contested in a public and dramatic form in women's sports in particular, so that women's sports, as they often have in the past, call into question what we take for granted as idealized feminine morphologies. Judith Butler (1998)

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Every woman in sports comes under the threat of the lesbian stigma. Athleticism, once solely the male domain, is still a place where men can prove their masculinity by beating other men. Women who show skill in male domains, whether heterosexual or lesbian, are accused of being masculine, and beyond that, lesbians. This paper, however, is a look at the inverse. What happens when an athlete comes out as lesbian? The threat of being named a lesbian is moot. What happened when Amélie Mauresmo came out was unprecedented in tennis, and possibly all of sport: The discourse shifted from descriptions of Mauresmo as, for example, French, an unseeded player (versus a seeded player), to masculine descriptions of her body and even questions of her physical sex. In the case of Mauresmo, being a lesbian brought with it a visual understanding of masculinity. A search for the underlying facets of this visual understanding of masculinity when viewing lesbian athletes is the purpose of this paper. A reworking of Judith Butler's theory of the heterosexual matrix will guide this search.

In this paper, the definitions of sex, gender and sexuality will be those used in the field of women's studies. Sex is one's physical structure, traditionally male and female. Gender is one's performance of self, either masculine or feminine, or butch and femme, respectively, in lesbian slang. Finally, sexuality is whether one is attracted to someone of their same sex or another sex, which is homosexuality and heterosexuality, respectively. We can convey information about our sex, gender and/or sexuality through the way we dress, walk, talk, stand, etc. In *Gender Trouble* (2006), Judith Butler formulated the concept of the heterosexual matrix (or what she later, in *Bodies That Matter* (2011), termed heterosexual hegemony). Judith Butler's heterosexual matrix (a sex-gender-sexuality tripartite system) accounts for how we make assumptions of what we see based on normative frameworks in society. Her theory explains the experiences of people who are closeted or those with non-normative genders, where sex and gender are the known categories, and from which the viewer, then, assumes a particular sexuality. However, the concept does not work for people who are already out because the known categories are sex and sexuality, leading the viewer to assume – as is the case for Mauresmo – a particular gender. This paper transforms Butler's theory into another similar concept, extending the usefulness of her heterosexual matrix.

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Premises

This paper stands on the foundation created by the two analyses of the media attention Amélie Mauresmo received before and after coming out as a lesbian. They are 'Courting Lesbianism' by Miller, McKay, and Martin (2001) and 'Amelie Mauresmo's Muscles: The Lesbian Heroic In Women's Professional Tennis' by Forman and Plymire (2005). Both studies highlight the difference in

focus and attention that Mauresmo received. Forman and Plymire point to the shift in focus from Mauresmo's ranking to her body:

> Prior to the news conference at the Australian Open semifinals [in which she came out], the adjective most often used to describe Mauresmo was "unseeded"... After the semifinal match with [Lindsay] Davenport and the subsequent comments from Davenport and [Martina] Hingis, correspondents quickly focused their attention on Mauresmo's body. (2005, 121)

Additionally, Miller, McKay, and Martin note that 'Mauresmo's musculature is unexceptional next to that of such players as Mary Pierce and Venus and Serena Williams [when she first joined the tour]. This suggests that sexuality animated the controversy' (2001, 104). Indeed, Mauresmo's body structure is indistinguishable from most female professional tennis players of her time. This, then, raises the question of what people were actually seeing when they looked at Mauresmo after she came out as a lesbian. Is seeing believing, or is believing seeing?

Miller, McKay, and Martin (2001) provide a broad review of what was written in the public media – newspapers and magazines – about female athletes and the lesbian stigma. Primarily, women's tennis is the focus of the book chapter, with Amélie Mauresmo's coming out providing the most details.

Forman and Plymire (2005) conducted an analysis of both newspaper accounts of Mauresmo's coming out and internet newsgroup sites in an effort to understand the shift from discussions about her ranking and nationality before coming out to discussions of her body after coming out. The data they have compiled is exhaustive and vital to understanding the discourse shift surrounding Mauresmo. Forman and Plymire argue that Mauresmo fits the 'butch lesbian heroic' model, in which the masculine lesbian stands apart from others in a politically motivated manner, because:

> The hero must be a butch because she acts as the sign of the "'true' female invert [whose] masculinity" defines her as a deviant and outsider and whose core self cannot be changed through medical or political intervention. The butch hero is a stereotype that represented the "inbetweeness"of lesbian identity that subverts the boundaries marked by the sex, gender, and sexuality system. (2005, 125)

I agree that Mauresmo, in certain ways, subverted the sex, gender, and sexuality system. I disagree, however, in the assessment that Mauresmo is butch or, in the language of this paper, masculine. Nor do I believe that a lesbian hero needs to be masculine. Forman and Plymire continue by asserting that:

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> While the comments by [Lindsay] Davenport and [Martina] Hingis point in this direction, as does the panic over her body present in some press accounts, Mauresmo's alleged masculinity has been at least contained and quite possibly tamed by a commercial discourse that presents her ambiguous presence as an exotic form of glamour. This move domesticates and trivializes the butch hero, enclosing her within the boundaries of a niche market and thereby containing the threat of lesbian sexuality and identity. (2005, 125–6)

Forman and Plymire seem to be hedging on their claim that Mauresmo is masculine. Indeed, Mauresmo's masculinity was 'contained' as was her 'threat of lesbian sexuality' because she was not masculine. Her supposed masculinity was a construction by the media, fed by the comments by Davenport and Hingis, which occurred after Mauresmo came out as a lesbian. She was, as Miller, McKay, and Martin assert, physically indistinguishable from other players in women's tennis (2001, 104) so it cannot be argued that Mauresmo is masculine, nor can it be argued that she is feminine.

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Gender Performance and Sexuality

Gender is not static; a person's gender is constantly able to move across a continuum with femininity and masculinity as polar opposites but with few, if any, people hitting these poles. A person isn't born with a certain gender either; gender is socially constructed. We construct and display our gendered selves through our bodily dress, posture, and structure. These features are read and understood by others as either masculine or feminine. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler asserts:

> Acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (2006, 185; italics in original)

This social construction of gender gives an illusion of some internal, static dimension of a person. However, as Butler points out, gender is a performance, it is 'on the surface', and understood through 'discursive means'. Indeed, femininity and masculinity are simply discursive, making them difficult to assign stable attributes to. Theresa de Lauretis asks us to problematize 'discursive constructions' and 'constructed silences' (Sykes 1998, 18). That is, we must uncover what has been said and understood and what has been left out. Or, as this

paper strives towards, uncovering the underlying assumptions behind what is being said.

Femininity

It is difficult to categorize femininity into stable attributes. Though not directly advocating femininity, the Women's Tennis Association's *Guide to Playing Professional Tennis* published in 1995, a handbook given to all female professional tennis players, asserts that:

> Whether you are glamorous, athletic, businesslike, or intellectual, make sure your image is one that the press will latch on to in a positive way. Take time over your appearance. Select tennis clothes carefully and pay attention to what you wear at player functions. … How you conduct yourself *off* the court may have more significance to your career than anything you ever do *on* the court. (Festle 1996, 243)

The gender for women 'that the press will latch on to in a positive way' is femininity; however, femininity, as Pat Griffin points out, 'is a code word for heterosexuality' (Griffin 1998, 68). The important component for femininity is availability to men and submission to male desires. Thus, the inverse is true as well: Heterosexuality is a code word for femininity.

Masculinity

As with femininity, masculinity is difficult to categorize into stable attributes. Susan Cahn, in discussing masculinity, states that: 'Women's athletic freedom requires that certain attributes long defined as masculine – skill, strength, speed, physical dominance, uninhibited use of space and motion – become human qualities and not those of a particular gender' (1994, 279). By unlatching attributes that make good athletes from the clutches of masculinity, women would be able to compete athletically without stereotypes or stigmas associated with masculinity.

Judith Butler, in discussing injurious words, notes that the military banning the word 'homosexual' only 'redoubles the term it seeks to constrain, and can only effect this constraint through this paradoxical redoubling' (1997, 104). Instead of ignoring it, which would diminish its power, 'homosexuality' is explicitly stated which names and empowers it. The same is true of masculinity with women, especially female athletes. Within the dominant discourse, masculinity among women is constructed and maintained in the discursive realm in an effort to constrain it; however, this has only created space for it to exist. For example, if the Women's Tennis Association announced that there were no lesbians on tour, it would create a witch-hunt atmosphere around those

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suspected of being lesbians. The same would hold true for masculine women, especially since there are varying degrees of masculinity.

Martina Navratilova was the female tennis player who most epitomized masculinity within the dominant discourse. She rushed the net, she was from Eastern Europe which brought with it negative stigmas that the United States held about female athletes from the Soviet bloc, and, most of all, after the mid 1980s, she was muscular; however, the ways she was feminine get muffled in the discourse. In 1980, Navratilova proclaimed, 'I find it offensive and ridiculous that anyone should think that I am gay' (Gever 2003, 159). The next year, just after Billie Jean King's public outing, Navratilova, though already known for almost a decade as bisexual, came out as a lesbian, most likely fearing the uncontrolled public outing that King had received. In a self-assessment, Navratilova claimed that her 'biggest image problem was not lesbianism per se. … The major problem she described in her autobiography is femininity or, rather, her shortcomings in that department' (Gever 2003, 166–7). Navratilova seems to be asserting that sexuality is not as much of an issue in women's tennis and the media spotlight as is a lack of a feminine performance. It is possible that Navratilova was not so much lacking femininity as she had been marked as masculine through the public discourse, similar to Amélie Mauresmo.

To counter accusations of masculinity, many female athletes employ the female apologetic which is 'a coping strategy that allows a woman to compensate for the perceived masculinizing effect of participating in sports by exaggerating her femininity' (Malcom 2003, 1388). Women employ the female apologetic by doing various actions such as wearing hair ribbons or tennis dresses, and stating that, rather than athletic ability, it was the men in their lives that led them to win. These tactics only serve to diminish the power and assertiveness that these women.

The Heterosexual Matrix

With Judith Butler's theory of the heterosexual matrix, a person's sex and gender are known to the viewer and this gaze leads the viewer to assume a particular sexuality for the person looked upon (see Table 1). Judith Butler asserts that:

> The term heterosexual matrix … designate[s] that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized. I…characterize a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. (2006, 208, no. 206; italics in original)

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TABLE 1 Judith Butler's heterosexual matrix[1]

Gender → Sexuality ↘ Sex ↓	Masculine	Feminine
Male	Heterosexual	Homosexual
Female	Homosexual	Heterosexual

People are read, or made intelligible, by being viewed, through the visual gaze, as a particular sex and a particular gender, both of these binaries of one or the other – male/female, masculine/feminine. With this information, the viewer assumes a particular sexuality for the person being looked upon – heterosexuality or homosexuality – which is, again, a binary understanding. For example, a person viewed as being male and masculine would be understood as being heterosexual. A woman who is viewed as masculine, however, is understood as being a lesbian. Of course, it would be best to move away from these binaries because of the problematic nature of them (see, for example, Caudwell 2006). Butler, though, uses the binaries as a 'hegemonic…model of gender intelligibility'. This is how the majority of people make sense of other people. For this reason, there is a need to use the binaries for an understanding of the dominant discourse so that we can work at eradicating the binary system from within.

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Out Lesbians in Women's Tennis

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick asserts that 'the closet is the defining structure for gay oppression in this century' (1993, 48). In the public discourse, a person is either in or out of the closet, establishing yet another binary system, and this structure is only used to describe gay people or those who have non-normative gender performances. Furthermore, Sedgwick states that:

> "Closetedness" itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence – not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularity by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it. The speech acts that coming out, in turn, can comprise are as strangely specific. (2008, 3)

This closet is a site of speculation. If a person is in the closet, that person is understood as gay. If the closet is not even an applicable site, the person is understood as heterosexual. Furthermore, as opposed to Judith Butler's speech act which can name and, therefore, empower female masculinity, Sedgwick's closet is a speech act which is silent. That is, by choosing the closet, the person is choosing silence.

In women's tennis, the closet is always a site of speculation. Female athletes are always under the gaze of feminine and heterosexual critique. As K.L. Broad explains,

> With every gain that women have made in sport, there has been a simultaneous reaction questioning the sexual orientation of women athletes as well as the actual sex/gender of women in sport. Simply stated, the assumption has been, "sports are masculine; therefore, women in sports are masculine; therefore, women in sports are lesbians". (2002, 182)

Indeed, homophobia is used in this way to police women and even thwart their athletic achievements. Martha Gever describes the closet of women's tennis which was, surprisingly, aided by journalists:

> Long before "don't ask; don't tell" became shorthand for official U.S. government policies…, the same principles governed a tacit bargain struck between the sports press and lesbian or gay athletes. Navratilova (and undoubtedly countless others) went along with the strategy, because it allowed them to keep in check nosy, scolding members of the press, or at least those who always treated homosexuality as a sensational topic. (2003, 161)

Journalists, at least before the current mass media age of televised press conferences, were the main conduit between athletes and the general public. During the 1970s–1990s, this tacit agreement was critically important for closeted lesbian players.

There have been only three women in the history of women's tennis who have come out publicly during their careers: Billie Jean King, Martina Navratilova and Amélie Mauresmo. Countless others may have come out after their tennis careers were over or came out to family and friends but not to the scrutiny of the public. That there have only been three athletes come out publicly during their careers points to a deeply rooted homophobic climate in women's tennis.

Amélie Mauresmo

Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova both came out publicly in the early 1980s. It was not until 1999 that a third lesbian came out publicly in women's tennis while still an active player. Amélie Mauresmo was a very successful player on the professional tennis circuit from 1994 until her retirement in 2009. During that time, she was ranked no. 1 in the world in 2004 and again in 2006. She won two Grand Slam singles titles. She also represented France during Federation Cup play.

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Mauresmo came out as a lesbian at the 1999 Australian Open, in which she was unseeded, after beating Lindsay Davenport, then the no. 1 ranked player in the world, in the semifinals to the surprise of everyone. Mauresmo lost to Martina Hingis, then the no. 2 ranked player in the world, in the finals. Mauresmo stated that she came out 'not because she wanted to become a symbol or the focus of attention, but because she did not want to dance around the subject throughout her career' (Forman and Plymire 2005, 120), as Navratilova did for a decade. Indeed, Mauresmo asserted that closeted players on the women's tennis tour 'had a hard time dealing with their situation … I feel sorry for them' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 106). Mauresmo, then, had seen that she could not exist within the confines of the closet while being in a public arena.

In an article published in the now-defunct Stanford Humanities Review, Judith Butler, while writing about Navratilova's accomplishments, wrote that:

> What are we charting when we note that Martina was once outside the [gender] ideal — because outside of recognizable gender, too strong, too muscular, too aggressive — and that she ended her career by exemplifying that very ideal? Such a move could not be possible if gender ideals were not capable of transformation, of becoming more capacious, of responding to the challenge of what is excluded from their terms by expanding the very terms of gender themselves. (1998)

Butler, however, could not have foreseen what would take place during the following year, 1999, when Mauresmo came out. Prior to coming out, Mauresmo was most often described as 'unseeded' (Forman and Plymire 2005, 121) – meaning that she was not ranked high enough to be 'seeded' or placed in a more protected spot in a tournament's draw. The dominant discourse immediately changed after her coming out. After the homophobic and genderphobic comments by Davenport and Hingis which immediately followed Mauresmo's coming out, the dominant discourse switched to descriptions of Mauresmo's muscularity (Forman and Plymire 2005, 121). Indeed, the authors seem to be claiming that Davenport and Hingis created the discourse that the media, then, ran with. If being a lesbian is a shunning of male access, what was so threatening about Mauresmo to Davenport and Hingis? It might be impossible to know what they were threatened by, and why Mauresmo's coming out was more threatening to them than, seemingly, to men.

Davenport, though 6'2½" and 174 pounds compared to Mauresmo's 5'9" and 141 pounds frame, asserted that Mauresmo's 'power and physique were overwhelming, that playing her was like playing "a guy"' (Forman and Plymire 2005, 120) and that her muscles 'looked huge to me. I think they must have grown; maybe because she is wearing a tank top' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 104). Davenport further elaborated:

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> A couple of times, I mean, I thought I was playing a guy, the girl was hitting so hard, so strong. … She is so strong in those shoulders and she just hits the ball very well. … I mean, she hits the ball not like any other girl. She hits it so hard and with so much topspin. … Women's tennis isn't usually played like that. (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 104)

Considering their size differential, it seems inconceivable that Davenport felt physically threatened on the court. However, in the dominant discourse that proclaims that lesbians are masculine, Davenport may have suddenly been made to focus upon Mauresmo's muscularity. In response to Davenport, Mauresmo said: 'The fact that I'm strong physically is maybe impressing her. It means that I'm a very solid player, so I take it as a compliment' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 104).

Before the final was played, Martina Hingis announced to journalists, Mauresmo 'came to Melbourne with her girlfriend; I think she's half a man' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 104, Forman and Plymire 2005, 120). To this, Mauresmo stated, 'On top of wanting to beat her, now I'm enraged!' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 104). In response to Hingis's statement, Billie Jean King requested that Chris Evert, Hingis's tour mentor, counsel her protégé on homophobia. It's ironic that Hingis is named after Martina Navratilova. Though, it is possible, that this made Hingis want to differentiate herself from lesbians even more.

Journalists from around the world bounced onto this site of sensationalism created by Davenport, Hingis, and the Australian press. As noted previously, players and the press had a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy; however, if a player came out, he or she was fair game. Comments made by journalists after Mauresmo came out include:

- 'Mauresmo's thickly muscled shoulders bulge from her dark blue tank top, and she struts cockily around the court like a weightlifter in the gym' (Forman and Plymire 2005, 121), wrote one Associated Press reporter.
- 'Oh, Man, She's Good'. (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 105), from the *Herald Sun*.
- 'Women normally only play tennis against men in mixed doubles. But that all changed yesterday if you believe the world's number one player Lindsay Davenport' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 105), from the *Daily Telegraph*.
- 'Shoulders like Lou Ferrigno – she is the French "incroyable hulk"' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 105) from the *Daily Telegraph*.
- 'Where is women's tennis headed? Mind boggles at the muscle monsters' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 105), from the *Daily Telegraph*.
- 'Huge linebacker shoulders' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 105).

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It is most likely a fact that Mauresmo's muscles did not grow between the time she was closeted playing Davenport in the semifinals and out as a lesbian playing Hingis in the final.

As noted previously, Miller, McKay, and Martin claimed that 'Mauresmo's musculature is unexceptional next to that of such players as Mary Pierce and Venus and Serena Williams. This suggests that sexuality animated the controversy' (2001, 104). Indeed, Mauresmo's musculature was not more pronounced than others on the tour. However, Mauresmo was marked as masculine when she came out as a lesbian. Susan Cahn asserts that:

> The lesbian athlete, with her reputation for masculine style, body type, and desire, represents a refusal to issue this reassurance [of being a "normal" woman]. Her sexual autonomy and her rejection of conventional femininity – as defined through heterosexuality – make her the locus for enduring fears that women in sport transgress gender lines and disrupt the social order. (Cahn 1994, 265)

Mauresmo, then, was socially constructed as masculine in the discourse because, by rejecting heterosexuality, she, essentially, was understood as rejecting femininity.

Pamela Forman and Darcy Plymire, in describing the media's attention on Mauresmo, state that:

> By coming out as a lesbian and fitting certain stereotypical notions of masculine lesbianism [by being an accomplished athlete], Mauresmo allows the press, advertisers, and women's tennis symbolically to demonstrate their sympathy with women's issues while differentiating the real lesbian from other strong women on tour. In addition, embracing Mauresmo allows those same entities to portray themselves as tolerant and progressive without identifying themselves or their products too closely with lesbians. Interestingly, the press compliments itself further by castigating Martina Hingis for her homophobia. This move reinforces the assumption that homophobia and heterosexist oppression are problems of individual ignorance rather than of the socioeconomic or political system. (Forman and Plymire 2005, 125)

Mauresmo was simply coded as masculine in the dominant discourse after she came out; however, she was embraced by some. Indeed, the 'press, advertisers, and women's tennis' could feel comfortable being sympathetic to Mauresmo precisely because she was not masculine.

A Modified Gender Matrix

At the beginning of this paper, I quoted Judith Butler asserting that the heterosexual matrix functions when the known quantities are 'a stable sex

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TABLE 2 A modified gender matrix

Sexuality → Gender ↘ Sex ↓	Heterosexual	Homosexual
Male	Masculine	Feminine
Female	Feminine	Masculine

expressed through a stable gender' (Butler 2006, 208, 206). Her theory, at least in this formation, does not account for those instances when sex and sexuality are the known and stable components. When people are out, when their sexuality is known, their sex and sexuality are the known components. The viewer, then, assumes a particular gender in an effort to make the person intelligible within a sex/sexuality/gender system what the viewer does not understand (see Table 2). For these cases, when a person is out making their sexuality known, we need to use a modification of the heterosexual matrix. This modified gender matrix would account for what happens when a person's sex and sexuality are known. Thus, when a woman is known to be homosexual, she is automatically marked as masculine. This is the most likely explanation, too, of the sudden attention on Mauresmo's musculature after she came out which is not any more pronounced than other female athletes.

Conclusion

To reiterate, Martha Gever asserts that: 'If there is to be a lesbian celebrity then she must represent triumphant female masculinity' (2003, 186). Indeed, as Susan Cahn notes: 'Women's athletic freedom requires that certain attributes long defined as masculine – skill, strength, speed, physical dominance, uninhibited use of space and motion – become human qualities and not those of a particular gender' (1994, 279). Furthermore, if 'femininity…is a code word for heterosexuality' (Griffin 1998, 68), then, as I have argued here, masculinity for women is a code word for homosexuality with its inverse, homosexuality as a code word for masculinity, being true as well.

Sedgwick asserts that: 'Knowledge, after all, is not itself power, although it is the magnetic field of power. Ignorance and opacity collude or compete with knowledge in mobilizing the flows of energy, desire, goods, meanings, persons' (2008, 4). That can be seen with understandings of gender and sexuality in women's tennis. Features, like muscles, are accentuated in the public discourse. With Amélie Mauresmo, her muscles became the focal point. Lindsay Davenport, apparently, 'think[s] they must have grown' (Miller, McKay, and Martin 2001, 104) in the process of turning the knob, opening the door, and leaving the closet.

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This paper extends the usefulness of Judith Butler's theory of the 'heterosexual matrix'. In its original form, it is a theory that can account for the assumptions about sexuality that many people make about others. In this reworked form, the theory helps explain the assumption of masculinity of lesbian athletes, specifically Amélie Mauresmo, that occurs after one comes out, an assumption that was non-existent prior to coming out.

Though it appears there is a focus on binaries – male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, out/closeted – this was, in fact, in order to show their construction and maintenance in the dominant discourse. What should be understood now is how these binaries cease to function properly when pressed. Within women's tennis, women who are closeted or simply have a masculine appearance are coded as being lesbians. Judith Butler's heterosexual matrix explains this. However, Butler's concept does not account for women who are out. Lesbians – whose sex and sexuality are known – are coded as being masculine even when, as in the case with Amélie Mauresmo, the woman's gender is indistinguishable from other women. A modification of Butler's concept accounts for women who are out and allows us to better understand the dominant discourse surrounding lesbian athletes.

Once we know that a woman is a lesbian, we are prepared, even eager, to re-read her physique in masculine terms, presumably because lesbians are socially coded as masculine. An area for further study would be an examination of why this occurs. Is it simply the assertion of independence from men, which could affect heterosexual women as well as lesbians? Is it that genderphobia is a bigger issue than homophobia, which Judith Butler has asserted and to which Martina Navratilova alluded to with her comments about her shortcomings in femininity? These would be interesting questions to answer in further studies.

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Note

1. The diagram for Judith Butler's heterosexual matrix is from the Sport and American Society course (Kinesiology 287) created by David L. Andrews at the University of Maryland.

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Kristi Tredway, University of Maryland, Department of Kinesiology, College Park, MD, 20742 USA. E-mail: tredway@umd.edu.

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