3A Richard Pringle, University of Auckland & Dillon Landi, University of Auckland

"Are Sporting Masculinities Really Inclusive? A New-Materialist Study of (Homo)sexualities and Sport"

The apparent liberalization of attitudes towards homosexuality in various post-industrial states is reflected in changes in legislation and policy. Although public opinion on homosexuality appears to be rapidly changing, Smith (2011) states that it is still strongly divided. Moreover, there is conflicting evidence of the change in attitudes towards homosexuality within sporting contexts. Several studies, for example, suggest that homophobia is nearly non-existent in some sporting contexts (e.g. Bush, Carr & Anderson, 2102). Whereas, other studies (e.g. Denison & Kitchen, 2015) reveal that concern about homophobia is still very much warranted. These differing findings provided an impetus for this study, within which we conducted in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with sportsmen of diverse sexual backgrounds to examine their experiences and understandings of gender and sexualities. Our results are discussed in relation to feminist-inspired readings of Deleuze and Guattari and with particular desire to move beyond binary thinking (e.g. straight/gay, inclusive/exclusive, hegemonic/subordinated). We draw on the notion of the ‘sexuality-assemblage’ (Fox & Alldred, 2013) to consider how affect flows within assemblages of bodies, objects, discourses and social contexts to produce material effects, including sexual identities, desires, power relations and codes of conduct.

3A Judy Liao, University of Alberta

"The Gif-able Ronda Rousey: Conceptualizing Materiality in Sport Media Analysis"

In this presentation, I explore what a “new” materialist media analysis may look like. Using the example of Ronda Rousey, I intend to work through the following ideas: how to understand materiality of a text/image-based and pixelated body, and therefore, to take materiality of a mediated body in sport media analyses. Mainly relying on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1989) and Latour’s (2004) conceptualizing the body as a productive and “interactive” event, and thus materiality as the process through which an entity that becomes affective, significant and intelligible (of whose differences/uniqueness” can be distinguished), I first reconsider a dichotomy of the “represented” body vs. the material/corporeal body that insists on a division of subject/object, (natural) body/embodiment, material/discourse and non-human actants. Then, I discuss ways to account for movements, affects, and the “texture” of the world as parts and particles that enable connections and form networks that become “the body.” Using an example of the “unauthorized” (by the Ultimate Fighting Championships) presence of Rousey’s fighting body through various editing and new media distribution platforms (e.g. gif and Vine), I experiment with ways to discuss the (body) politics of mediated/digital materiality and approach toward female sporting bodies in media beyond the examination of identity and representations.

3A Kiri Baxter, Goldsmiths College, University of London

"Sport Matters: Feminist Embodied Inquiries into Another"

Coole and Frost (2010) note ‘thinking anew about the fundamental structure of matter has far reaching normative and existential implications’ (p. 5). I will discuss in this paper how a new materialist ontology significantly changes the playing field of an embodied piece of feminist research that seeks to engage with women’s sporting bodies. I argue that, by applying new materialism to empirical research on female bodies in physical activity, traditional materialist analysis can be extended beyond macro-level social phenomena (Van der tuin & Dolphijn, 2010). This is because new materialism allows for the body to be understood as part of cartography of theory and praxis by de-privileging agency and focusing instead upon how assemblages of the animate and inanimate together produce the world (see Coleman &
Ringrose, 2013). In order to actively address the importance of female sporting bodies within material environments and socio-economic structures, I argue there should be a predilection for social theorists of sport to engage with corporeality and embodiment, as well as the inanimate objects that create experience. Furthermore, when corporeality and embodiment are engaged in a new materialist ontology, policy and structures of hierarchy and inequality themselves can begin to be questioned.

3A Natalie Welch, University of Tennessee; Jessica Siegelle, University of Tennessee & Robin Hardin, University of Tennessee
“Fitness or Pornography? The Sexualization of a Female Physique Athlete”

Physique (bodybuilding) competitors are judged on the perceived aesthetics of their physical body. Athletes are evaluated on the size and shape of their muscles, as well as their level of conditioning and overall physical appearance. Physique athletes have been increasingly posting their training and progress pictures and videos on various social media platforms. A growing conversation among participants in the sport has emerged on the sexualization of the female athletes and where the line is between fitness and pornographic content. This study focuses on the autoethnographic account of one of the researchers as she prepared for a physique competition. The researcher journaled her experience and posted progress pictures on her Instagram account. Results indicate that exposure of the physical body in a fitness context may be interpreted by those both inside and outside the bodybuilding community as sexual or pornographic. Postfeminism theory drives this research as an obvious gender gap emerges between the sexualization of female and male physique athletes. The female physique athlete is observed as a sexual object while their male counterparts are considered athletes or fitness professionals.

3A Doss Ramsey, Fort Lewis College
“Pumping Profits: Post-Natural Bodies and American Masculinity”

Issues concerning masculinity and men’s bodies have become increasingly tied to a culture of consumerism in modern America. This research addresses the impact of post-natural physiques (physiques “built” or constructed with modern chemicals, training regimens and supplements) in media on American men’s beliefs about their bodies, their definitions of what it means to “look” masculine, and how they approach embodying that definition. Why are men spending more and more money on gym fees and supplements without corresponding increases in health and fitness? By considering the evolution of idealized male bodies within American culture, the paradoxical relationship between masculine embodiment and modern consumerism is examined.