

Report

Inclusive Sport Practices

“You don’t include people by excluding other people”

Professor Murray Drummond (Lead Investigator)
Dr Sam Elliott (Chief Investigator)
A/Prof Claire Drummond (Chief Investigator)
Dr Lucy Lewis (Chief Investigator)
Dr Ivanka Prichard (Chief Investigator)
Ms Nadia Bevan (Research Assistant)
Dr Jamie-Lee Pennesi (Research Assistant)



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Executive Summary

General information

Flinders University's [Sport, Health, Activity, Performance and Exercise \(SHAPE\) Research Centre](#) are pleased to submit the following report related to sport and the LGBTIQ+ community to Inclusive Sport South Australia (SA) and the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing.

This is the first South Australia to identify barriers and enablers in sport for the LGBTIQ+ community. The findings and recommendations will help to advance a holistic approach for reducing homophobia and 'homophobia' within sporting environments. Furthermore, the report provides contextually-informed evidence for creating, maintaining and enhancing inclusive sport environments for LGBTIQ+ participants and allies based on extensive research examining:

- Current barriers to sport participation for the LGBTIQ+ community;
- Enabling influences that can be enhanced and expanded to other clubs and organisations to promote inclusion;
- Means, methods and practices to arrest barriers to sport;

SHAPE would like to thank Inclusive Sport SA for the opportunity to investigate this important area of research. The findings in this report will positively impact the sporting sector and support efforts to create and sustain welcoming and inclusive environments for the spectrum of sexualities and genders in South Australia and beyond.

Summary of major findings

Through the qualitative and quantitative data, this report highlights a number of findings related to the LGBTIQ+ community related to sport:

- There is a paramount importance to develop policy and practice around inclusivity for the engagement of the LGBTIQ+ community in sport.

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- The LGBTIQ+ participants reported experiencing a higher degree of challenges in sport in relation to their gender identification and sexual identity. More participants in the LGBTIQ+ community (39.7%) compared with heterosexual participants (15.7%) reported that they have felt unsafe or vulnerable in a sporting environment as a result of their gender identification or sexuality.
 - Clubs appear to struggle to create strategies to develop these policies and/or then implement their practice. One main reason for this is that clubs are essentially run by volunteers often with little or no formal education, knowledge and understanding around issues associated with inclusivity.
 - There are often competing agendas existing within a club, which then impedes or impacts the development and implementation of policy and practice. For example, short-term winning and immediate success can take precedence at the expense of developing policy and practice in the area.
 - A key component to inclusive policy and practice within sporting clubs and organisations is education. Education from the “top down” was regarded as the most resourceful approach. Further, having a “champion of change” embedded within the club meant there is a greater chance of systemic cultural change.
 - Endorsement and action through policy making is imperative at the President / board / committee level. They must provide a clear message with respect to what the club stands for.
 - There are a range of coaches that exist within sporting clubs and organisations and are at the “coal face” of the sport. They are in contact with the players and athletes and are most likely to be the person responsible for delivering the inclusive message to players and being the “face” of the club to supporters and stakeholders, including the board and sponsors. If inclusivity is to be adopted, maintained and perpetuated as part of a larger initiative, it is the coach that needs to be aware and selling the message to his or her athletes.
 - Supporters of the team play a significant role in the culture of the club but

supporter-based education can really only emerge from the way in which the entire organisation presents a consistent message around inclusivity at the expense of everything else. Changing a culture of a club takes time and the supporters need to be aware of the path in which the club is heading.

Recommendations

Coaches provide the interface between the players and the club, or sporting organisation. They are also pivotal in the determination of whether an athlete continues to play the sport in which they are involved. It is imperative that all coaches are educated and aware of the needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals who may enter the club and seek to participate.

Recommendation 1:

Provide funding for education for coaches at the community level around knowledge, communication / language and management of LGBTIQ+ participants.

Many sporting clubs and organisations are not financially prepared for diversity and equity in sport where LGBTIQ+ community is concerned. This has the potential to impact attraction and retention of LGBTIQ+ athletes within the sporting club or organisation.

Recommendation 2:

Provide funding for LGBTIQ+ community to assist clubs in specific areas of need (ie change room facilities, development of alternative uniforms etc.)

In order to develop long-term systemic change around sport and the LGBTIQ+ community, awareness and education needs to occur with the potential leaders, and advocates, in the sporting field.

Recommendation 3:

Invest in strategic projects and partnerships with the tertiary sector to educate emerging sport and physical education leaders around the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community in sport.

The changing nature of LGBTIQ+ sport and the community is dynamic. Therefore ongoing understanding and research is imperative in terms of staying abreast of the developments in this field.

Recommendation 4:

Develop research partnerships with key research organisations around exploring new approaches to pathways for the LGBTIQ+ community in sport and evaluating existing models and practices.

Broad scale community awareness of issues facing LGBTIQ+ and sport in the community is essential to developing long-term change. The need to provide financial support to achieve this must occur at a variety of levels.

Recommendation 5:

Invest in an awareness campaign across multiple media platforms including television, print and social media to minimize stigmatization around LGBTIQ+ community in sport and enhance participation for this group in sporting organisations.

The need to develop, for example, an easily adopted “10 point plan” that a club or organisation can implement over time will be crucial for policy creation and adoption by many clubs stretched for both human and financial resources. Being aware of policies and procedures that are easily attained will assist many clubs in the interim as they develop their own nuanced policies and practices over time:

Recommendation 6:

Invest in the development of easy to understand inclusive guidelines for “grassroots” sporting clubs to adopt in order to simplify the policy and practice process.

Online tools provide enormous scope for education across large populations. The potential to impact at least one member of a sporting committee within each of the sporting clubs and organisations in South Australia is a very real prospect if it can somehow be mandated within the overarching policies for all recognised clubs in South Australia:

Recommendation 7:

Invest in the development of an online tool where volunteers can complete a brief web-based education “course” to encourage better education among the community.

The greatest capacity for long-term change across a range of issues is to provide education from an early age. Inclusive practice education around sports needs to be integrated into primary and secondary schools. Sport is wonderful vehicle for teaching many issues within society given its ubiquitous nature and ease at which children can relate. While all children might not be overly sport oriented there is ample opportunity for children to observe sporting practices through the significant media exposure it receives:

Recommendation 8:

Begin working with the Department for Education to implement education strategies in primary and secondary schools regarding inclusive practices in sport (and society).

The issue of transgender people in sport has the potential to be a major political and litigious issue in the foreseeable future. As people increasingly

identify their gender and / or sexuality as other than male or female and gay, lesbian or heterosexual the need to have well developed policies and robust inclusive practices will be crucial for ongoing anti discrimination attitudes and behaviours. These will need to be nuanced in comparison to LGB policies given the challenging nature of the issues at hand with respect individuals who may be in the process of gender transition:

Recommendation 9:

In consultation with clubs and key stakeholders, develop policies and procedures to ensure inclusive practices for transgender athletes in sport.

Educating individuals, clubs and organisations will occur at some financial cost. The need for the South Australian State Government to be involved as a partner, both financially and pragmatically, is a major recommendation. The endorsement that occurs through bipartisan Government partnership is a key to ongoing sustainable initiatives around inclusive policy and practice:

Recommendation 10:

State Government should be lobbied for funding assistance on education and awareness of diversity in sports and inclusive practices within sporting clubs and organisations.

While the notion of developing inclusive policy and practice is desired within community sporting organisations the relative infancy of inclusive sport means that community sporting clubs and organisations are not well established to undertake such change or policy and practice development. Policy should include a variety of position/guidelines ranging from athletes and their feelings of 'safety', to their inclusiveness in the environment. The need for an overarching committee to assist this process will be paramount:

Recommendation 11:

Establishment of a committee to oversee the development of inclusive practice and policy among community sporting organisations in South Australia.

It is essential to provide junior sporting clubs and committees with the education and tools to be able to create inclusive policy and practice. By doing so it is establishing positive ideologies early in a child's life and has greater potential to create long term systemic change both within sport and throughout society. Additionally, there is a very good chance that those involved with the sporting club and its committee are likely to be the parents of the children involved. There is also a strong possibility that these parents will continue to be involved as volunteers throughout the child's involvement through to adulthood and beyond. This should be seen as a long-term sociocultural investment:

Recommendation 12:

Establish a committee to oversee the development of inclusive practice and policy among (specifically) junior sporting organisations in South Australia.

The establishment of an overarching body will provide significant leadership and guidance for the inclusive policy and practice. Ideally this body would be aligned to a government organisation in order to provide it with ongoing resources and political capital:

Recommendation 13:

Establish an overarching body to oversee the development of inclusive practice and policy among elite level sporting organisations in South Australia.

In the process of appointing leaders (CEOs, Presidents, Chairs) sporting clubs and organisations should promote inclusive practices by writing into position

descriptions and criteria items relating to inclusion. This will assist in the development of a top down inclusive approach and build in a set of key performance indicators that must be met by the leaders and leadership team:

Recommendation 14:

Build a “top down” inclusive leadership culture through inclusive leadership appointment selection criteria.

The financial assistance of the South Australian Government to fund at least one full time position to help clubs create new policies and inclusive practices must occur. There needs to be at least one individual to oversee the process to assist community based clubs and report back to the overarching body responsible for the ideological change. The issues associated with change in community clubs and organisations cannot be underestimated as many will struggle to implement and create long term, systemic change without support from strong leadership and management:

Recommendation 15:

Seek State Government funding to support at least one full time position to assist clubs and organisations across South Australia to develop inclusive practice and policies within their organisation.

Definitions

The authors of this report would like to acknowledge the range of genders and sexualities in contemporary society. Although LGBTIQ+ is commonly used throughout this report, we recognise this is an umbrella term and acknowledge all sexualities in the spectrum that are encompassed under the + symbol. Additionally, we acknowledge that there was an under-representation of Transgender (n=3) and no representation from Intersex (n=0), Non-binary (n=0) and other genders in this study. Due to the voluntary nature of this research the narratives that emerged were predominantly heard from the voices of male and female participants. The authors acknowledge this could be a result of the under-representation of 'other' genders in sport, which in turn could be a consequence of current exclusionary practices. This is an area that requires further research.

Sex – Biological sex i.e. the anatomical composition, such as reproductive organs.

Gender – Socially constructed behaviours, roles, and expressions as female, male and gender diverse.

Lesbian - Same-sex attracted women.

Gay – People attracted to the same-sex as their gender.

Bisexual – An individual attracted to both males and females.

Queer – Often used as either; a) an umbrella term for people attracted to all genders and sexes; b) someone who does not fit dominant gender norms/expressions.

Questioning – An exploration of gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

+ - Encompasses all other sexualities that are not represented in the LGBTIQ acronym.

Transgender – An umbrella term, related to an individual whose psychology contrasts their sex at birth.

Intersex – Umbrella term for someone who is born with variations of sex characteristics.

Non-binary – A person who does not label himself or herself as a specific gender and may encompass various gender expressions.

Pansexual – Someone attracted to all genders and sexes.

Heterosexuality – An individual attracted to someone that is a different gender to them.

Background

The literature displays that historically sport has been a male-oriented domain, with hegemonic masculinity being a dominant ideology that is institutionalized within sport (Connell 1995; Messner, 1992; Anderson, 2011; Piedra et al., 2017; Fink, 2008:2016). While sports remain closely aligned to hegemonic masculinity - that is, what it means to be a man (Anderson, 2011) - there is a shifting culture emerging towards acceptance of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people within society; sport being a dominant area of participation for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTQI+) community (Piedra et al., 2017; Kauer & Krane, 2006; Anderson et al., 2012; Ensign et al., 2011; Oswalt & Vargas, 2013; Channon & Matthews, 2015; Cleland, 2013).

Research on LGB sport experiences largely emerges from elite level, college (Eng 2008, Magrath et al. 2015) and professional settings (Billings 2015). This research has identified that homophobia and sexism are significant stressors for LGB people within community sport in contemporary Australia (Symons et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies have also examined cultural response to LGB athletes in fan groups, media (Cashmore & Cleland 2012; Cleland 2014, Billings 2015) and the coming-out process and sexual stigma that shapes subsequent sport involvement (Petty & Trussell, 2018). In Australia, recent research on gender, sexism and homophobia in sport indicates *that homophobia and sexism are significant stressors for LGB people within community sport in contemporary Australia* (Symons et al., 2017). Suggestions for advancing the field include engaging stakeholders who have previously been overlooked in discussions surrounding LGBTIQ+ involvement in community sport (Trussel et al., 2018).

Internationally renowned scholar in the area of masculinities, sexualities and sport, Eric Anderson, has undertaken extensive research in gay and bisexual men in sport (many articles current and dating back to 2002). He has also recently published research related to lesbians in sport (see Anderson & Bullingham, 2015). Anderson's research is extensive. However much of his recent work is specifically related to his theory based on the declining rate of homophobia, and his concept of homohysteria, in sport. According to Anderson and McCormack (2016, p.2) homohysteria is defined as *the fear of being socially perceived as gay*. Additionally, Piedra et al., (2017) defines the concept of

homophobia as:

Engaging in actions intended to distance oneself from the suspicion of being gay, Anderson notes that among men, homophobia is typically manifested by fleeing from feminized behaviour, including physical contact with other men or showing signs of affection and emotion, while also maintaining homophobic discourse. Homophobia helps to explain how gendered patterns of behaviour—both within and outside of sport settings—play out in relation to shifting levels of societal homophobia, particularly highlighting how homophobia can affect the behaviour of individuals who may not necessarily be homophobic themselves (P. 1019).

Anderson et al. (2016) state that the incidence of homophobia and homophobia can decrease over time in society. However, this needs to be led by social, cultural and legislative processes (Piedra et al., 2017), especially as homophobia can be part of organizational or institutional culture, such as sport (Anderson & Bullingham, 2015).

Findings from various International studies in lesbian, gay and bisexual people in sport show that there are still prevalent issues of homophobia, homophobia, discrimination, abuse, bullying, othering, stigmatising and silencing against LGB players, parents, coaches and the wider LGB community in sporting environments (Denison & Kitchen, 2015; Petty & Trussell, 2018; Trussell et al., 2018; Symons et al., 2017; Piedra et al., 2017; Lee & Cunningham, 2016; Waldron, 2016; Matthey et al., 2014). In relation to sporting organisations, Waldron (2016) states,

The lack of diversity training on issues of gender and sexuality reiterates that gender and sexuality are not valued and important within a sport organization and team.

Denison and Kitchen (2015) and Symons et al. (2017) are two of the prominent Australian studies released related to the LGBTIQ sporting community. Denison and Kitchen's landmark study entitled 'Out on the Fields' was the first international study on homophobia in sport and included research participants from six Westernised countries; Australia, USA, UK, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, in addition to an 'other' category capturing multiple other countries (2015). According to participants 80% witnessed or experienced homophobia in sport in Australia, with 85% of gay men and 84% of lesbians personally targeted heard verbal slurs such as 'dyke' or 'faggot' (Denison & Kitchen, 2015). Youth sport is an area of vulnerability, with 70% of gay people stating that team sport is not safe

for gay people, including considerable fear of discrimination from players and officials (Denison & Kitchen, 2015). One per cent of participants in the study stated that LGB people were 'completely accepted' in sporting culture, compared to almost 50% stating that LGB people are 'accepted a little' or 'not accepted at all' (Denison & Kitchen, 2015). Denison and Kitchen's study (2015) found that in Australia, Rugby Union was the most popular sport for adult gay males. However, as Rugby Union is not as prominent in South Australia as it is in the Eastern States of Australia, mainly NSW and QLD (ASC, 2017), there is less certainty as to the type of mainstream and niche sports that have a higher proportion of LGBTI participants, together with how their needs are being addressed in South Australian sporting organisations.

Symons et al. (2017) research examined LGB sexist and homophobic discrimination in sport in Australia, specifically in Victoria. It was found that in young people, homophobia still is a significant stressor, particularly in educational and sporting settings (Symons et al., 2017). Symons et al. (2017) found that men experience approximately double the level of explicit and implicit homophobia in comparison to women. The study noted that in response to homophobia 'identity impact' occurred, that is, the way in which LGB people perceived themselves or, the manner in which they acknowledged or expressed their own sexual identity (Symons et al., 2017). This could lead to feelings of negativity based on their gender or sexuality or perpetuate the notion that diverse sexualities should remain hidden. Homophobia can create feelings that LGB individuals are not 'OK' or are 'less than' and underpins that LGB people are not welcome in sport, and if wanting to participate, sexualities should remain hidden (Symons et al., 2017; Meyer, 2003). Importantly, Symons et al. (2017) state that:

When discrimination and abuse is embedded at the organizational level and 'taken for granted' the culture of the sport is more difficult to challenge individually. This is especially so for a minority who are rendered largely invisible and lack solidarity due to the effects of heterosexism, stigma and shame. Safety through the 'closet' is often a necessity but can also work against direct action for positive change (P. 484).

This current study is the first South-Australian specific study to identify the sporting sectors influence for LGBTIQ+ participants. It was important to attain sporting participants' and key stakeholders' narratives to garner a holistic approach to

understanding the sporting landscape for LGBTIQ+ individuals. The study was also designed to begin the process of stemming elements of potential homophobia and homophobia in South Australian sport and creating inclusive environments for LGBTIQ+ participants and allies. This study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the barriers and the enablers assisted in determining A) what barriers exist; B) how these barriers can be minimised and; C) what enablers for LGBTIQ+ people are currently in place that can be enhanced or promoted to other clubs/sports/organisations. It is important to recognise, and instil, that inclusive environments and positive social support within, and external from the sporting club is integral for LGB athletes to 'come-out' (Petty & Trussell, 2018; Barber & Krane 2007; Melton & Cunningham, 2012; Fink, 2012). LGBTIQ+ individuals must feel like they have a voice within their sporting club or organisation.

Methodology

This project utilised a mixed-method methodology to ensure that a comprehensive overview of the sporting climate for the LGBTIQ+ South Australian community was undertaken.

Quantitative

Phase One of the study was a short yet comprehensive, online questionnaire (approximately 15 minutes), designed to access a diverse range of genders and sexualities, including, albeit not limited to, those who identify as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, transgender, queer, asexual or other, who are current sport participants or ex-sport participants aged 18 years and over. The purpose of this first phase was to attain an all-inclusive perspective on the current landscape of the LGBTIQ+ sporting community in South Australia. The questionnaire included key demographics, and questions related to discrimination, the structure of sporting club's inclusivity, myths surrounding sexuality in sport, homophobia in sport, and other barriers and enablers of sporting participation for the LGBTIQ+ community. The authors found a gap in validated, reliable measures related to studies in this area. The majority of studies related to LGBTIQ+ experiences in sport that the authors could find were qualitatively based. The questions were therefore underpinned by previous research projects used where quantitative measures comprised the primary methodology (e.g. Symons et al 2017; Piedra et al 2017), as well as the expertise of the authors with significant quantitative research experience across a range of large-scale sporting and health-oriented research projects.

Participant characteristics

One hundred and eighty-three people commenced the survey; however, 35 participant responses were excluded from analyses due to incomplete data. The results presented in this section refer to the 148 participants who provided valid data (defined as $\geq 50\%$ survey completion).

Of the 148 included participants, 93 identified as part of the LGBTIQ+ community and 53 participants identified as heterosexual, and a further two people preferred not to say. Of those in the LGBTIQ+ community, participants identified as bisexual (20.9%, n = 31), lesbian (18.9%, n = 28), gay (12.8%, n = 19), pansexual (4.7%, n = 7), other (2.7%, n = 4), queer (2.0%, n = 3), and asexual (0.7%, n = 1). Of the 93 participants from the LGBTIQ+ community 76.3% (n = 71) indicated that they have “come out”, and of these, the majority have come out to friends (97.2%), family (88.7%), spouse/partner (73.2%), sporting club/organisation (59.2%) and their workplace (57.7%).

For the purposes of this report, where relevant, descriptive analyses are presented for the whole sample, as well as separately for heterosexual and LGBTIQ+ participant groups. The average age of the sample was 32.0 (*SD* = 11.3) years, with participants in the LGBTIQ+ community being slightly younger (*M* = 29.6 years, *SD* = 9.7) than heterosexual participants (*M* = 36.0 years, *SD* = 12.9). The majority of participants were female (overall: 68.7%, n = 101; LGBTIQ+: 71.7%, n = 66; heterosexual: 62.3%, n = 33). Nine participants reported being transgender (6.1%). Most of the sample were Caucasian (82.3%, n = 121) and currently employed (70.9%, n = 105).

Involvement in organised sport

Table 1 presents participant involvement in organised sport, whether participants had ever dropped out of sport, and whether there were any sports that participants did not participate in as a result of their gender identification or sexuality. Overall, participants were involved in a large range of different sports. The most commonly reported sports that participants were currently involved in were soccer, Australian football, basketball, netball, and hockey. The most commonly reported sports played in the last 12 months were netball, softball, soccer, volleyball, and basketball.

Table 1: Summary of involvement in organised sport

| Variable | Whole sample | LGBTIQ+ | Heterosexual |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) |
| Sport involvement | N = 145 | N = 91 | N = 52 |
| Current | 77 (53.1%) | 49 (53.8%) | 28 (53.8%) |

| | | | |
|--|-------------|------------|------------|
| Past 12 months | 14 (9.7%) | 9 (9.9%) | 5 (9.6%) |
| More than 12 months ago | 47 (32.4%) | 28 (30.8%) | 17 (32.7%) |
| Never | 7 (4.8%) | 5 (5.5%) | 2 (3.8%) |
| <hr/> | | | |
| <i>"Have you ever dropped out of an organised sport?"</i> | N = 137 | N = 86 | N = 50 |
| Yes | 93 (67.9%) | 63 (73.3%) | 29 (58.0%) |
| No | 44 (32.1%) | 23 (26.7%) | 21 (42.0%) |
| <hr/> | | | |
| <i>"Are there any sport(s) that you have wanted to participate in but didn't, as a result of your gender identification or sexuality?"</i> | N = 147 | N = 93 | N = 53 |
| Yes | 35 (23.8%) | 26 (28.0%) | 9 (17.0%) |
| No | 112 (76.2%) | 67 (72.0%) | 44 (83.0%) |

Note. LGBTIQ+ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other.

Experiences in sport

The survey asked participants to indicate a range of different experiences they had had in sport. Table 2 outlines the questions asked, and the level of agreement with each statement/question in LGBTIQ+ and heterosexual participants. The LGBTIQ+ participants reported experiencing a higher degree of challenges in sport in relation to their gender identification and sexual identity. More participants in the LGBTIQ+ community (39.7%) compared with heterosexual participants (15.7%) reported that they have felt unsafe or vulnerable in a sporting environment as a result of their gender identification or sexuality. However, just over half of both LGBTIQ+ and heterosexual participants reported that they currently felt safe in their sporting club or organisation.

Table 2: Summary of experiences in sport

| Variable | LGBTIQ+ | Heterosexual |
|--|------------|--------------|
| | N (%) | N (%) |
| <i>"Have you faced any <u>challenges, issues or negative experiences</u> in sport as a result of your gender identification or sexuality?"</i> | N = 81 | N = 51 |
| Yes | 27 (33.3%) | 8 (15.7%) |
| No | 54 (66.7%) | 43 (84.3%) |

| | | |
|--|------------|------------|
| <i>"Have you had any <u>positive experiences</u> in sport as a result of your gender identification or sexuality?"</i> | N = 79 | N = 51 |
| Yes | 41 (51.9%) | 15 (29.4%) |
| No | 38 (48.1%) | 36 (70.6%) |
| <i>"Have you ever felt <u>unsafe/vulnerable</u> in a sporting environment as a result of your gender identification or sexuality?"</i> | N = 78 | N = 51 |
| Yes | 31 (39.7%) | 8 (15.7%) |
| No | 47 (60.3%) | 43 (84.3%) |
| Not relevant | 0 | 0 |
| <i>"Do you feel <u>safe</u> in your sporting club/organisation as a result of your gender identification or sexuality?"</i> | N = 78 | N = 51 |
| Yes | 44 (56.4%) | 28 (54.9%) |
| No | 3 (3.8%) | 5 (9.8%) |
| Not relevant | 31 (39.7%) | 18 (35.3%) |
| <i>"Do you feel <u>included</u> in your sporting club/organisation as a result of your gender identification or sexuality?"</i> | N = 77 | N = 51 |
| Yes | 40 (51.9%) | 32 (62.7%) |
| No | 7 (9.1%) | 3 (5.9%) |
| Not relevant | 30 (39.0%) | 16 (31.4%) |
| <i>"Are there any policies in your sporting club/organisation that you feel <u>exclude members of the LGBTIQ+ community</u>?"</i> | N = 77 | N = 50 |
| Yes | 3 (3.9%) | 3 (6.0%) |
| No | 19 (24.7%) | 23 (46.0%) |
| I am not aware of my sporting club/organisation policies | 28 (36.4%) | 11 (22.0%) |
| Not relevant | 27 (35.1%) | 13 (26.0%) |
| <i>"Are there any policies in your current sporting club/organisation that you feel <u>exclude heterosexual people</u>?"</i> | N = 76 | N = 49 |
| Yes | 2 (2.6%) | 0 |
| No | 27 (35.5%) | 28 (57.1%) |
| I am not aware of my sporting club/organisation policies | 22 (28.9%) | 9 (18.4%) |
| Not relevant | 25 (32.9%) | 12 (24.5%) |

Note. LGBTIQ+ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other.

Discrimination in sport

Discrimination in sport was also examined. Of those within the LGBTIQ+ community, 79.7% had experienced (or witnessed) sexism in sport compared with 65.3% of the

heterosexual participants. The majority of both LGBTIQ+ and heterosexual participants had experienced (or witnessed) verbal homophobia in sport (63.7% and 59.2% respectively). Only 5% (n = 4) of LGBTIQ+ and 2% (n = 1) of heterosexual participants had experienced (or witnessed) physical homophobic assault in sport.

Acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people in sport

Lastly, participants rated their tolerance for a range of different statements related to the acceptance of different sexual orientations in sport. The items completed and responses are reported in Table 3. For the LGBTIQ+ community, over 88 percent of the participants were rated as being tolerant to all acceptance items in the questionnaire. For the heterosexual participants, the percentage of participants who were tolerant to each item ranged between 70 and 96 per cent. The items that rated the highest for 'intolerant' for the heterosexual participants were: *"I would not like to get changed in the same changing room with a transgender person"* (12.5%), *"Gay sportspeople should not kiss each other and show off their homosexuality within public sporting events"* (12.5%), and *"I would never be part of a sports club that included homosexual, bisexual or transgender people"* (12.2%).

Table 3: Summary of acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people in sport

| Item | LGBTIQ+ ¹ | | | Heterosexual ² | | |
|--|----------------------|----------|------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Tolerant | Neutral | Intolerant | Tolerant | Neutral | Intolerant |
| | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) | N (%) |
| 1. I would never be part of a sports club that included homosexual, bisexual or transgender people | 68 (88.3%) | 3 (3.9%) | 6 (7.8%) | 38 (77.6%) | 5 (10.2%) | 6 (12.2%) |
| 2. If I were a coach, I would not feel comfortable knowing that there is a homosexual person on my team | 73 (94.8%) | 2 (2.6%) | 2 (2.6%) | 45 (91.8%) | 2 (4.1%) | 2 (4.1%) |
| 3. If I had a child, I wouldn't like their coach to be gay or lesbian | 73 (94.8%) | 2 (2.6%) | 2 (2.6%) | 41 (83.7%) | 7 (14.3%) | 1 (2.0%) |
| 4. I would not feel comfortable hugging a homosexual rival after a match | 70 (92.1%) | 2 (2.6%) | 4 (5.3%) | 44 (89.8%) | 4 (4.1%) | 1 (2.0%) |
| 5. I would not feel at ease if it is known that my teammate is not heterosexual | 74 (97.4%) | 1 (1.3%) | 1 (1.3%) | 47 (95.9%) | 2 (4.1%) | 0 |
| 6. I would not like to get changed in the same changing room with a homosexual person | 74 (97.4%) | 2 (2.6%) | 0 | 40 (81.6%) | 6 (12.2%) | 3 (6.1%) |
| 7. I think that boys are not genetically suited for 'artistic' sports such as figure skating, rhythmic gymnastics or aerobics | 72 (94.7%) | 3 (3.9%) | 1 (1.3%) | 46 (93.9%) | 2 (4.1%) | 1 (2.0%) |
| 8. If I had a son, I would not feel at ease if he wanted to practice rhythmic gymnastics or any other mostly 'feminine' sports | 73 (96.1%) | 2 (2.6%) | 1 (1.3%) | 42 (85.7%) | 3 (6.1%) | 4 (8.2%) |
| 9. Girls who practice contact sports, like rugby, lose part of their femininity | 74 (97.4%) | 2 (2.6%) | 0 | 46 (93.9%) | 1 (2.0%) | 2 (4.1%) |
| 10. If a sportsman touches a teammate's bottom when scoring a goal, it is because he is gay | 74 (96.1%) | 3 (3.9%) | 0 | 46 (95.8%) | 2 (4.2%) | 0 |
| 11. If I had a daughter, I would not feel comfortable if she competed in rugby | 71 (92.2%) | 5 (6.5%) | 1 (1.3%) | 42 (87.5%) | 2 (4.2%) | 4 (8.3%) |
| 12. Generally, I think that girls who practice sport are too muscular | 72 (93.5%) | 5 (6.5%) | 0 | 46 (95.8%) | 2 (4.2%) | 0 |
| 13. I think that lesbians are more aggressive in sport than heterosexual women and girls | 70 (92.1%) | 4 (5.3%) | 2 (2.6%) | 40 (83.3%) | 8 (16.7%) | 0 |
| 14. It seems logical to me that sports fans would laugh at an effeminate player during a game | 72 (94.7%) | 4 (5.3%) | 0 | 41 (85.4%) | 6 (12.5%) | 1 (2.1%) |
| 15. I would not like to get changed in the same changing room with a transgender person | 72 (94.7%) | 3 (3.9%) | 1 (1.3%) | 39 (81.3%) | 3 (6.3%) | 6 (12.5%) |
| 16. I would feel nervous in an openly homosexual sports club | 73 (96.1%) | 3 (3.9%) | 0 | 40 (83.3%) | 5 (10.4%) | 3 (6.3%) |
| 17. If I had children, I would not like their coach to be transgender | 74 (97.4%) | 1 (1.3%) | 1 (1.3%) | 39 (81.3%) | 5 (10.4%) | 4 (8.3%) |
| 18. I think that most girls who practise my sport are lesbians | 70 (92.1%) | 5 (6.6%) | 1 (1.3%) | 41 (85.4%) | 6 (12.5%) | 1 (2.1%) |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|----------|----------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 19. The image of lesbian sportswomen kissing each other to celebrate a victory should be avoided in sport events | 70 (92.1%) | 4 (5.3%) | 2 (2.6%) | 35 (72.9%) | 9 (18.8%) | 4 (8.3%) |
| 20. Gay sportspeople should not kiss each other and show off their homosexuality within public sporting events | 70 (92.1%) | 5 (6.6%) | 1 (1.3%) | 34 (70.8%) | 8 (16.7%) | 6 (12.5%) |

Note. LGBTIQ+ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other.

¹ Internal consistency (Cronbach's α) for this sample was .94.

² Internal consistency (Cronbach's α) for this sample was .95

Qualitative

Phase two of the research project involved collecting qualitative data.

Participants who engaged in the phase one quantitative survey were invited to participate in the qualitative component as well. Sixty-seven of the participants who undertook the questionnaire provided their name and email for a voluntary follow up focus group or individual interview. Those who responded were booked into their preference of either a focus group or individual interview at a convenient location such as a Flinders University meeting room, cafe or local library. Thirty-one participants who had completed the online questionnaire participated in focus groups (n=13) or individual interviews (n=18). There were a range of key stakeholders (n=12) such as coaches, executive staff, trainer's, committee members, and officials. All key stakeholders were ex-sporting participants in their own rights. Twenty-four of the participants were still actively involved in sport. The other participants were ex-sporting participants (n=7). Ages ranged from 16 years (with parental consent) to 62 years of age (*mean*=31). Four participants did not disclose their age.

A semi-structured interview guide was utilised with questions that included:

- In what ways does your sporting club advocate for inclusion in sport?
- Who are the leaders of inclusion at your sporting club? How do they 'lead'?
- What are your perceptions and experiences of homophobia in your sporting club?
- What lessons can sport learn about promoting safety and inclusion in sport?

-
- How does language and the sport environment impact how you experience sport?
 - What improvements in attitudes, behaviours and/or policies have been made to include LGBTIQ persons in sport?
 - In what ways does your sporting club accept or reject sexual diversity?
 - In what ways does your sporting club accept or reject gender diversity?
 - What opportunities can be seized by your club to promote safety and inclusion?
 - What aspects of sport positively model inclusion and should be celebrated?

Participants and key stakeholders

The break-down of participants in the focus groups and individual interviews were as follows:

- Of the 31 participants that took part in the interviews 24 were Adelaide metropolitan-based;
- There were 4 participants that were from Asian/Middle Eastern origins;
- There were 3 participants from rural and regional South Australia.

The intention of the qualitative component of the report was to capture both mainstream and niche sports. Table 1 illustrates the sport or recreational activities discussed, number of participants involved, including a both active participants and ex-participants. Table 2 displays the sports in which stakeholder participants are involved. It was essential to view both mainstream and niche sports experiences. These narratives comprise the richest qualitative dataset on sport and the LGBTIQ+ community to date in South Australia, and as such, offer naturalistic generalisability for the reader. Furthermore, while the number of participants captured within the qualitative component totalled 31, the data covers a wide variety of sports ($n=39$) that are represented across the South Australian landscape. It could be argued that traditional sports may have historically imbedded gendered ideologies, particularly where masculinities and femininities are concerned. These can have significant influence upon constructions of perceived sexualities as well; including conforming to homogenous, heteronormative ideologies. However, there may be reason to

hypothesise that newer, potentially niche, sports may not have to conform to traditional gender norms.

Table 4: Participant representative sports

| Sport/recreational activity | Active Participants | Ex-Participants | Total |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Women's soccer | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Men's soccer | | 4 | 4 |
| Rugby (all codes) (women) | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Rugby (all codes) (men) | | 1 | 1 |
| Swimming | | 3 | 3 |
| Dragon boating | 3 | | 3 |
| Netball | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| Football | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Gym | 3 | | 3 |
| Softball | 3 | | 3 |
| Basketball | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Yoga | 3 | | 3 |
| Water Polo | 1 | | 1 |
| Surf Life Saving | 1 | | 1 |
| Hockey | | 1 | 1 |
| Target Shooting | 1 | | 1 |
| Larping | | 1 | 1 |
| Athletics | 1 | | 1 |
| Medieval re-enactment | 1 | | 1 |
| Dance (varying types) | 3 | 1 | 4 |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Sailing | | 1 | 1 |
| Boxing | | 1 | 1 |
| Tennis | | 3 | 3 |
| Table Tennis | | 2 | 2 |
| Frisbee (incl. Ultimate frisbee) | 2 | | 2 |
| Cricket | | 2 | 2 |
| Volleyball | | 6 | 6 |
| Badminton | | 1 | 1 |
| Power lifting | | 1 | 1 |
| Cycling | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Running | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Gaelic football | | 1 | 1 |
| Lacrosse | | 1 | 1 |
| Brazilian Jiu Jitsu | 1 | | 1 |
| Martial arts | | 3 | 3 |
| Jada | | 1 | 1 |
| Baseball | | 1 | 1 |
| Squash | 1 | | 1 |
| Golf | 1 | | 1 |
| Rowing | | 1 | 1 |

Table 5: Key Stakeholders

| Sport/recreational activity | Total |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Women's soccer | 1 |
| Men's soccer | 2 |
| Rugby (all codes) (women) | 1 |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Swimming | 1 |
| Dragon boating | 3 |
| Netball | 1 |
| Football | 1 |
| Softball | 1 |
| Basketball | 3 |
| Water Polo | 1 |
| Badminton | 1 |
| Squash | 1 |

Qualitative results and discussion

A number of key points developed from the data attained through extended questionnaire responses ($n=183$), individual interviews ($n=18$) and qualitative focus groups ($n=13$). A thematic analysis was undertaken to carefully identify developing themes as well as the key issues identified by participants as being significant within their sporting community or organisation. Some of these issues may be idiosyncratic to the sport or organisation irrespective of their size or footprint on the South Australian sporting landscape. Nevertheless, the voices of these participants have been heard and need to be documented.

Theme: Sport is Sport

Overwhelmingly, there was universal recognition from majority of participants that *sport* is the primary focus of sporting engagement. This includes factors such as skill development, competition, physical activity and health, to name a few areas. It was further identified that “everything else that comes with sporting involvement is secondary”. This sport-focus ideology is further intensified the higher the competition level according to the participants. Accordingly, elite level competition has rigorous training and an intense focus on performance in competition. Often this ideological perspective associated with high-level athletes, sporting clubs and organisations can thwart the broader, more holistic, elements that sport can provide. The “win at all costs”, at the expense of an

encompassing inclusive approach, to sport can be rewarding for some yet not provide the ultimate benefits that sport can provide. As a participant claimed:

It's like, right, we're here to play and we're here to train. If you've got other things, well we don't want to hear about that, we just want you to play the game, sort of thing.

This places the entire report into a particular context given that many athletes within this study have identified that sport, and success, is the key driver as to why they are involved. However, it was also widely acknowledged that a key element that motivated sporting involvement was social interaction. The comments below are indicative of the type of perspective held by many of the participants.

These are people that you spend, it's like a job, you're there, you see them all the time every week, I see them more than my family. So, they are my family in some degree. It depends on what you want.

At football, you are just there for football. You don't have to be there – it's what I love to do and, in the club, everyone's there for that one thing.

You're there for the sport and for the social interaction.

While it was clear that for many, the notion of sport was a driver for engagement and participation, a number of key themes surrounding complexity of gender roles, gender norms and stereotypes, and language within sporting environments increased the complexity of the sport experience. Noteworthy, and despite there being only three transgender participants in the research, the issue of transgender athletes was raised on numerous occasions within focus group settings, and individual interviews. Certainly, the impact and issues of transgender people in sporting contexts was discussed, while inclusion and diversity were deliberated at length. The main tenet of the discussions tended to focus on governance and the responsibility that leaders of sporting organisations and associations need to be “champions of equity” leading inclusion using a “top down” model. This means creating and implementing appropriate policies and procedures for inclusion to

occur. It also means applying sanctions when policies and procedures are not adhered to. In addition to this it was articulated by many that there is a sense that some sporting environments, often niche sports, are far more welcoming and inclusive than their larger sporting counterparts with strong historical ties to gendered orientations and traditional social and cultural ideologies where gender and sexualities are concerned. As one participant stated, “sport’s pretty powerful and important to it – cuts through a lot of stuff”. This sentiment demonstrates the impact that sport has on people’s lives, in particular the importance of inclusion in sport.

Theme: Gender roles, norms and stereotypes

Importantly within this research, there was an acknowledgement that there has been a gendered shift in the “culture” in particular, gender-oriented sports in Australia. Many of the participants cited the inclusion of the Women’s Australian Football League, which has coincided with an increase in girls’, and women’s, participation in this historically masculinised sport. However, it was noted that many sports continue to be gendered constructs dictated by traditional gender roles, gender norms and gender stereotypes. There has been a long history of sports being gendered, which was identified by participants. Given the socially constructed and embedded nature of these ideologies, it was also acknowledged that it would take ‘a long time’ for social, cultural and political influence to deconstruct, or perhaps, reconstruct gender norms and sport. The two prominent sports that were identified by participants as continuing to display gendered ideologies were that of netball and Australian football. Indeed, many argued that traditional gender roles, norms and stereotypes were all still highly fostered within these two sports, tempering wider perceptions about the ‘progress’ of girls and women’s involvement in sport. A participant from a regional football/netball club reflected on the continued traditional gendered roles established within the club by stating:

100%, so the netballers, they were the ones who did the canteen and they were the one who would do the cake sales and the boys played the footy and drank the beer. Very gendered.

The previous quote is a representative sentiment that filters through much of the data

and illustrates traditional gender roles and norms remain strong in sporting communities. Often these sporting gender roles, norms and ideologies commence from a young age. For example, sport in schools is often separated by gender, which in turn can endorse gender segregation given the significance of school on the sociocultural system that influences normative behaviours and perspectives where girls and boys are concerned. The following claim is indicative of the type of comments raised by a number of participants around gender, sport and schooling, and where a good deal of negativity was created, maintained and perpetuated.

Yeah, yeah because you definitely see that culture, or I certainly saw that culture emerging at school, and it was, you know the sports ground was the place where that kind of culture, that kind of negative culture really thrived.

The disparity between males and females with respect to sporting strength, power, speed etc is accentuated at puberty. It can also be argued that the way in which gender is constructed at this point in time as a consequence takes on a heteronormative ideological perspective. That is, as some of the participants in this research alluded it is not uncommon for individuals, schools and sporting organisations to adhere to the beliefs that girls are not as skilled or “as good” as boys in sport simply as a result of the seemingly greater physical aspects such as muscularity and strength associated with gender. This concept is widely understood as ‘the natural inferiority’ complex. While gender segregation in sport and physical education still exists in schools, there has been a gradual cultural shift (see generational shift section below), towards challenging the somewhat antiquated views surrounding traditional notions of gender within physical and sporting contexts. Previously, traditional notions of gender could have acted as a deterrent for sporting participation. Alternatively, it may have been a catalyst for girls to prove their sporting worth, whereby girls continue to explore how they perform gender in sport. This may influence the intrinsic nature of sport and the inherent worth that sport can provide. Girls and women should not feel the need to prove themselves against, and to, boys while simultaneously having to display socially constructed feminised behaviours that are part of accepted gender norms.

Women who do attempt to disrupt gender stereotypes and play what are

classified as traditional masculinised sports such as the football codes of Australian football, Gaelic football, soccer and rugby, are frequently labelled as masculine, 'man-like', or lesbian. Female participants involved in this research who played these sports stated that within these sporting clubs and environments, sexual diversity was of little significance and that sexually diverse individuals were accepted given the diverse nature of the cohort involved. Such environments created a form of normalisation around sexual diversity. As one of the women who played a masculinised sport claimed:

We're all on the same page, we're all women who have chosen to play a sport that already doesn't subscribe to femininity

While the comment above is significant and empowering, this was at odds with the perception of the broader sociocultural environment in which we live. Consequently, other sporting codes were also seen in a similar light to the masculinised sports mentioned previously, including softball, lacrosse and basketball. The women involved in these sports were generally regarded as lesbian by "outsiders looking in". This has the potential to create negative effects on young girls wanting to participate in such sports irrespective of their sexualities. Some girls may be straight, or gay, and not want to be labelled as lesbian, while other girls who may indeed be lesbian may simply not be ready to come out yet. Playing such sports could ultimately "force their hands" to come out. Clearly this may have far reaching implications for perceptions where family, friends and broader society are concerned.

Oh, from the time I played. I mean, I came out to my family when I was 15, probably because I was naïve. But I played basketball quite seriously, and I remember being sledged on the basketball court a number of times, and then when I got into coaching, I had an allegation made against me by a player, who herself, was gay, but because she didn't get time at a state national championship, she alleged that something inappropriate had happened, and it was clear that it wasn't, it was just about her being disgruntled about not getting playing time, and that came out in the end. But to have to go through that, as a coach, when I was very much aware my whole career, as a player and a coach, about even being in the same change room as other women or coming in to talk

to my team. And I shouldn't have had to do that, but I was aware of it all the time and took precautions so that I wouldn't put myself in a situation where allegations could be made against me, false allegations, only to substantiate whatever their goal was. But I guess, I am one of eight children, so I'm very fortunate that I became quite assertive as a result. And look, I lost a really good friend when she was twenty-four, because of that, so, yeah.

A number of examples were raised within this research to highlight the plight of women and the implications through labelling. One heterosexual female who played soccer reported that her sexuality was constantly questioned due to her sporting choice.

I guess it's a shared, the external – yeah, so definitely, you have to – it's almost like if you play football and you're not obviously playing into a female stereotype that you almost have to prove that you are, in fact, straight, if you are straight, because at least I've always experienced and I definitely am probably not like the most stereotypically feminine girl but I've always had to prove almost otherwise because my whole life has been I just want to play football, I just want to be the best I've always been.

Another example emerged from a key stakeholder involved in softball who described that internally to the sport, there was a vast representation of sexualities, which were all accepted and the 'norm' within the sport. However, externally, parents would often state that they would not want to send their girls to a "lesbian feeding ground". These are powerful comments that weave into the heteronormative narrative that exists within female sports that are perceived to be masculinised in nature. Additionally, the traditional stereotypical masculine image of a lesbian with short hair, who is muscular and displays an aggressive attitude was identified by some of the participants when they claimed that some people in society perceive lesbians as the ones that are the "big, crazy one's" that can "take you out". A number of participants also identified that there is an imbedded stereotype that suggests males who undertake seemingly feminised sports and activities such as dance and yoga are perceived as gay. This

demonstrates the stigma that continues to exist for both females, and males, related to sexual diversity, and being 'different' from gender and sexual norms. Where girls and women are concerned the participants identified that gendered norms constitute that females must conform to gendered expectations such as girls being "girly" by dressing in socially constructed "feminine attire and being emotional" while males "need to be strong". Females who partake in sports that are traditionally masculine are viewed as "different" or "othered", which is not conducive to encouraging participation or retention in these sports, particularly for those who simply want to play the sport and just "fit in". A transgender male articulated that when he was younger, prior to transitioning to a male he was bullied and expected to play netball. This is despite the fact that this individual had "grown up in a soccer family" and desired to play soccer. However, given that he was a girl at the time there was an expectation that she had limited knowledge, skill or aptitude towards the sport. These negative experiences meant that, for many years, this individual did not participate in any sport as a consequence of the strong gender norms, stereotypes and expectations that society and others placed on him.

When I was younger with the netball, I don't remember anything specifically it was, it, because I'm trans, so I was in a women's team. And it was just a girls' sport thing, because that, they netball if, they thought men played basketball thing that was kind of their thing.

With regards to men and sport, *toxic masculinity* is an omnipresent concern within traditional masculinised sporting environments and clubs. Academics such as Eric Anderson (2002,2015,2016,2017) have argued in recent times that hegemonic masculinity is diminishing and a more inclusive form of masculinity is upon us (Anderson, 2016; Piedra et al., 2017). Masculine hegemony is often represented through strength, toughness, muscularity, absence of emotions and, being heterosexual. By not conforming to these socially constructed masculine ideologies, such men are placing themselves at risk of being labelled "different" and therefore ostracised from mainstream masculinity. They are also at risk of being labelled, as some participants alluded, "gay, weak, pussy, faggot, pansy,

poof or feminine". These same participants also identified sports and the heteronormative culture of many as being a key driver of these labels within "Australian society". They argue that a toxic form of masculinity has led to discriminatory behaviour, ignorance and a lack of respect. As one of the participants stated:

I do think that because of the competitiveness in sport it does sort of breed that really sort of toxic and masculine kind of environment which is, I think unhealthy for, well for, anyone in it, but particularly for anybody who identifies as anything out of the norm or out of the sort of hegemonic majority.

An area of interest that was articulated in several interviews and focus groups related to the way in which men, involved in masculinised sports, such as Australian football and rugby, continued to dress up as women, often in fund raiser events as a form of fun' and 'hilarity'. It was also raised that this could also be used as a form of light-hearted punishment for misdemeanours on the field or at training. The participants who discussed these events did not find these sanctions appropriate and condemned this behaviour as exclusionary.

I thought this was a classic example of the footy club culture putting up a prize for the best same gender dance and as you can see from the photos it is all men dressed in skimpy women's clothing, making fun of queer people.

It should be recognised the gender discrepancy across a range of modalities exists within sports despite the surge of efforts of governments and sporting organisations to bridge the ideological gap. It can be argued that sports remain a largely masculinised domain particularly with respect to areas such as prize money, sponsorships, endorsements and television and viewing rights, to name a few. However, sports are also a masculinised domain given that for majority of males it is a rite of passage into successful boyhood, adolescence and manhood (Drummond, 1996). It is a form social and cultural capital. Given the imbedded nature of masculinities with particular sports this has the capacity to create an environment of fear for those young males who have yet to come out, would like to come out, or

have come out to others beyond their sporting environment. Similarly, within sports it is particularly challenging for people who identify as non-binary or gender diverse. Sporting clubs and organisations are not particularly well set up to deal with situations regarding gender and sexualities that are not regarded as “mainstream”. The segregation of athletes in sports occurs at a relatively young age, and reinforced in schools, within the family unit and in sport. Therefore, this is a process of normalisation perpetuated, in part, by the club or organisation. Potential significant challenges and possible exclusionary practices with the club or organisational environment therefore represents a risk for individuals.

I think it's just, oh, it's really hard. That's a good question because sport has just had so many years of being gendered. We watched the AFL women's footy trying to make a go of it and now there's some talented women playing that game, they play a really good game but sport's so gendered. It's going to be a big task for inclusion to be, because you've got to get past the gendered side of things, so boys play footy and girls play netball or girls play netball, not boys. So, yeah, it's going to be a long road. There're so many things that needs to change and God forbid that you're transgender, trying to play in the women's league. So, I think, yeah, inclusion's going to be a long way off. There're too many other things already that need to be accepted in sport.

In terms of sexuality, sports and stereotypes, there are certain assumptions that are made with respect to the types of sport played and ones' sexuality. For example, girls and women that play netball do not generally have their sexuality questioned. The same can be said for males who play Australian football or other similar masculinised sports. However, girls who play masculinised sports such as Australian football and cricket may have their sexuality challenged, so too the men who engage in traditional feminised sports such as diving and gymnastics. These assumptions can be harmful, as they perpetuate gender and sexuality stereotypes.

Well I, I must say I have really and very proudly noticed that they've allowed women to play footy now, which is really great for those that like footy, but they've also been labelled as dykes, hairy, hairy chested dykes. And, and look to be honest perhaps it does attract women that have more masculine features and,

and are perhaps very strong and maybe it does, I don't know, that would be another research thing. But it shouldn't be like that, it shouldn't be that you're pigeon-holed straightaway and the only girls who, who are dykes or lesbian would join a footy, a footy team, not the pretty curvy feminine ones.

With respect to stereotypes, a number of participants identified that, women in particular had to deal with issues associated with sexualisation. The notion that “sex sells” was certainly an issue that was highlighted as being important within women’s sports. Noteworthy was the fact that the participants claimed that women’s exposure at an elite level, such as the Australian Football League Women (AFLW), which was frequently raised throughout, would assist in decreasing sexuality stereotypes. However, they also stated that society needs to change its perception of women in sport, in order for them to be seen as *not* hyper-sexualised, and appreciated for their skills, talent and athletic competence. As one participant stated:

(We need the) courage to believe that people will come to these games based on the talent of the players, not on any perceived sex appeal.

Importantly, as this theme has identified, gendered norms, roles and stereotypes in sport create limitations, are exclusionary, and can have harmful consequences for both heterosexual and homosexual males, females, transgender people and those who identify as gender non-binary.

Theme: Gender diversity

Gender diversity is a key component of inclusive practices within sports. It has been included into some sports well such as archery and Live Action Role Playing (LARPing). However, these are somewhat fringe sports in terms of the manner in which they are accessible to, and utilised by, the masses. Indeed, the majority of mainstream sports have not adapted to the changing nature of gender diversity within contemporary western society. As it has been identified, many contemporary sports remain gender-specific or have gender-specific based competitions. According to participants the greater the level of gender diversity within a sporting club or organisation, the more welcoming, accepting and inclusive the sports club or organisation is likely to be.

Examples of gender-specific individual sports such as tennis, or team sports such as Australian football that harbour dominant gendered ideologies appear to create significant barriers for gender diverse or non-binary people. A participant reflected this when they explained how confronting it would be to be gender diverse in a sport such as surf lifesaving:

With surf lifesaving, you have to be so open with your body, you have to – you're running around in swimsuits and stuff and if someone who isn't sure of their gender, it wouldn't be something that they'd be comfortable with doing and I think that has reduced the amount of people who feel like they can get involved and I think that's why the policies haven't really arisen in that aspect because it's such a sport where you have to be so open with your body and accept it and that sort of thing.

Within the qualitative component of this research, three participants identified as transgender. However, there was a good deal of discussion around transgender athletes that took place from a multitude of the other participants. It was clear that many of the participants irrespective of their own gender or sexuality experienced a degree of confusion surrounding the entire issue related to transgender people and the sporting community. The overarching discussion tended to centre on morals, ethics and pragmatic aspects associated with the physiological elements. These included muscular strength within the context of a sporting or athletic competition. Noteworthy, it was acknowledged that transgender people endure a challenging time within sport. The recent highly visible example of Hannah Mouncey, the transgender woman who applied, and was rejected, to play AFLW was commonly cited and used as an example of a transgender sporting experience, albeit somewhat negatively.

M: There's a little bit of a controversy actually, and I know there's one recently with a former – a man who transgendered into a woman, who's playing AFL and broke somebody's arm or something. ... (Background noise) Shannon or something – Shannon Malone or something?

Q: Hannah.

M: Yeah, Hannah Malone (Mouncey) – something like that. And that's actually

an issue that's been around in combat sports for a while, is that when someone's growing up to be a man and has got broader shoulders and thicker wrists and extra muscle mass, that issues around competing against women. And there's been some – just like that AFL person – there's been a few fighters who were men and transgendered into becoming a woman, who think it's an unfair advantage. And there's that – was it Caster Semenya or something – the South African sprinter who was – had a strange chromosome arrangement?

Some participants stated that gender divisions within sporting competitions are there for a reason, indicating that there is a physiological difference between the binary genders, and that is why there are separate competitions for males and females. Some participants explicitly stated this physiological difference, and in particular muscularity, is why a transgender person should not participate in a team sport. As one participant stated, “if they want a fair game, there will be barriers”. There was a sense of the “unknown” with the participants' perception of the physiology, unknown risks related to safety, concerns about (dis)advantage relating to performance, risk aversion and a level of duty of care to all sporting participants. While it was clear there was a level of confusion surrounding transgender athletes and sports, there was an additional lack of clarity among key stakeholders who were unsure what to do with respect to transgender people who are in the process of transitioning.

Q: So, it's that welcoming environment. What lessons can sport learn about safety and inclusion in sport?

A: Well I think one of the things I came across was not really understanding what the problem is for a transgender person transitioning in terms of changing rooms for instance and it was this – they had the attitude in this room where I had to get permission from the females, so to speak, to be female. Otherwise, I couldn't use their changing room.

Q: Okay.

A: Since I didn't get that permission, they expected me to use the men's change room.

Q: So how did that impact your experience then?

A: Yeah it was very upsetting ... (Unable to understand – background noise). It wasn't their fault – they just didn't understand. They thought they had a right to choose whether I should go into their changing room or not to choose whether I was female or not – education.

Noteworthy, other participants wanted to find the most appropriate solution to ensure that transgender people are included in sport. They argued that until this is established, at the very least mutual respect is required in order to “move forward”. Some people were unsure as to “the appropriate solution”. One transgender woman discussed that there are biological and medical issues and that she “would love to see get solved”. She suggested that medical technological improvements would decrease current barriers in existence for transgender people in sport. Additionally, there is a perception that transgender males would not be able to compete with cis men. It was noted that several of the participants had played in sporting teams with, or against, transgender sporting participants. One example provided was a transgender woman playing in a participant's soccer team. Despite initial reservations by team members it was suggested that everyone was “cool” with it. Both the team and opposition competitors alike were seemingly inclusive and accepting of this participant, whom was not able to play soccer in her own country. This particular club sought the counsel of the governing associations in order to seek clarity around this participant playing soccer for them. It was clear that as a club, they were unsure as to the rules, regulations and policies surround transgender individuals and soccer involvement. A research participant poignantly stated that it “shouldn't be a thing”, inferring that one's sexuality simply should not matter, and should not be a source of confusion for sporting clubs.

A number of the participants identified that sporting clubs and organisations are “just not well set up to cater for transgender participants” within their club or organisation. This includes infrastructure in terms of having adequate change room facilities to accommodate for a variety of sexualities, nor the education and training, which is critical in moving forward. For example, a swimming coach stated that, “I don't feel we have the tools including education or expertise on how to help the sporting participants who may identify as transgender”. While

there was a discourse surrounding facilities, including change rooms, as mentioned, for transgender people, there was a perception of transphobia related to change-room access.

A: Yeah, I mean policies and procedures – what do they do about somebody who comes and says they're transgender? – they understand that what the problem is which changing room do you go and get changed in. It's a really basic sort of problem to have clear guidelines about...and understand what the issues are and the programs I guess....and make sure they understand what they want to be called.

Arguably the major factor that needs to be taken into consideration with respect to transgender athletes within sporting clubs and organisation is the lack of consultation that has occurred and the need to increase the level of awareness and education that surrounds this important aspect. According to participants the lack of education and development of policy is a significant area of concern that needs to be addressed immediately within the sporting landscape.

And one of the ones that kind of more difficult at the moment is the transgender policy, and I feel they kind of got left out a little bit, and you know, we talk about marriage equality and we didn't really talk about transgender. We didn't really give them a platform to talk about their level of discrimination, which I would imagine, because I'm not transgender I don't definitely know, but I would imagine it was much, much worse than the discrimination I've experienced. But so, I'm just not aware of any policies. And yeah, look there might be some policies, but I'm not aware of them. It's alright for the Office of Rec and Sport or other state bodies to say you have to provide a welcoming environment and not be discriminatory against anybody, because that's the legislation, but for the people on the ground in club land and association land, what does that mean?, you know, and how do they do that, and how do they deal with their biases. So, no, I'm not aware of any legislation in South Australia.

Theme: Language

Language associated with gender and sexualities within a sporting context has the capacity to frame a culture within a club or organisation. According to the participant's negative language, including, sexist and homophobic language, in addition to swearing did not equate to positive experiences for them. Indeed, sexist comments with negative connotations such as "you throw like a girl" or "you kick like a girl" and homophobic language such as you "throw like a sissy" and "get that dyke off" were commonly reported. These derogatory comments are common occurrences in the sporting context and have the capacity to significantly impact enjoyment and engagement and future involvement (Waldron 2016; Lenskyj, 2003).

Participants identified that it is not uncommon for verbal homophobia to be directed personally towards women in particular who challenge the stereotypical archetype of a traditional "feminised woman" and, those who do not comply with a traditional heteronormative "look". Women with, for example, short hair, stocky build, muscular and have louder, deeper voices are often the "easy targets" of verbal homophobia as these women do not comply with the socially constructed norm of a feminised woman. The sporting arena provides an opportunistic environment for opposition teams and athletes to sexually vilify athletes who they may regard as LGBTIQ+. While vilification is often produced as a consequence of frustration, it can also be a premeditated means through which players attempt to mentally destabilise their opponents.

I think it's like language, it's super important. It's a massive thing. Like if you identify as a queer person and you're out there playing this super intense sport, where you're getting smashed and then someone throws a slur at you, like that's hard. That doesn't make you feel good, especially out there. Because you play rugby because you love it, you have to, you have to love it to play it because it's such a crazy intense sport, and I'm not saying you expect those things at all, but if you are out there doing it and playing the sport and then someone just throws something at you, like, it can wear you down, for sure.

Most of the participants in this research identified that verbal homophobia and gendered discrimination are disrespectful and not appreciated within the context of sport. However, that does not mean that it does not occur. Indeed, it is argued to be

widespread and potentially endemic given there is little recourse associated with forms of vilification. Often it is one individual's word against another's. This was certainly identified as an area of sport that should be addressed immediately. Noteworthy, a number of participants across a range of sports including, volleyball and soccer stated that they dreaded playing specific teams due to the fear of sledging directed at their sexuality.

I can't remember anything specific that was said, but that would be, always be the point of attack whether it be, whether it be specifically homophobic sledge or whether it would be gendered in terms of making comments about how particular players represented their gender or chose to you know outwardly portray their gender. Because it was a mixed team and we had all kinds of people playing, we had, you know, feminine men and masculine men and feminine women and masculine women and sort of, you know, a spectrum in between.

Oh, it's more just a bib – a lot of the teams that I've played against have been really big stereotypes of lesbians on the other teams, like short hair and they are the ones who are the most aggressive and.... and take you out and you always think that they are the big, crazy ones on the other teams.

The participants within this research made it known that open dialogue and communication, using appropriate language and correct terminology where sexualities and genders were concerned was crucial. They claimed that it was a key to breaking barriers, reinforcing gender equality and creating inclusive and welcoming environments, specifically surrounding the retention of diverse genders and sexualities. One of the residual consequences might be a feeling of paralysis, whereby individuals within sporting clubs feel 'tentative' about using the wrong language. This challenge reflects a priority area for further support for sporting clubs. Nonetheless, using the appropriate language and terminology in discussions is an essential element of inclusion. Given that as humans we are socially constructed to adopt particular language and behaviours from our social environment from a young age, it is crucial that inclusive speak, together with inclusive actions, are created and adopted from a young age (Symons et al., 2010; Waldron, 2016). Indeed, it was noted that transgender participants within this research lamented that a deliberate lack of

effort to use the correct pronouns and language can be exasperating and exhausting.

Q: What about language – in terms of how does language impact your experiences?

A: Yeah the strange thing with.... most people I meet often call me him, or sort of her, or things like that, and yeah and I think there's variation in how hard people take that – how hard a transgender person reacts to that. But I know from the highest profile one transgender person in the world to the least high profile like me we all suffer to different degrees. But I am pretty sure that.... so it's an important thing to try and be respectful. You might not always get it right but who cares for me. Good on you, you sometimes get it right.

Q: It's that sort of giving it a try and that acknowledgement that they are trying to make change, is that what it's more about then?

A: Well for me, but I would say there is a range of sensibilities and people getting really upset about being called the wrong gender, and then you have people that don't want any gender and so you go (shrugs shoulders).

Currently, rugby, as an organisation in South Australia, are setting a good example by trying curb sideline behaviour, including any gendered or sexual discriminatory behaviour and language.

Q: In terms of their policies, you said there was an anti-discrimination one, are you aware of any other specific policies in terms of?

A: Yeah, so around the game, so referees have the ability to do either like, if there's on-field slurring or things like that, straight away they can either red card a player, but that could be whether it's like racial or homophobic comments and things like that, or comments made to the referee. Because rugby's a game where only the captain can talk to the referee. And if comments are made to the referee, it's up to the referee's discretion whether they can go like you know, 'no', 'nope', or they can go 'oh, nah', like penalty or they can give penalties or yellow cards. So yellow card is like 10 minutes in the sin bin, like in

the naughty chair I call it, and then red card is for like a far more serious offence where you're off for the rest of the game and you're going to go face judiciary. So, in the discrimination, it's up to the referee if he were to hear something, or she, I should say that, because I referee as well, but also in saying that, they all call me sir on the field, because it's just a respect thing. But the referee has the ability to say 'nope', not okay, you're going to go face tribunal or judiciary because of comments that are made.

Q: So, there's a system in place?

A: Yeah, that exists through the laws of rugby and then also you can cite incidents as well. So say where opposite teams, and I call you something in a game and the referee doesn't hear it or whatever, you can approach the union and say well, there was an incident that happened, I want to put in a citing incident and then if there's evidence and things like that, so it can be really hard to prove, but if there is evidence you can cite me and then I can go to judiciary as well, or the Burnside Club could face a penalty. You can do that for off-field incidents as well. So, say you have spectators that are being really, really rowdy, they might be abusing a particular player for whatever reason, and then if I catch it on film or something like that, I can say well, you know, it's not okay. And likely what will happen is the union will then approach the club and say we've got an issue, this happened, you need to sort this out. If something doesn't happen from that then potentially it will go to judiciary, but yeah. Judiciary is more for on-field things, and then there's like citing and things like that for off-field incident.

Theme: Homophobia

Homophobic language, attitudes and behaviour

Homophobic language is insidious and has the capacity to impact members of the LGBTIQ+ community in many and varied ways. It is clear that in mainstream sports homophobic language continues to be used frequently. Participants in this research identified the following homophobic terms that they hear on a regular basis during sport participation:

-
- Poof
 - Poofers
 - Dyke
 - Gay
 - Fairies
 - Fag

Participants within the qualitative focus groups and in-depth interviews identified that homophobic language is used regularly. However, they did claim that this language might not always be used in a literal manner and intent behind the use of these terms. Regardless the homophobic language was used in a derogatory way to offend and mentally challenge opposition players.

Well I think language impacts your experience of everything. And yeah in terms of that sledging that did, I think had we not been sort of a supporting and fairly large team I think that would have seen us out of the competition for those experiences. Because I do remember sort of a palpable and sort of tangible feeling of bracing ourselves for playing against certain teams in that competition because we knew it would happen. And you know in volleyball where you have like the service rotation you know, when you're up to serve, you know, you'd have everybody on the opposing team watching you for sporting reasons, but that's when it would happen. And you just sort of line up, you'd go and put your foot on that line and go to serve and just, firstly hope you did a good serve because otherwise if you didn't the reason would be that, you know, the reason would be given a sexual connotation or it would be gendered or you know that would be why you're accused on not performing.

Significantly a number of females in this research, who identified as gay, were adamant that the word *lesbian* has severe stigma attached to it. They discussed how confronting it is to be called a lesbian. Indeed, one participant specifically claimed to have a physical reaction to the word *lesbian*, "It makes me feel physically sick". This is a very important issue that has been raised by these participants who are a part of the LGBTIQ+ community particularly with the way in which the term *lesbian* creates feelings of disquiet amongst gay women.

Even if you're a woman that is really good at football, you're probably going to be called a dyke or something like that, you're just a lesbian, sort of thing, that's why you're good.

And also, like, on the opposition maybe, it was used as an insult, less within the team but if an opposition had players which were perceived as gay or manly, or something like that, they would sometimes be derided, derided, like insulted using the gay or insults like that.

Like there's a bit of shame associated with the fact that, oh everyone who plays this sport is gay, and like, with the Gaelic team, I never felt being part of the team. I felt really comfortable and accepted and stuff, but when I tell other people that I play Gaelic football, I always feel the negative connotations of it and slightly self-conscious about it.

It can be argued that homophobic language is a form of homophobic attitudes and behaviour. However, within the context of this research homophobic language was generally confined to sporting competitions as a form of vilification or inadvertent derogatory challenges. In terms of physical behavioural acts participants had not necessarily experienced specific homophobia. They did claim that there were occasions when specific targeted harassment would take place. Indeed, it was suggested by a number of participants that once there is exposure of sexual or gender diversity within the club, team or organisation, there is potential for people to be treated *differently*. As one participant identified:

Q: So, there are certain stereotypes then that sort of come into it?

A: Definitely stereotypes, yep, and that's where I have a giggle because I think, well I'm one but I'm not this big, scary player that's – they think that you're dirty and you're going to foul each other off and act really badly just because you're a lesbian, it's actually quite funny.

Q: Does anyone ever say anything in relation to that? Have you ever said anything or anyone else in the team ever sort of reacted to someone who has made these sort of comments?

A: No, it's more they all just laugh and agree with each other and I guess me being a minority and I guess being new to the club and new to the team, I sort of didn't feel comfortable in saying, hang on a minute, you're sort of talking about me when you're talking about me. Yeah, I didn't feel comfortable enough to say that.

With respect to homophobic attitudes, discussion regularly developed around the supposed ways in which lesbians speak and dress, or their perceived level of threat based on sexuality. There were also commonly held beliefs that many straight people within sporting clubs and organisations viewed males together (i.e. gay men) as 'disgusting'.

If the Jiu Jitsu club was majority homosexual – openly homosexual men – I'm not sure that I'd want to go there.

A participant also recounted an example of homophobia that occurred within women's basketball. It was claimed that the dynamics completely changed as a consequence of a suspected *lesbian* on another team. This created, what the participant described, as a 'threat' as teammates irrationally perceived that the *lesbian* had a crush on all the women in the team. Therefore, as a result of these irrational assumptions there was a good deal of discussion, homophobic language and differential treatment towards this woman as a consequence of her sexual diversity.

A: I reckon and I was playing hockey with a group of girls who I had been through school with, most of them, we'd been mates forever so really good friends and easy going with each other and we played against this team that there was a woman on the other side that was a suspected lesbian, nobody knew for sure but she was suspected so the – most Saturdays was talking about her, whether she was or wasn't and her behaviour on the field, whether she, I don't know, looked at someone or whether she – at the end of the game you always shook hands so it was all like, oh my God, she shook my hand and she held on to it a bit longer and obviously she thinks I'm alright and, I guess, just all

that. That's probably my first memory of it, definitely. This poor woman, whether she was or wasn't, she was labelled and then just treated differently because she may have been and also the women felt really threatened because they were thinking that maybe this woman might have had a crush on them and they were just like, oh gosh, what would you do? It was really interesting, the dynamics how it changed, just one woman on the field. It was only suspected.

Q: And then the whole sport became about her as well.

A: Yeah, yep, definitely. So that's probably my first one. The rest has all just been when they're just in groups and they are always talking about homophobia and always talking about lesbians and always talking about how bad it is and even when they start talking about the men and calling them poofers and gay and it's always a detrimental thing and, yeah, so probably just more that sort of speak, that really homophobic speak around it.

Q: And always in that negative, sort of derogatory way?

A: Definitely derogatory and really threatened by it or them, I think some of them would probably actually be insulted if they thought this woman liked them and then she didn't, it sort of insults them because they're like, well obviously lesbians like every woman they see, so you're quite insulted if they don't like you.

Homophobic language, attitudes and behaviour are still prevalent, and in existence, despite the argument to suggest that that has been a decrease of occurrence across generations (Denison & Kitchen, 2015). The participants in this research were adamant that no form of homophobia should exist in general society or in sports. Given that some of the participants stated that targeted harassment can occur in sports, and a small proportion had experienced homophobic behaviour and attitudes from others, support is required to immediately arrest all forms of homophobia.

Theme: Generational shift

There was recognition that society as a whole has shifted its views related to the LGBTIQ+ community. There were numerous comparisons to previous generations and how society, including the sporting sector, has become more accepting and inclusive toward the LGBTIQ+ community. This includes that people can be more open with their disclosing their sexuality and introducing their same-sex partners. In past generations it was argued there was an intense fear based on prejudice surrounding the need to hide one's sexuality. This was stated to be both society-based, and in sports clubs, teams and organisations. It was also noted that from the early 2000s, there has been a shift away from stereotypical male and female media representation, where there was little related to anything but the heteronormative image. The participants claim that there has been a shift within current media representation.

I don't know what's driven it, but there is definitely a big change in how many sports people are out. There's probably not as many men as there are women I don't think, again not citing hard data on any of this, but like, with basketball because that was then only one that I followed, I did notice there was a year when I was injured...Yeah so I did all this tracking, anyway back to the original story, I did all this tracking and I collected a lot of data and I noticed that in the WNBA because that was the league that I was following, that was the league that was the league that was playing at the time and it was the league at that year there was 16 Australian players in it, which was massive. I noticed that there were women that would be interviewed about their family and they would appear, these players, they would appear in photo shoots with husbands and children and it would all be this whole family thing. And then there were other players where, who would never be, well that information would never be published, it was just like a no comment zone. And I sort of started to think well you know that's obviously because they represent sort of a non-normative sexual identity. But I've noticed that that's not so much a thing anymore. I actually did a whole stack of digging around because I thought 'well is there some kind of specific team policy that's preventing these women from talking. Is it their own personal fears or hang-ups or just their own concern for their career that is stopping them from being interviewed or is it a lack of

interest from the media'. I don't think it was a lack of interest from the media I think that probably would have been created quite a bit of interest. But that was, it was really actively excluded from the discourse around women's sport at that time 2001, 2002. But that's definitely changed and to a point obviously, I don't think we can mark that one down to fixed, but that's really changing, you do see like the Erin Phillips basketballer, she was on the front page of the Advertiser with her partner and their children and she's received a lot of support in that. And the image around her, like the public imagine around her is overwhelmingly positive.

It was noted by majority participants that as a society, we are less label-oriented in terms of having to identify an individual's particular sexuality. It was also argued that we tend to care much less about this than previous generations. This could be in part due to the greater level of social conscience that is held by younger people. Therefore, instances of discriminatory behaviour would not be tolerated, comparatively to previous generations.

Q: So, from that example, it still sounds like sexuality or sexual orientation can act as a barrier to participation in sport.

A: Oh, absolutely. And I guess the AFLW has done a fair bit of work on that, and again, the marriage equality campaign where you saw sports come out and support that, making statements in relation to that, and not just sports, but businesses and government departments where they actually made a declaration, well this is about all of our people not just a part of our people, and we should be advocating for all of our employees not just a percentage that don't agree or have some kind of challenge with it, because at the end of the day, that's their challenge, not ours, that's the way I look at it. But yeah, I just, I think if people were a little bit more aware and educated about it, then you probably wouldn't see – you'll still see some challenge but not what we're getting at the moment.

With respect to sporting clubs, which are often historically imbedded with a member's culture and "way of being", there can remain a fair degree of

resistance from older generations towards such aspects as diverse genders and sexualities. Specifically, this ideological resistance can emerge from committee and board members. Clearly this can be problematic with respect to creating an inclusive agenda and, considering the importance that all participants in this study stated, in having a 'top-down' approach. It was argued that without a holistic approach by the club or organisation there needed to be significant change in terms of ousting the "old guard" from positions of power such as committee and board membership. This includes the presidents and chairs. They further claimed that this was the only way in which there could be true systemic and long-term ideological and cultural change. These are powerful perspectives from the participants which is reflected by the following comment:

It starts right at the top with governance with the culture at the top, so setting an accepting culture of all people, and actually walking the talk in relation to that and not just it being these are our values and we're saying we're inclusive, but we're not actually being inclusive. So, it starts with all the policies and all the governance documents, but it's also then about creating really good role models in relation to that. And some people find that difficult to embrace, but you know, making sure that people understand that it's not a barrier, it's not a challenge, you can be a senior exec, you can participate in sport, you can be an official, you can be whatever it is, a volunteer, and it doesn't matter, you're just a volunteer or whatever, rather than all these other names that you're allocated. So, I think, and then generally, working right down with your associations. Because often people are scared of what they don't know or don't know how to create an environment of inclusiveness, so rather than try to do it, they'll just not do it. So, I think making it okay for people to participate and to volunteer and to manage, really. But it's got to be incorporated in everything that you do, and it can't be what I call a bolt-on, so you know, this is for this community, and this is for – no, it has to be part of everything you do. It's the same as a gender diverse argument, it is no different. So, there are some really good examples around gender diversity and how they've created that in terms of the – not the me-too campaign, that's to do with sexual harassment, but I can play too, or their campaigns that they've got now in relation to women getting physically active – it's no different. We just need to be seeing

those on our screen more regularly, and hearing about them more regularly on radio and out in the community, you know, without pointing to their sexual orientation or anything else.

It was recognised that latent homophobia still exists in sporting clubs and that attitudinal changes are slow, as previously identified. It was argued that much of the attitude and behavioural change was created as a consequence of the broader social and cultural changing laws, such as those associated with marriage equality and same sex relationships, as well as recognising the rights LGBTIQ+ community are equally valid in society as they in sporting clubs and organisations. Similarly decreasing the level of stigma associated with the LGBTIQ+ community in sporting clubs and organisations is pivotal to creating long-term positive systemic change.

Well definitely, definitely and I think that's, I think that's indicative of a generational change, there was a really, I don't know if you read it there was a really interesting piece in the conversation that looked at how the, I suppose accepted generations that we talk about, like the millennial and the X's and the Y's and baby boomers, and how that aligns with perceptions around sexual identity and it, I just found that that really sort of rang true. There was a, the generation before me which were really active campaigners or not, who had a certain view around things and then there was my generation and then they talked about a generation, so if you grew up in the 70s or 80s there was a particular name for it, I can't remember what it was but if you grew, if most of your childhood was in the 90s or afterwards they called it a post gay generation where an attitude, it was in the conversation it was really good I'll send it to you. Where attitudes really shifted and that's the generation that we're seeing being really active now, and I think that's driving that kind of change. I think it's, I think they called it post gay because it was, yeah, it's a generation where labels don't matter as much where there's a great deal more fluidity in by terms of sexual identity and gender.

Theme: Sexuality

According to participants sexuality is not necessarily discussed within the club environment. Opinions and comments were sometimes stated within the context of broader discussions. However, participants did not necessarily view this as a response to homophobia. Participants did hear others within their club claim that in the event of the club taking on inclusive practices for the LGBTIQ+ community, this could be at the expense of the needs of the “straight” members within the club. This type of response is common in areas where change needs to occur and yet the change seems to be challenging the order that had been create within the club or institution.

I felt like there were some people who were a bit homophobic, and they were the people that really, you know it sounds weird to say, like the cool people in the team. But that kind of thing, and their influence then, made it slightly less comfortable I think for anyone in the team who is homosexual.

One major area of discussion that emerged on a regular basis was the significant numbers of “out” women involved in the majority of football codes. As it was identified in the in the ‘gender norms, roles and stereotypes’ section, there is a higher level of lesbians and gay women in soccer, Gaelic football and Australian football, as well as softball and basketball. As a consequence, the greater proportion of gay and lesbian women involved in these sports creates a form of perceived “normalisation” where diverse sexualities are accepted, and potentially seen as part of the norm both from within and beyond the club environment. Indeed, it is not uncommon to have same-sex partners within a team or club. Women can play these sports to meet other gay women, given the higher concentration of gay and lesbian women in the closed sporting environment. However, while this can be seen as a positive aspect for gay and lesbian women, externally there may be homophobic responses from the broader straight community. As a consequence, in order for the club to grow it needs to be seen as a club that is accepting of diverse communities and yet not solely gay and lesbian oriented or “hegemonically” heterosexual. As one participant claimed in response to be seen as too inclusive:

The players themselves accept it, but as an image to the outside world the club often thinks that will be damaging to them.

It's a bit of an unspoken thing isn't it, like so a lot of soccer teams and a lot of Gaelic teams, and a lot of Aussie rules football teams will have a huge number of gay players, and this is something that I just discussed before. But despite that, despite maybe 80% of the team identifying as LBGTIQ, it's something which is kept hush hush. It's not talked about with under age teams, like the real under age teams, like under 13s, and that kind of thing. And it's something which is not really in the open at official social events of, run by the organisation and things like that, so yeah I think it needs to be taken ownership of a bit more and accepted, because it's there and the players themselves accept it. But as an image to the outside world the club often thinks that it will be damaging to them.

It was also suggested by participants that on occasions when the club was seemingly more visible, such as on open days, they might attempt to “hide away the gay” as it was commonly referred. It was argued that this act was intended to present a heteronormative image of the club, despite the number of “out” women. This process is not openly discussed. However, it is something that is recognised within the confines of the team. Noteworthy, participants in this research regarded this as problematic. Some of the participants identified that this clandestine approach to inclusivity meant that younger sporting club members are being sheltered from exposure to diverse sexualities in sporting clubs, thereby limiting the development of inclusive understanding, which is a key to education.

I don't know, like I guess if new people come to the club and stuff, like they'll be a bit of a, 'oh keep this quiet' or, and in Gaelic within the older women's team, which might have a lot of gay people, that's kind of separated from the younger levels because you don't, they don't want the young girls to be influenced, which sounds horrible but, yeah things like that maybe.

There seemed to be greater levels of definitive discussion around gay and lesbian women than that of gay males within sporting communities among the research participants in this study. However, it was claimed by many that it was very difficult to gauge the numbers of gay men involved in sporting clubs. Given that

that there are no openly gay males playing in any of the football codes in Australia may suggest that the traditional hegemonic, heterosexual, masculinities plays a dominant role in the ideology of the club environment. This could also be said of other masculinised sporting environments such as cricket and basketball. Indeed, given the historically masculinised nature of the sports it would be difficult to ascertain whether they would be welcoming of and inclusive of diverse sexualities without strong leadership and policy driven practice around these areas of inclusivity.

According to the research participants there is a problem associated with the dearth or openly gay male athletes in high profile sports, and in particular team sports. They further claim that this is a concern for young gay males who may be currently involved in team sports and therefore lack role models to whom they can aspire. They argue that having high profile athletes "come out" would assist in changing the nature of sporting club environment where sexual diversity and inclusive practice is concerned.

In terms of what opportunities, I think that again it needs to come from the big players, because that's, there's this whole concept of sort of, and prevalence of idolatry in sport you know. Sporting people are held up to such high standards and held in such high regard. And that's a big responsibility. It's their responsibility to make sure that happens, they've actually got the voice and they've got the power in this situation.

It was stated by a number of the participants that the society in which we live is now a little more receptive to diverse sexualities and inclusive practices and therefore in the event that an athlete "came out" it would not affect the way in which the games was perceived or impact negatively upon attendances. There was a perception among the participants that as a culture we need to acknowledge the LGBTIQ+ community within the context of sports, "rather than pretend it does not exist". These are important claims that cannot be underestimated. The issue lies with the way in which clubs are situated in terms of dealing with these through policy and practice. Additionally, there is limited evidence-based knowledge associated with the way in which society will deal

with the LGBTIQ+ community in sports. The argument from the participants is based around the notion of more exposure to LGBTIQ+ community in sport means a greater level of “normalisation” with respect to understanding and inclusivity. They also argue that increased exposure to LGBTIQ+ community may make it feel easier and more comfortable for young people to “come out” in the event of feeling the need to hide their hidden sexuality. According to the participants who identified as part of the LGBTIQ+ community within this research, it was important to feel included, welcomed and accepted within a sporting club, especially when still discovering and exploring one’s sexuality. Additionally, it is imperative to have other likeminded people who may have been similar processes that can assist and provide invaluable guidance and life experience with respect to understanding one’s sexuality.

It was certainly a lot more social, a lot friendlier yeah because I suppose it was a whole group of people who were interested in getting engaged in sports but saw a lot of barriers in mainstream club and association. So yeah people were just really happy to be there and there was a real, yeah it was a really lovely vibe.

Sexuality stereotypes

Sexuality stereotypes can be harmful to people throughout entire society as well as act as significant barriers to sporting participation among people of all ages. Within the context of this research it was highlighted on numerous occasions by research participants, that females who play soccer are “most likely lesbian”. Consequently, these women are labelled as “dykes”, which has been a historic social and cultural metaphor for women who play sports “like a man”. There is no physiological evidence to suggest that sporting ability in more masculinised sport is attributed to sexuality. Therefore, it can be argued to be a sociocultural phenomenon, which has more to do with subcultural, social constructionism whereby individuals who identify as a particular sexuality naturally gravitate towards others with similar sexualities. This makes these individuals feel comfortable and part of a group.

It was also noted that straight females within soccer needed to “prove their heterosexuality” and have it “displayed” which would most likely occur via being

accompanied by a male on occasions that are regarded as more “visible” than others. These include functions such as social events, award ceremonies and events where media are present. Alternatively proving one’s heterosexuality could also be displayed through having male sexual partners, which is often seen as the primary vindication of a woman’s heterosexuality. Similarly, females who participate in these types of sports and do not conform to the gendered expectations of femininity must prove their femininity in other ways.

An extremely damaging stereotype that was raised in both focus groups and interviews was the misguided association that many people hold between homosexuality and predatory connotations. A number of participants raised this issue and were concerned that it has negatively impacted LGBTIQ+ as diverse community. They also claimed that it had enormous influence over the determination as to whether an individual would involve himself or herself in a particular sport. It would also likely have a significant influence over parents allowing their children to be involved with a particular club if it was well known that the club had numerous players who identified as gay or lesbian.

Someone made the comment to my wife the other day when she was trying to recruit people – they said, “Oh, why would I send – although interesting enough, why would I send my daughter to that lesbian picking ground?”

Where women are concerned, the benefit of diverse sexuality representation in sports such as soccer and football, has the capacity to challenge traditional broader gender stereotypes. Irrespective of sexuality, women involved in masculinised sports is a positive element that promotes the image of strong athletic women in involved in non-traditional sports. This not only contests gender but also challenges constructs of archetypal femininity based on a passive form of slim and slender body aesthetics. Women doing brutal contact sports forces people in society to take notice through *being different*. As a consequence, the way in which the body moves is publicly displayed through a variety of alternative clothing and uniforms and can be heavily punished through body contact. In this respect sexuality becomes irrelevant as it promotes women in an alternative light to the historical norm.

An important point was raised by several of the bisexual participants in this research in so far as they claimed that the LGBTIQ+ community was not without its own form of

internal stereotyping based on sexuality. Participants who identified as *other than* bisexual, including gay and lesbian, also raised this. They claimed that there was a degree of segregation between those who identify as gay or lesbian with those who identify as bisexual. There is still a good deal of work to do in understanding the dynamics that exist with the LGBTIQ+ community as it is a changing, dynamic culture that requires attention more broadly, not just in the area of sporting participation.

What lessons can be learnt? Well I think sport perhaps needs to take a broad approach and not just look at it as sport. But I mean a lot of people's sporting life starts in associations that engage young people in schools, and I think that needs to be a really broad collective action in saying, in trying to reshape the culture of sport I think. I think it would be really good for, you know, the AFL to be going out to schools and going, well this is the virtues we want to promote. And I mean, that must be happening to a point, like that positive culture must be being promoted to a point because we've seen massive growth in the women's game in the last couple of years apparently. Yeah so, I think those changes are happening, but I don't think it can be through one thing. I think any change like that needs to be you know widespread and collective because it's just not effective otherwise.

Theme: Sporting organisations and clubs

Leaders/Governance

There was overwhelming commentary from the participants in this research claiming that positive, welcoming, inclusive governance from sporting boards and committees, as well as other significant leaders, is integral to club's being inclusive to the LGBTIQ+ community. Leaders can include board/committee members, coaches, team managers, captains, and individuals that exist in teams as a consequence of longevity and informal social structures. It was recognised that anyone within the club or organisation has the capacity to be champions of inclusion. However, when participants were asked about whom the leaders of inclusion in their respective clubs were, it was generally staff or volunteers with official titles who were quickly identified. It seems the process of governance together with leaders, and champions of change, are the most significant factor in determining whether the clubs are likely to

be inclusive, according to the participants in this research. There was significant discussion surrounding the notion that inclusivity must be driven from a “top down approach” meaning that leaders, such as boards, committees, presidents, CEOs, coaches and senior players need to adopt attitudes and behaviours that are intrinsically inclusive. While participants were clear that inclusivity from leadership is fundamental for clubs to be welcoming and inclusive, this same approach must be adopted and promoted by the overarching sporting associations. The participants further claimed that leadership in the highest forms, such as the CEO of a sporting organisation must be inclusive; otherwise there are serious challenges that exist to create systemic change amongst clubs at the “grassroots”. Without a broader inclusive framework from the governing body to assist the clubs on adopting change policies the clubs will struggle to develop their own set of strategies. The following comment is typical of the responses that were stated throughout the research.

So, I think something needs to come from the top level of those sporting associations to absolutely condemn that kind of behaviour and make a really, really clear assertion that there's no place for it in sport.

It was also recognised that older players, senior role models and mentors within clubs are crucial towards developing an inclusive environment and enacting inclusive practices that are visible to other team members. This includes attitudes, behaviours and language both on and off the competitive sport setting. Much of what can be learned within the club environment takes place in locker rooms, at training and in social settings. This is an approach that the participants have identified as “leading by example”. However, in theoretical terms it is the essence of social constructionism whereby younger players learn a way to “act” and understand what is socially, morally and ethically appropriate through sound leadership within their peer group. One of the participants reflected this by claiming:

I think it needs to be made very clear what constitutes inclusion or what doesn't, what constitutes an appropriate sporting culture and what doesn't, and I think that needs to be monitored and enforced and for there to be a zero tolerance in a style of leadership.

Often there is a hierarchy within teams based on skill level, and those who are the most skilful participants are at the top of this hierarchy. These leaders must be inclusive, or teams can become exclusive very quickly. It is incumbent upon the club to assist in the development of educating these senior players about inclusive practice. Simply being a good player does not provide the skills and abilities to be a good mentor or role model. It is also important for the coach to be an integral part of the inclusive narrative and practice within the club given that coaches are seen as the “next layer” following on from senior peers within the team. Participants experienced both positive and negative coaches, who are influential leaders in their own right. It seems the coaches play a pivotal role in being the conduit between the governance structure of the board and the team, senior role models and mentors, and individual players. One participant stated that they had never experienced a positive coaching leader. This participant claimed that; coaches need to set the example of what is “expected behaviour”. He also argued that leaders, including coaches, sometimes demonstrate inappropriate behaviour, and ‘will not listen’ or are ‘ignorant’.

Q: Okay, and in your own sporting club who are the leaders of inclusion would you say? Who really encourages that, that culture?

A: More or less everyone. The current club leader has, oh he's another crossbow shooter. He's been with the club for a long time and he helps pretty much everyone out. He doesn't really care what you are, who you are as long as you ask politely, he's probably going to be able to help you out with just about everything you ask. The other main member of the crossbow section of the club I suppose would be Liz Johnson. She's pretty much one of the best in the world. She has competed at a world level multiple times and she's just happy to get in more people that are shooting crossbow in general. Again, she doesn't really mind who it is, but she's been a very, very fun person to work with and learn from.

Women specifically stated the importance of having same-sex roles models and coaches within their teams and clubs. Exposure to leaders such as this provides tangible evidence that women can assume significant leadership positions within

the club. Additionally, it was claimed that the most inclusive practices that many of the female participants had experienced were associated with female coaches. For female participants who identified as a part of the LGBTIQ+ community, having an openly gay or lesbian female coach was of great benefit to their inclusive sporting experience. Noteworthy many of the female participants, irrespective of sexuality, stated that inexperienced male coaches, of female teams, tend to be 'scared' and treat them with 'softness'. They also claimed that they could be somewhat oblivious to what is going on in the team given their lack of understanding of women. While participants do not necessarily perceive that coaches need to be heavily involved in the team dynamics beyond the competitive element, having an awareness of players' sexuality is an important aspect they should know and understand. There is often a clandestine association between male coaches and the sexuality of female players. One participant specifically stated that they have been treated differently (positively) now their sexuality was exposed to their male coach. It was identified there is a strong need for more female sports coaches and increased female membership on boards and committee members. The importance of diverse representation in all facets on boards and committees was illustrated. Therefore, the need for more women "at the top" was a clear message being sent for the participants.

Yeah and it's typical of society right? A whole group of women being controlled by a man. Like, why don't we have female coaches? Like, in the teams where I've had female coaches, we've been much more successful because they understand how the game is played differently, and they understand how motivation is different between the genders. And it's true that, like there is, you know there are subtle differences, and it's just that feeling of the coach being part of the team. I've only ever experienced that with female coaches. With male coaches it always seems like there's something separate, and I guess that keys into like hiding the sexuality and stuff, they don't feel part of it, whereas with female coaches I haven't had that problem.

There was also little doubt from participants in voicing their opinion that some board members of sporting clubs and organisations need "to move on". These board members were often seen as older, white males, who are "stuck in their

ways", thereby making change difficult to implement. They also suggested that without "moving on" many policies are often out-dated and not necessarily inclusive of diverse genders and sexualities.

I think there needs to be really clear policies around it. I think there needs to be really clear ramifications for violations of those policies. I think it needs to be made very clear what constitutes inclusion or what doesn't, what constitutes an appropriate sporting culture and what doesn't, and I think that needs to be monitored and enforced and for there to be a zero tolerance in a style of leadership.

Another participant claimed:

And it's usually dependant on the hierarchy of the association that you're with. If it tends to be a younger age bracket they will be more inclusive of everyone, if it tends to be the old guard still running the show, then they will put in the rules but they'll be out aside to hide in the corner sort of thing, and there is nothing that you're able to do until you can change the old guard. Your separate clubs will be able to fix it because they will tend to be the younger ones, but the overarching association will hide it away. So, it's probably what you classify as active discrimination, but it's by the old guard not by the young ones.

There was recognition by the participants that further education is required for boards, committee members and coaches regarding inclusivity to the LGBTIQ+ community and the use of appropriate language. The emerging sport of LARPing was once again cited as good example of inclusive practice and policy development. It was claimed that policies and procedures were specific to gender, and sexuality diversity and a comprehensive member protection policy exists. There were several leaders, all of whom are inclusive, welcoming and communicate with participants. The board are regarded as friendly and welcoming, and there is a specific, trained, liaison officer to consult in times of concern. Additionally, a briefing on respectful behaviour is conducted at the beginning of each event to remind players and spectators of the underpinning

cultural values of the sport.

They just have a brief at the beginning of events where they're, no, don't be an idiot to people thing and make sure that you're not just, they just try and make sure that people have read the rules they've written thing, make, they've got it on their Facebook group. And it's, it's a thing when you sign the membership form thing you have to say, I've read, I've read all of your terms and it's, it's in that so that's cool.

Policies

Policies are crucial pieces of legislation that can have an enormous influence on the culture of a club, team or organisation. However, for many participants policies were somewhat non-existent or were merely a part of the burgeoning bureaucratic landscape. It seems that unless a participant was involved at the committee or board level of a club, then they were oblivious to many of the club's policies and procedures, specifically related to inclusion. However, some participants had a vague awareness that there would be something within their policies and procedures to ensure that discriminatory behaviour would be dealt with in their club. Problematically, they were unsure of the specifics and had little idea as to the ramifications in the event of discriminatory behaviour taking place. As one participant stated:

The policy is pretty vague, but as a statement I don't think there's anything either way to say we're inclusive or we're not inclusive, it just is what it is.

There can be a discrepancy between policies and the behaviour of the organisation/club. Apart from unambiguously discriminatory legislation, participants stated that there were no explicit policies and procedures related to gender and sexuality. LARPing was the only sport that had gender and sexuality specific policies and procedures. A number of participants stated that there are no specific policies related to transgender people, which is clearly an area that requires further investigation. In the absence of policies, it was suggested that clubs might sometimes use the policies of bodies such as Sport Australia as encompassing "catch all" guidelines in the event of clubs being unsure as to what they need to include.

Policies and procedures are integral to creating a club that is welcoming and inclusive. They can also be educative on sporting participants' requirements. Overarching policies and procedures are required in order to eliminate the potential for discrimination to occur as well as provide procedural recourse in the event that incident does arise. Many of the participants in this research claimed that, in an ideal world, all members would need to be aware of club policies and procedures. Any discriminatory behaviour, including the use of homophobic language should be sanctioned, with clear step-by-step processes, including those responsible for "ongoing follow up".

Environment, resources and facilities

A number of the participants identified the "environment" of the club as being important to the overall "feel" as to whether it was welcoming, inviting and inclusive. Environment can mean a variety of things to different people. It may include the physical, social or emotional space. Clearly a range of factors plays into the notion of environment. The creation of policies and procedures is one aspect of creating a positive social and emotional environment. However, the physical environment also needs to be taken into consideration. Some of the women mentioned the way in which the majority of sports are highly masculinised environments and seem to largely cater for males. Many examples were provided around masculinised spaces such as the weights rooms in gyms and fitness centres. This made a number of women, irrespective of sexuality, very uncomfortable. One woman stated she was "terrified" to enter the weights area of a gym for fear of the large muscular men "invading" the space.

Girls and women involved in this research identified that their needs including resources, training allocation, space and, at the elite level, pay disparity, are secondary to males. There were examples of male soccer coaches encroaching on females' soccer space at training thereby limiting the women to a smaller playing area. There were also claims of women having to use second hand equipment while males used the newly purchased items. Some participants stated that males simply had a greater a voice within sporting clubs, displaying a lack of respect for women in the club. This inequity does not inspire confidence in females participating in these sports. The comparison between resources to sports at a Government level was also provided, with claims that larger, more powerful, sports receive substantially more

resources than niche sports, making it challenging for increased participation and retention in these sports.

Resources are required for clubs, leaders, specifically coaches, parents and members which detail evidence-based acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, language and examples of the way in which inclusive clubs appear. Easily accessible instructions and guidelines would assist clubs, especially since coaches are generally under-resourced already. Importantly this is not only about women and the sporting environment in which they exist. Gay men involved in highly masculinised sports also struggle to come to terms with the traditional hegemonic masculine space created within these domains. While the statistics indicate there are no gay men involved in elite level football (all codes) in Australia there are likely to be gay men involved. Similarly, there are likely to be gay men involved in a variety of other traditional masculinised sports across all levels of sport in Australia. These environments make it incredibly difficult for men to divulge their sexuality to teammates for fear of reprisal and retribution. As a consequence of such retribution they may not feel like they want to play any longer. Therefore, in order to remain in the team is easier not to “come out” to teammates and simply play while masking one’s sexuality.

Theme: Intrinsic inclusion

One of the dominant themes to emerge was that of intrinsic inclusion within the sporting and club environment. Using the term “intrinsic inclusion” means that the majority of the LGBTIQ+ participants in this research wanted to play their sport and not be recognised as a LGBTIQ+ individual playing sport. They simply wanted to be another team member. The following quote from a participant is representative of the claim that has just been made and is representative of numerous comments made by participants:

I guess, for me, because I was in the closet or kept it hidden for so long, for me it's, I guess I don't like to announce it and I don't like it in those sort of circles because I'm a really private person because of that, to me it's just, to me it's, to not talk about it and just, I don't know, accept people for who they are and not have to advertise it, not have to have, what would you call it, meetings or all these things about

inclusion because then that's – that's what separates you, do you know what I mean? It's when you don't have to talk about it, but people just rock up to play.

Similarly, another man stated:

To me inclusion is we all just talk about each other and to each other and play the game and it really doesn't matter who you go home with at night, who you're living with or who you choose to love.

It was identified that individual sports appear to be far more “safer” for younger athletes who identify as LGBTIQ+. For example, swimming was seen by many as a sport that was inclusive of genders, sexualities and disabilities. The sport has a long history of inclusive practice and has an enormous presence within Australia as a leading sport underpinned by a significant national organisation in Swimming Australia. It was claimed that, “swimming is more equal than lots of other sports. It's more female friendly as well”. Participants also recognised individual athletes as having the opportunity to “mask” their sexuality in a far more controlled manner than in team sport environments. Further it was argued that team sports can often be quite “random” and those with louder voices and personalities can influence the overall environment irrespective of the policies and procedures that are put in place. However, where gay and lesbian women are concerned, there are certainly some sports, as identified earlier, that are more inclusive than others, such as soccer. The problem, however, is the public perception of such sports being emblematic of gay and lesbian women and therefore risk the potential of straight women gravitating away from the sport for of being label gay or lesbian. Once again, irrespective of sexuality there are major hurdles for sport to develop inclusive practices and policies given the gender divide in which we exist. The historical, social and cultural barriers within sports mean that it will take time to create systemic change. This was noted by the participants within this research as one man claimed:

It's going to be a big task for inclusion, because you've got to get past the gendered side of things, so boys play footy and girls play netball or girls play netball, not boys. So, yeah, it's going to be a long road.

Conclusion

The issues surrounding inclusive practices among the LGBTIQ+ community and sport is incredibly convoluted, confusing, challenging and dynamic. These are a just a few terms that can be used to describe the environment in which the LGBTIQ+ community exist with regards to sport, and seemingly within many other areas of life. The qualitative and quantitative data within this research has highlighted a number of issues that confront the LGBTIQ+ community where sport is concerned.

Policy and Practice

As it has been identified throughout the data the paramount importance for policy and practice surrounding inclusivity where the engagement of the LGBTIQ+ community in sport is concerned. Both insiders (i.e. athletes, coaches board and committee members etc) and outsiders (observers) agree that this is crucial for change in this area. The problem is that clubs are struggling to create strategies with respect to the way in which they develop these policies and then implement the practices. Many of the clubs are essentially run by volunteers often with little or no formal education, knowledge and understanding around issues associated with inclusivity where gender and sexual diversity is concerned. It is not uncommon for clubs to be almost 100% reliant on volunteers to keep the club functioning. This includes coaching, committee membership, fund raising and transport to name few areas. These volunteers come from “all walks of life” and are more often than not related to one of the players whether those players are their son, daughter, partner, mother, father, brother or sister. These volunteers may not necessarily be academically educated or maintain a vast range of cultural understanding in relation to changing sociocultural ideologies where sexually and diversity is concerned. Some may be opposed to this ideology; others may be champions for the cause, while others simply may not care. However, this does not make them less valuable to the club, as most volunteers are doing what they perceive to be the best thing for the organisation. Clearly education is the key, which is “easier said than done”. The need to develop education tools is incumbent upon the governing bodies for the clubs to implement in the best way

they see fit. How this is done is a significant question that requires further consultation. Another significant question is *who pays for this education and when and how do the volunteers fit it in to their lives?*

One of the other issues that can impact the development and implementation of policy and practice is the competing agendas that exist within a club. For example, a primary aim of the coach is to win games. While creating a club culture that positively values sexual diversity and inclusivity could be regarded as being important, it is generally secondary to winning as success is often seen to create a good culture. Coaches often use the mantra of “success breeds success” and “success creates a happy environment”. While this is certainly possible it is not necessarily the case with respect to developing a long-term culture underpinned by sound values, principles and practices.

A similar claim can be made about boards and committees where winning and success is concerned. While the club and coach at the “grassroots” level may be seeking change and attempting to develop long-term ideological change the board and committee may be seeking immediate success based on a number of competing agendas. For example, the board may be attempting to appease sponsors by attaining success. It is not uncommon for sponsors to place a win/loss ratio clause on sponsorship deals together with potential for sponsorship extensions based on this ratio. Ultimately, the actions placed on attempting to win are often financially driven. Therefore, while the club may espouse the virtues of being inclusive and identify the importance of developing policy and practice in the area, short-term winning and immediate success can take precedence at the expense of this development.

Targeted education and informational support

As it has been identified throughout this report a key component to inclusive policy and practice within sporting clubs and organisations is education. Irrespective of the sport, the sexual or gender diversity, the locality, or the level at which the sport is played (i.e. elite vs. community) education across all domains is paramount. Education from the “top down” is regarded as arguably the most considered and resourceful approach given that the head of the club or organisation is providing an endorsement for education around these key issues

to occur throughout the entire structure. Having a “champion of change” through education at the helm of the organisation means there is a greater chance of systemic cultural change.

The next level of change through education that is required must occur at the President / board / committee level. Endorsement and action through policy making is imperative at this level. It is where unity and solidarity are forged in order to provide a clear message with respect to what the club stands for. Once again, not all board and committee members may be well versed in matters pertaining to gender and sexual diversity and inclusivity within a sporting context. However, as a collective it will be incumbent upon this group to become educated in this area in order to create long-term change. This will need to be built into policy for future board and committee members as they change over time.

There are range of coaches that exist within sporting clubs and organisations. Some are full-time paid coaches of elite and pre-elite squads and teams. Others are part time coaches of emerging athletes while others are simply volunteers doing the best they can under the circumstances. Given that the coaches are at the “coal face” and in contact with the players and athletes the most they are likely to be the person responsible for delivering the inclusive message to players and being the “face” of the club to supporters and stakeholders, including the board and sponsors. Therefore, if inclusivity is to be adopted, maintained and perpetuated as part of a larger initiative, it is the coach that needs to be aware and selling the message to his or her athletes. Similar to committee members, some of the coaches that take on these roles have little or no education in the field of gender and sexual inclusivity. Therefore, it is up to the committee to provide the resources and support to enable education to occur.

Finally, the supporters of the team play a significant role in the culture of the club. Having educated supporters around the issues associated with gender and sexual diversity not only make the environment of the team feel more inclusive, there is potential for their attitudes, language and behaviour to be a positive educative tool for opposition supporters as well. Supporter based education can really only emerge from the way in the coach; the team and the organisation present a constant and consistent message around inclusivity at the expense of everything else. Changing a culture of a club takes time and the supporters need to be aware of the path in which the club is heading.

Sexism, sexuality and gender discrimination

Upon completion and analyses of all the surveys and interviews associated with this research project it is clear that there is a good deal of slippage with respect to the terms sexism, sexuality and gender discrimination. Indeed it can be argued that the terms are somewhat confused by the research participants irrespective of their own gender or sexual diversity. As a society we have come to use these terms interchangeably in order to assist our conversation at the time. One might argue that if confusion, and slippage of terminology, exists among participants who identify as a particular sexuality other than heterosexual, gay or lesbian, or identify as a gender other than male or female, it is clearly going to be problematic for individuals and groups who have little awareness of the LGBTIQ+ community.

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