

# QUEERING HEALTH

## Well-Being, Medicalization, and Recreation

In 1972 St. Martin's Press published a book called *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*, whose title challenged many previous assumptions that to be queer was to be by definition unhealthy. The author, George Weinberg, focused on mental health, and his purpose was to argue that the "illness" most prevalent among homosexuals was that of an unaccepting society. He is generally considered to have coined the word *homophobia*, an important conceptual addition to queer studies. It is worth noting that the title of Weinberg's book, while an important step forward in how nonheteronormative sexuality was viewed in the mental health community, continued the invisibility of both bisexuality and trans identity, and, indeed, emphasized same-sex orientation and cisgender identity in its reclamation of *health* as an appropriate word to use for the homosexual as a generalized type or category of person. Steps forward are often thus: incremental and sometimes oblivious to what is omitted.

The word **health** is itself a problematic and difficult term to define, and certainly a word whose definition is changeable, depending on the historical and cultural contexts in which it is used. The psychiatrist and educator Norman Sartorius, who served as the head of the World Health Organization's Division of Mental Health, wrote an essay in 2006 in which he defined three principal types of health: (1) "the absence of any disease or impairment"; (2) "a state that allows the individual to adequately cope with all demands of daily life (implying also the absence of disease and impairment)"; and (3) "a state of balance, an equilibrium that an individual has established within himself [*sic*] and between himself and his social and physical environment" (662). The first definition is exclusively medical in its boundaries and puts the determination of health in the hands of medical professionals, such as physicians and nurses.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING AND VIEWING

Brownworth, Victoria A., and Susan Raffo, eds. *Restricted Access: Lesbians on Disability*. Seattle: Seal Press, 1999.

Clare, Eli. *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*. 2nd ed. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.

Fagan, Kate. *The Reappearing Act: Coming Out as Gay on a College Basketball Team Led by Born-Again Christians*. New York: Skyhorse, 2014.

France, David. *How to Survive a Plague: The Inside Story of How Citizens and Science Tamed AIDS*. New York: Knopf, 2016. (A documentary of the same title is also available.)

Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Kopay, David, and Perry Deane Young. *The David Kopay Story: An Extraordinary Self-Revelation*. New York: Arbor House, 1977.

Louganis, Greg, with Eric Marcus. *Breaking the Surface*. New York: Random House, 1995.

*Personal Best*. Directed by Robert Towne. Geffen, 1982.

Symons, Caroline. *The Gay Games: A History*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Thompson, Karen, and Julie Andrzejewski. *Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home?* San Francisco: Spinsters Ink, 1988.

Tuaolo, Esera, with John Rosengren. *Alone in the Trenches: My Life as a Gay Man in the NFL*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2006.

*We Were Here*. Directed by David Weissman. Docurama, 2011.

Woog, Dan. *Jocks: True Stories of America's Gay Male Athletes*. Los Angeles: Alyson, 1998.