



MONASH University

**Understanding and Reducing Homophobic
Language in Male Youth Team Sport**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) - 2022

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Dedicated to

Professor Celia Brackenridge OBE (1950 – 2018)

*Pioneer of research on ending abuse and
discrimination in children's sport*

Major contributions of this thesis

- First randomised controlled trial of an intervention designed to reduce the frequency of homophobic language in male sport
- Timeline of research on homophobic behaviours in sport
- Timeline of Australian government regulatory responses to evidence of children being harmed by homophobic behaviours in sport
- First published statistical research on the drivers of homophobic language in sport
- First published research testing the theorised relationship between homophobic attitudes and homophobic language use by male athletes
- First application of Social Cognitive Theory to understand this behaviour
- First published review of international and Australian statistical research on discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people in sport
- First published international statistical data on the homophobic victimisation experienced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual young people in sport

Tools to inform future intervention development

- Completed socioecological model illustrating the factors supporting homophobic behaviours in sport settings
- Novel causation model illustrating the social processes underpinning homophobic behaviours in sport (the LGBTQ+ Exclusion in Sport Cycle)

Abstract

The frequent use of homophobic language in sport settings is a serious child safety problem due to the harm that it causes to all young people, but particularly those who identify as gay or bisexual. As this thesis explains, this behaviour is associated with a range of negative health and social outcomes, including youth suicide, gender-based violence, and sexual abuse. This thesis responded to the urgent need for research on interventions which could be used to reduce the frequency of this behaviour. The project also had an applied focus because it emerged from public commitments in 2014 by Australian sport governing bodies to “eradicate” homophobia in sport. This manuscript contains five papers, including the first randomised controlled trial of an intervention designed to reduce homophobic language use by male athletes.

The first paper is a narrative review which assessed the current state of quantitative evidence on homophobic behaviours in sport and sought to understand why the sport sector has made little progress in addressing this problem. A key factor was found to be denial of the pervasiveness of this behaviour, which was addressed by the second paper.

The second paper is the first large-scale, quantitative study to investigate the frequency of homophobic victimisation that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth experience in sport. The study analysed survey responses from young people (N = 1173; 15-21 years) in six countries. It found nearly half of participants (46.1%) had experienced homophobic behaviours in sport (e.g., slurs, bullying, assaults). Males who came out as gay/bisexual to their teammates/coaches were significantly more likely than those who remained in the closet to report being the target of these behaviours (64.5% vs. 47.6%).

The third paper sought to better understand the factors which drive the use of homophobic language by male athletes. Current interventions are based on the assumption that this behaviour is driven by individual homophobic attitudes, whereas a vast body of

qualitative and observational research has concluded that this behaviour is normative and often thoughtless. This study responded to the need for quantitative research to better understand the role of attitudes and norms by analysing survey data collected from teenage male rugby union players (n = 97; ages 16 -18) and adolescent and adult ice hockey players (n = 146; ages 16 - 31). The study found no relationship between the homophobic attitudes of athletes and their frequent use of homophobic slurs (e.g. fag). In contrast, norm measures had a strong, positive relationship and uniquely accounted for almost one-half of the variance in this behaviour. These findings suggest that current interventions need to be refocused away from changing attitudes toward changing norms.

The fourth paper is a narrative review of research on the impact of homophobic behaviour in sport. It also critically examined the current intervention approaches used to stop this behaviour. It proposes new theories and methodologies which could be used to improve intervention approaches and provides a novel psychosocial model which can be used during intervention design to understand the social processes underpinning homophobic language.

The fifth paper describes the development of a 30-minute, discussion-based social-cognitive educational intervention that was then delivered to young male rugby players (N = 167; ages 16 - 20 years) by professional rugby union players. The paper reports the results of a cluster-randomised controlled trial used to evaluate the intervention. The study found no significant effects from the intervention on the homophobic language used by athletes nor did the intervention have an effect on the norms associated with this behaviour. The final chapter examined potential factors which might explain the results of the intervention study, including homophobic language used by coaches, the lack of oversight of volunteers who deliver sport to children, and repeated failures by the Australian Government to ensure the sport industry complies with human rights and child protection laws in sport settings. Recommendations to address these factors and inform future intervention work are provided.

Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter 1 - Introduction | 17 |
| Government and sport industry response to evidence of harm..... | 21 |
| The origins of this PhD project | 25 |
| First punitive regulatory action in response to advocacy by LGBTQ+ leaders..... | 29 |
| Key supportive regulatory action: Fair Go, Sport!..... | 32 |
| Second punitive regulatory action in response to advocacy by LGBTQ+ leaders | 34 |
| Anti-Homophobic and Inclusion Framework for Australian Sport..... | 35 |
| Connection between the Framework and this PhD thesis | 37 |
| Chapter summary | 39 |
| Chapter 2 – Research objectives, aims, and methods | 44 |
| Research objectives | 45 |
| Research questions | 45 |
| Research approach..... | 46 |
| Research methods..... | 48 |
| Chapter summary | 52 |
| Chapter 3 – Published Paper – Review of research and evidence..... | 54 |
| Review methods | 54 |
| First systematic review questions..... | 55 |
| Second systematic review questions | 55 |
| Summary of Australian evidence | 57 |
| Review of international research..... | 68 |
| Chapter 4 – Published paper – The relationship between ‘Coming Out’ and experiences of homophobic behaviour in youth team sports..... | 90 |
| About the study | 92 |
| Research questions | 93 |
| Chapter 5 – Published paper – Relationships between attitudes and norms with homophobic language use in male team sports | 105 |
| About the study | 106 |
| Research questions | 107 |
| Chapter 6 – Paper – Reviewing evidence of harm to young people from homophobic behaviours in sport and potential intervention approaches | 115 |
| About the narrative review..... | 116 |
| Objective | 116 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter 7 – Submitted paper – Effectiveness of an educational intervention targeting homophobic language by young male athletes..... | 158 |
| Intervention approach..... | 158 |
| Evidence supporting the use of professional athletes..... | 159 |
| Theoretical framework – Social Cognitive Theory..... | 161 |
| Chapter 8 – Supplementary analyses – Investigating language use by coaches | 190 |
| Methods | 191 |
| Results – Homophobic language use by coaches..... | 192 |
| Discussion..... | 199 |
| Chapter 9 – Summary of key findings and contributions..... | 201 |
| 1. What factors underpin homophobic language use in male sport?..... | 203 |
| 2. What types of educational intervention approaches could be used? | 205 |
| Major contributions of this thesis..... | 208 |
| 1. Strong evidence of failures by sport leaders and regulators to protect children from harm..... | 209 |
| 2. Statistically validated and evidence-based causation model | 209 |
| 3. First RCT of an anti-homophobia intervention in sport..... | 211 |
| 4. Advancing understanding of the role of coaches in language | 212 |
| Chapter 10 – Conclusions and recommendations..... | 214 |
| Potential reasons for failure of academic responses..... | 215 |
| Structural and institutional factors contributing to the failure of Australian Government responses..... | 218 |
| Recommendations | 222 |
| Secondary recommendations | 223 |
| Conclusion | 227 |
| Appendices | 229 |
| Appendix 1 – Survey | 229 |
| Appendix 2 – Review of research on behaviours..... | 234 |
| Appendix 3 – Review of research on interventions | 236 |
| Appendix 4 – Intervention script..... | 238 |
| Appendix 5 - Per-Protocol Analysis Results – Intervention..... | 240 |
| References | 241 |

Figures

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Figure 1. Regulatory oversight structure of sport in Australia | 24 |
| Figure 2. Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework for Australian Sport | 37 |
| Figure 3. Examples of sport-specific factors at different levels of a socioecological model.. | 50 |
| Figure 4. Excerpts from English, American, and Australian sport strategies | 91 |
| Figure 5. Anti-homophobia campaign by the Australian Wallabies..... | 160 |
| Figure 6. Examples of sport team social media posts | 160 |
| Figure 7. Factors targeted by the intervention (as indicated by red arrows)..... | 162 |
| Figure 8. LGBTQ+ Exclusion in sport cycle..... | 211 |

Tables

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table 1. Timeline of Australian Government regulatory actions | 27 |
| Table 2. Similarities between 2000 and 2014 regulatory actions..... | 40 |
| Table 3. Six Steps of intervention development and how they relate to thesis publications .. | 51 |
| Table 4. Evidence on homophobic behaviour in Australian Sport by type..... | 58 |
| Table 5. Timeline summary of Australian evidence on homophobic behaviours in sport | 59 |
| Table 6. Percentage of LGB youth targeted with homophobic behaviours | 105 |
| Table 7. Summary of evidence considered at each step of intervention development | 163 |
| Table 8. Homophobic language use by athletes and coaches (rugby and ice hockey) | 194 |
| Table 9. Relationships between athlete and coach behaviours (rugby and ice hockey) | 195 |
| Table 10. Homophobic language use by players and coaches (Rebels study) | 197 |
| Table 11. Relationships between athlete and coach behaviours (Rebels study) | 198 |
| Table 12. Outcomes form intensive support provided to the sport industry | 217 |
| Table 13. Outcomes of Australian Government regulatory responses | 221 |

Publications during candidature

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Paper 3. Denison, Erik., Jeanes, Ruth., Faulkner, Nicholas., Toole, Daniel. Relationships between attitudes and norms with homophobic language use in male team sports. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*. 10.1016/j.jsams.2020.10.018.

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Pringle, Richard., **Denison, Erik.** (In Press). Examining World Rugby's transgender ban and the perspectives of cisgender women who play rugby in England, Canada, and Australia. In Lenskyj, H & Greey, A (Eds.), *Justice for Trans Athletes*. Emerald, Toronto.

Denison, Erik., Toole, Daniel. (2020). Do LGBT pride games stop homophobic language in sport? In Walzak, L & Recupero, J (Eds.), *Sport Media Vectors: Digitization, Expanding Audiences, and the Globalization of Live Sport*. Common Ground Research Networks.

Jeanes, Ruth., O'Connor, Justen., Lambert, Karen., Bevan, Nadia., **Denison, Erik.** (2020). Evaluating LGBTI+ inclusion within sport and the pride cup initiative. Prepared for the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

Jeanes, Ruth., **Denison, Erik.**, Bevan, Nadia., Lambert, Karen., O'Connor, Justen. (2019). LGBTI+ Inclusion within Victorian sport: A market analysis. Prepared for the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

Denison, Erik., Toole, Daniel. (2019). Why is homophobic and sexist language used within ice hockey?. Prepared on request for the Melbourne Mustangs and Australian Ice Hockey League, Melbourne, Australia.

Denison, Erik., Bevan, Nadia. (2019). Creating inclusive sport environments: evidence from 2018 and 2019 surveys of Team Monash athletes and self-audits by club leaders. Prepared on request for Team Monash, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

Denison, Erik., O'Brien, Kerry., Jeanes, Ruth. (2018). Academic review of the draft "*Guidelines for the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse people in sport.*" Prepared on request for the Australian Human Rights Commission, Canberra, Australia.

Denison, Erik., Lumby, Catherine (2018). Understanding homophobic behaviour. In "*NRL Research Report: Respectful Relationships, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling*". Prepared on request for the National Rugby League, Sydney, Australia.

Denison, Erik. (2017). Homophobic Language in Sport: A Research Overview. *Pride in Sport 2016 Report*. Pride in Diversity, Sydney, Australia.

O'Brien, Kerry., **Denison, Erik.** (2017). Review of evidence on homophobic attitudes and behaviour in sport and recommended intervention approaches for use in the AFL. Prepared on request for Stand Up Events, Melbourne, Australia.

Denison, Erik., Shaw, Sally. (2017). LGB inclusion and discrimination: Research gaps and needs. Prepared on request for International Gay Rugby and World Rugby, Dublin, Ireland.

Conference papers presented during candidature

Denison, Erik., O'Brien, Kerry., Jeanes, Ruth., Faulkner, Nick., Toole, Daniel. (2019). Prevalence and factors influencing homophobic and sexist language in male ice hockey. Full paper presented at the Sport & Society Conference in Toronto, Canada.

Denison, Erik., O'Brien, Kerry., Jeanes, Ruth., Faulkner, Nick. (2019). Why do boys use homophobic language in team sport? Examining the role of prejudice, masculinity, and the desire for social capital. Full paper presented at the World Congress of Sociology of Sport in Dunedin, New Zealand.

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Jeanes, Ruth., **Denison, Erik.** (2018). Supporting and creating inclusive sport environments. Symposium presentation at the Inclusion and Diversity in Sport Conference in Adelaide, South Australia.

Denison, Erik. (2017). Are sports homophobic? Roundtable presented at the Pride in Practice Conference in Melbourne, Australia.

Thesis including published works declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis. The ideas, development and writing of papers presented in this thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the student, working within the School of Social Sciences under the primary supervision of Professor Kerry O'Brien (behavioural science/social psychology, study design, quantitative analyses), and with the guidance of two other supervisors: Associate Professor Ruth Jeanes (Faculty of Education; subject matter expert on sport management and sport diversity) and Dr. Nick Faulkner (BehaviourWorks Australia; subject matter expert on behaviour change interventions, prejudice and evaluation). The role of each supervisor in papers written for this thesis is detailed below.

| | Publication title | Status | Student contribution | Co-authors (student Y/N) and contribution |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ch.3 | Reviewing evidence of LGBTQ+ discrimination and exclusion in sport | Published | Developed search method, conducted search, reviewed evidence related to males, trans, and partially on women in sport, 65% of writing | Nadia Bevan (Y) , reviewed evidence on female participation, co-wrote section on how discrimination and stigma impact females, 15% Ruth Jeanes (N) , subject matter expert (sport management/ sport diversity), co-author, 20% |
| Ch. 4 | The relationship between 'coming out' as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and experiences of homophobic behaviour in youth team sport | Published | Conceptualised study, collected and cleaned data, conducted analyses with direction from supervisors, 50% of writing | Kerry O'Brien (N) , directed study and analyses, guided writing as part of PhD training, co-author, 30% Ruth Jeanes (N) , subject matter expert (sport management/ sport diversity), co-author, 15% Nick Faulkner (N) , input into analyses, co-author, 5% |
| Ch. 5 | The relationships between attitudes, beliefs, and social norms with homophobic language use in male team sport | Published | Conceptualised study, collected and cleaned data, conducted analyses, 65% of writing | Nick Faulkner (N) , input into analyses, co-author, 20% Ruth Jeanes (N) , guided data collection methods, subject matter expert and guidance, co-author, 10% Daniel Toole (Y) , study design and data collection, co-author, 5% |

Erik Denison, Candidate

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the student's and co-authors' contributions to this work. In instances where I am not the responsible author, I have consulted with the responsible author to agree on the respective contributions of the authors.

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This thesis emerged from the commitments by the leaders of the largest sport governing bodies in Australia to become "world leaders" and "eradicate" homophobia in sport. These commitments were the result of years of hard work by many including Australia's first openly gay athlete, Ian Roberts, academics such as Caroline Symons, and LGBTQ+ sport leaders including Andrew Purchas OAM, Duncan McGregor, and other members of the Sydney Convicts RUFC.

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Every child has the right to participate fully in play and recreation activities and to do so in a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment.

- 2016 IOC Consensus Statement

Failure to uphold the human rights of LGBTI people and protect them against abuses such as violence and discriminatory laws and practices, constitute serious violations of international human rights law.

- Joint statement from United Nations Agencies (2016)

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Research conducted in Europe, the United States, and Australia over the last half-century has consistently documented homophobic language (e.g. fag) being frequently used in male sport environments by athletes, coaches, and physical education (PE) teachers (Brackenridge et al., 2008; Greenspan, Griffith, & Watson, 2019). In Australia, evidence of this problem comes from over 30 academic studies and four government inquiries (see Chapter 3 for a full list).

The first Australian Government funded evidence was published in 1982 by Connell and colleagues; they have since published hundreds of articles and books on this topic (Connell, 1982, 1995, 1996; Kessler et al., 1985). Their original pioneering work was based on detailed observational, ethnographic, and interview data collected from students, parents, teachers, and coaches in 12 Australian schools (Connell, 1982). They observed boys learning to use homophobic language from their coaches and peers, typically during social interactions before or after games/training sessions, and then observed boys adopting this behaviour to conform to what the researchers identified to be a form of masculinity that is dominant and held in high esteem in male sport settings. This data formed the basis of Hegemonic Masculinity Theory. This widely cited theory (50,000+ times) has influenced ideas about gender and masculinity across multiple disciplines (e.g. medicine, sociology, psychology, sport management, public health, education) and has been the primary framework used to study homophobic behaviours in sport (Steinfeldt et al., 2016).

The theory posits that sport has long been used (intentionally and unintentionally) to teach boys a form of “hegemonic” (i.e. idealised) masculinity that is based on being heterosexual, dominant, strong, athletic, competitive, aggressive, and unemotional (Connell, 1995).

It further posits that boys and men demonstrate their conformity to this masculinity in sport settings through their verbal rejection and denigration (i.e. homophobic and sexist language) of anything deemed to be feminine, including women, gay men, and men who can't play sport (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Connell et al.'s conclusion, that homophobic language is largely normative, has been generally supported by subsequent qualitative and observational research which suggests male athletes rarely use homophobic language with the explicit intent to express hate or antipathy toward or about gay people (Magrath et al., 2015; McCann et al., 2010). For example, Australian medical researchers conducted 'life-history' interviews and found boys started hearing this language being used as early as six-years-old by their coaches, teachers, and peers and they felt conformity pressures to adopt this behaviour (McCann et al., 2010; Plummer, 2006). However, the links between this behaviour and a specific form of masculinity have been difficult to establish with statistical research, whereas research with teenage American football players found associations between homophobic bullying at school and descriptive norms (i.e. what happens) and injunctive norms (i.e. what is expected). In this American study, the perceived endorsement of homophobic bullying by a coach or another respected older male was the strongest predictor that football players would engage in these homophobic behaviours (Steinfeldt et al., 2012).

The need for interventions to stop homophobic language use in sport has been repeatedly identified by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) which has found this behaviour causes serious harm to children, regardless of sexuality (Ljungqvist et al., 2007; Mountjoy et al., 2016; Reardon et al., 2019). As would be expected, this language is particularly harmful to gay and bisexual youth, who are at high risk (relative to others) of experiencing all forms of abuse in sport (sexual, physical, psychological) due to the stigmatisation of their identities underpinned by the constant use of homophobic language

(Ljungqvist et al., 2007; Mountjoy et al., 2016; Reardon et al., 2019). Indeed, multiple statistical studies funded by the Australian Government since 1998 (Hill et al., 2021; Hillier et al., 1998, 2005, 2010) and funded by others (Parent et al., 2020; Symons et al., 2014) have found boys who experience homophobic victimisation (regardless of sexuality) are at increased risk of suicide, self-harm, and depression. In addition, the frequent use of this language in school and community sport settings deters many gay and bisexual boys from participation, with population research finding they play sports at half the rate of their peers (Doull et al., 2018). Finally, if children continue to play sport, but hide their sexuality, they will still be at increased risk of suicide and self-harm from the constant exposure to homophobic language (Russell & Fish, 2016).

Across all sport environments, homophobic language appears to be particularly common in school or sport club changing rooms, before or after classes and games, due to the lack of adult supervision (Greenspan, Griffith, & Watson, 2019; Storr, Robinson, et al., 2020). In this setting, homophobic language is often used in tandem with other behaviours, including physical and sexual assaults (e.g. boys pretending to rape another boy, boys penetrating other boys with hockey sticks) (Greenspan, Griffith, Hayes, et al., 2019; McCann et al., 2010). This points to the well-established links between homophobic language and sexual violence, including child sexual abuse (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). These links are illustrated by evidence in a class-action lawsuit by ice hockey players seeking compensation from hockey leagues and governing bodies in North America. They claim homophobic language was used constantly in tandem with violent and sexualised assaults and hazing rituals that their coaches laughed off as ‘boys being boys’ (Koskie Minsky LLP, 2020).

The relationships with sexual abuse further emerges from homophobic behaviour creating an environment in which heterosexuality is strongly established as the norm (often referred to as heteronormative) while homosexuality is stigmatised and equated with weakness, failure, and deviance (Chang et al., 2020; Mountjoy et al., 2016; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). Government investigations in Australia and Europe have found victims of sexual abuse may fear that they will be stigmatised as gay and rejected by others if their abuse is reported and may fear that others would think they are weak and perhaps deserving of the abuse (Mergaert et al., 2016; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). The recent Independent Review of Sexual Abuse in Scottish Football (2021, p. 46) concluded that the use of homophobic language in male sport “contributes to silencing men and boys” not only in relation to sexual abuse but “any experience or personal issue that the young man believes will be construed as ‘weak’ or not meeting the ‘norms’ of masculinity often so forcefully imposed by those engaged in sport.” These findings are consistent with those of the American Medical Society for Sport Medicine (AMSSM). In a recent position statement on mental and physical health issues in sport it raised concerns about homophobic language being used to enforce conformity to the masculine norms associated with violence, alcohol and drug abuse, on-field risky behaviour, cheating, and the avoidance of medical help (Chang et al., 2020).

Finally, the gendered nature of homophobic language helps to explain the strong predictive relationship between boys using this behaviour and sexual and physical violence against women. Longitudinal research found boys who use homophobic language in early adolescence are at six-times higher-odds of self-reporting that they had raped or sexually assaulted a girl in high-school (Brush & Miller, 2019; Dworkin & Barker, 2019; Espelage et al., 2018).

Brush and Miller (2019) suggested that failures to consider homophobic language may help to explain the disappointing results of gender-based violence prevention programs. They wrote:

To gloss over how adolescents use homophobic teasing and “fag discourse” to police masculinity is to miss an important opportunity to expand the (gender-based violence) prevention paradigm. Homophobic teasing is a particular form of gender-based victimization and sexual harassment that merits attention as an important precursor to dating and sexual violence perpetration against women and girls (p. 1646)

Government and sport industry response to evidence of harm

The Australian Government and the international sport industry, including the IOC, have jointly accepted that homophobic language is common and harmful to children. This is best illustrated by a 2007 IOC scientific consensus statement which was co-authored by a senior Australian Government sport official (Ljungqvist et al., 2007). Consistent with the conclusions of Brush and Miller (above), the IOC defined homophobic behaviours in 2007 as a form of “sexual harassment and abuse,” which occurs “in all sports and at all levels,” and victimisation can:

Seriously and negatively impact on athletes’ physical and psychological health. It can result in impaired performance and lead to athlete drop-out. Clinical data indicate that psychosomatic illnesses, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self-harm and suicide are some of the serious health consequences. Passive attitudes/non-intervention, denial and/or silence by people in positions of power in sport (particularly bystanders) increases the psychological harm of sexual harassment and abuse (p. 5).

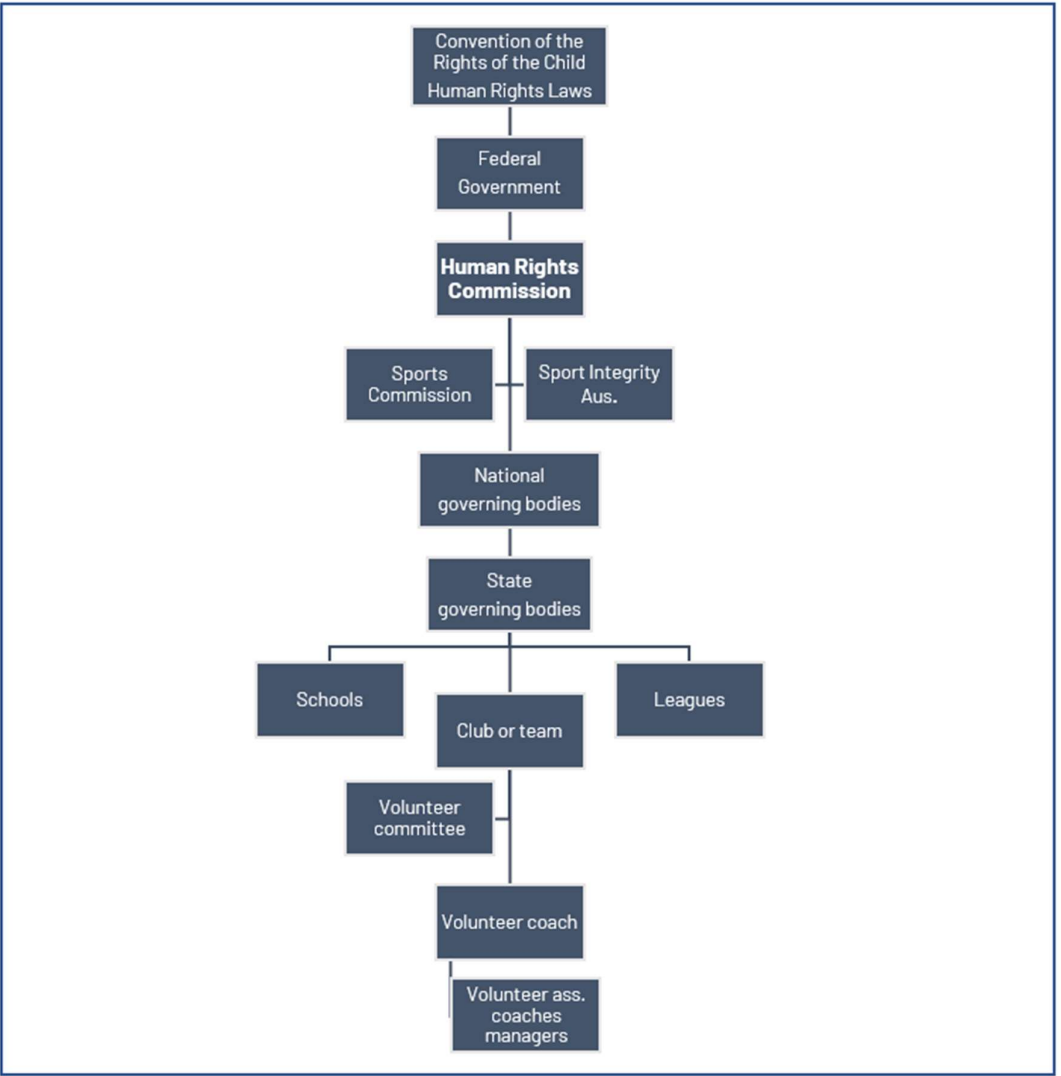
The information above has been shared widely by the IOC and Australian Government, yet there remains little awareness, or perhaps little acceptance, of this evidence by coaches and PE teachers. Indeed, the broader Australian sport industry has largely ignored its legal obligations to stop homophobic behaviours in sport settings (see Chapter 3). The term “sport industry” refers to sport leaders (e.g. CEOs) and administrators (e.g. coaching or referee manager) at international, national, and state/provincial sport governing who manage and oversee the delivery of their sports in schools and communities (e.g. Rugby Australia, Football New South Wales, FIFA). Sport industry also refers to coaches and PE teachers and the people who manage sports leagues, clubs, and teams. The term “government” refers to politicians and the officials they make legally responsible for funding and delivering sport in the community (e.g. Australian Sports Commission), the officials responsible for monitoring legal compliance (e.g. Sport Integrity Australia), and the officials who are responsible for ensuring human rights and children are protected in sport (e.g. Australian Human Rights Commission).

In most countries, including Australia, the sport industry is largely allowed to self-regulate (Oliver & Lusted, 2015). In part this is because governments generally view the industry to be a unique, positive, and socially beneficial institution (David, 2020; Oliver & Lusted, 2015). The other reason is practical: behaviours need to be allowed in sport settings which would be illegal in any other setting, such as physical violence or the exclusion of women (Oliver & Lusted, 2015). Despite the hands-off approach, the federal government still has international legally binding obligations to ensure human rights are protected in sport environments and that children (those under 18) are safe and not being harmed (David, 2020). These obligations are through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and through the 1990 ratification of the International Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) (David, 2020).

According to the Australia Human Rights Commission (2004), which is the agency with legislative responsibility to ensure compliance in Australia with the two international conventions above (see Figure 1), the ratification of the CRC by Australia created legal obligations on all “public or private social welfare institutions” (e.g. sport clubs and schools which receive public money) to ensure children have protection from all forms of physical or mental violence (article 19), have access to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (article 24), and have access to safe recreation and play opportunities and environments (article 31). The CRC underpins child protection laws in Australia. In most states it is mandatory for adults who interact with children (e.g. teachers, physios, doctors) or adults responsible for those who care for children (e.g. school principals, government officials, sport administrators) to report evidence of harm to state or national child protection authorities (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). If this harm occurs to children under the direct (i.e. coach, teacher) or indirect (i.e. club manager, school principal) care of an adult, and this adult does not take action, then this adult and their organisation can be held legally culpable for any negative outcomes, such as youth suicide, physical injury, or psychological injury (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017).

The legal risks created by the sport industry’s failures to stop harm to children are illustrated by the recently created National Redress Scheme involving the Australian Football League (AFL), Cricket Australia, as well as state sport governing bodies, local sport clubs, schools, and individual sport teams (Scheme, 2022). The Scheme was recently created by the Australian Government following the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse (see above), to hold these sport institutions and others “accountable” for failing to prevent children from being harmed in sport environments, to provide support to victims, and to oversee compensation claims (Scheme, 2022).

Figure 1. Regulatory oversight structure of sport in Australia



The origins of this PhD project

This Australian Government funded PhD project emerged from a regulatory action by the Government in 2014 for repeated failures by the sport industry to comply with human rights and child protection laws. The events that led up to this action are explained below because they provide the context needed to understand the objectives of this project.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that homophobic behaviours are not occurring in both adult and children's sport environments. It has a range (or spectrum) of regulatory actions (tools) which it can take if it receives evidence that the sport industry is not stopping this behaviour or that children (and adults) are being harmed. On the lower end of the range are supportive actions (carrots) such as providing financial or direct staff support to the sport industry to help it comply with the law (Freiberg, 2010). On the other end of this range are punitive actions (sticks), which generally start with legal warnings, enforceable undertakings and then increase in severity to fines, criminal prosecution, or the withholding of government funding (Freiberg, 2010). Punitive tools are typically used in response to repeated non-compliance and/or evidence of harm (Freiberg, 2010). The general public prefers supportive regulatory actions, but only when legal violations are minor, unintentional, easily mitigatable, and there is no evidence of harm (Freiberg, 2010; Short, 2019).

In theory, regulatory agencies are required to take immediate action if evidence is provided to them of non-compliance or harm. In practice, Short (2019, p. 9) found a "broad consensus" that regulatory agencies typically only take action when there is reputational risk to them or their political masters (particularly against an entire industry, which could be controversial).

This might help explain why the Australian Government has repeatedly chosen to take supportive and ineffective regulatory actions (see Table 1), even in response to a child nearly dying from suicide after he was the victim of preventable homophobic language at a national volleyball tournament (McCloughan et al., 2015).

Prior to this incident, the Australian Government, IOC, and multiple academic papers had repeatedly alerted Volleyball Australia (current name) and its state governing bodies to evidence that homophobic language is common in sport and that it is a key risk factor for youth suicide (Australian Sports Commission, 2000; Independent Sport Panel, 2009; Ljungqvist et al., 2007). Despite these prior warnings, the Government still chose to take a supportive action in response to the near-death of a child. Following the incident, two government sport agency officials and an academic provided intensive support to volleyball leaders, at no charge. They helped them develop a comprehensive training program for their athletes (including multiple versions for different age groups) and a program for coaches (Mattey et al., 2014; McCloughan et al., 2015). It is noteworthy that the coach program was only delivered once (during the pilot) and the athlete program was delivered just a few times, but only in Queensland (S. Hanrahan, personal communication, June 6, 2020).

Table 1. Timeline of Australian Government regulatory actions

Note. Outcomes of each action are provided in the final chapter

| Date | Type | Description |
|------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1999 | Capability support | The Government was the major sponsor of the world's first international conference focused on human rights issues in sport ahead of the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Numerous speakers outlined the legal obligations, of the sport leaders in attendance, to stop day-to-day discriminatory behaviours, including homophobic. In a keynote address by Australia's Governor General said "harsh punitive action" for violations "is, in the long term, likely to be most effective" way to ensure legal compliance (Taylor, 1999). |
| 2000 | Punitive: Compliance direction | The Government sent the sport industry a detailed document which outlined the evidence of the industry's non-compliance with human rights laws by allowing homophobic behaviours to continue. The industry was warned of legal consequences. The document provided examples of behaviours which are illegal and must be stopped, including day-to-day normative homophobic jokes and banter. The Government provided a list of actions which it expected the industry to undertake to ensure compliance with human rights laws (Australian Sports Commission, 2000). |
| 2001 | Capability support | The Government financially supported Play by the Rules, an online hub of resources and short-courses created to help coaches, PE teachers, and sport leaders comply with the basic requirements of human rights and children protection laws. Some materials focus on promoting LGBTQ+ inclusive sport settings, including the need to stop homophobic language. |
| 2010 | Capability support | After a national inquiry found homophobic behaviours remained common in sport, and were harming children, the Government provided \$200,000 (adjusted for inflation) to academics and asked them to work with officials from national and state human rights agencies. Together the academics and government officials provided intensive support over 16-months to the sport industry. The objective was to find scalable interventions that could be used to increase "awareness" of sexuality issues and "promote safe and inclusive environments." The academics and officials provided this support to one sport, field hockey. This sport was chosen because of prior engagement in LGBTQ+ issues (Fletcher, 2013). |
| 2014 | Capability support | Following the near suicide death of a child who had been the victim of homophobic bullying at a volleyball tournament, Australian and state government officials, and an academic, provided intensive support to volleyball's governing body in Queensland. They helped develop athlete and coach training programs designed to stop homophobic behaviours (Mattey et al., 2014). |
| 2014 | Punitive: Enforceable undertaking | <p>In response to strong evidence of continued harm to children, and non-compliance with human rights and child protection laws, lawyers from LGBTQ+ and human rights organisations began working with the AHRC, other Australian Government agencies, and the five largest sport governing bodies, to co-develop the Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework.</p> <p>The leaders of the five sports were then asked to appear on national television together and they jointly signed a commitment to "eradicate" homophobia and adopt all elements of the Framework. They committed their organisations to develop and implement a broad range of interventions, including fit-for-purpose policies, education programs for coaches and athletes, monitoring and reporting systems to detect non-compliance, and effective sanctions for violations.</p> |

| | | |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2014 | Monitoring | <p>As part of the action taken above (Anti-Homophobia Framework), the Australian Government provided funding to support the first large-scale international study on homophobic behaviours in sport. The Out on the Fields study collected quantitative data from Australia and five other countries.</p> <p>The Australian data was compared to other countries (no difference found). The Government said it would use the data as a baseline and would conduct the study again in 2019 (this was not done). The study provided strong, statistical evidence that illegal homophobic behaviours are common in all sport settings and they are harmful to children. This research is explained in greater detail in Chapters 3 & 4.</p> |
| 2016 | Voluntary performance indicators Capability support | <p>After evidence began to emerge that the five sport leaders had not fulfilled the commitments made in 2014, LGBTQ+ community leaders, lawyers, and the media began applying pressure on the Australian Government to take action. The LGBTQ+ leaders worked with Government agencies to co-create two new regulatory tools:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pride in Sport Index (performance indicator) is an annual benchmarking and performance indicator tool which sports can volunteer to use to objectively track their progress in complying with human rights and child protection laws. The Index is open to all sports. The results are not individually reported; 2. Pride in Sport (capability support) is an industry organisation with many of the same functions as Play by the Rules (above). It is run out of the largest LGBTQ+ health organisation and has a specific focus on helping Australian sports to become LGBTQ+ inclusive and stop homophobic behaviours. |
| 2020 | Voluntary standards | <p>A new Government agency called “Sport Integrity Australia” was created to primarily focus on preventing doping and match fixing, however, it has some responsibility for discriminatory behaviours (though its exact role remains unclear). It has asked sport governing bodies to sign a new, voluntary National Integrity Framework. One section of the framework documents mentions the legal obligations to prevent “vilification” (overt and deliberate hate speech) on the grounds of sexuality, however, the section on preventing day-to-day normative language focuses only on racist behaviours.</p> |

First punitive regulatory action in response to advocacy by LGBTQ+ leaders

The Australian Government has taken just two punitive regulatory actions in response to strong evidence of illegal homophobic behaviours and children being harmed. The actions occurred 14-years apart (2000 and 2014) and appeared to be in responses to reputational threats created by advocacy campaigns connected to international sporting events, including the 2000 Olympics and 2002 Gay Games. Another factor appears to be advocacy by Australia's Governor General. In a speech delivered to the world's first international conference on human rights in sport, funded by the Australian Government ahead of the 2000 Sydney Olympics, the then-Head of State (a retired High Court Justice) outlined Australia's need to fulfil its international legal obligations to stop discriminatory behaviours in sport and said that "harsh punitive action" for violations "is, in the long term, likely to be most effective" way to ensure compliance (Taylor, 1999, p. 16).

The Government's first punitive action occurred shortly after this conference and just a few months before the international media arrived for the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Around this time, there was strong international public and media "fascination" in the discrimination experienced by gay athletes in sport following the suicide death of Justin Fashanu in 1998 (Hughson & Free, 2011, p. 117). The world's first openly gay international soccer player experienced relentless homophobic abuse after coming out. After his death, media criticised the English Football Association and the British Government for failing to protect gay athletes (Hughson & Free, 2011; Sloop & West, 2016). In Australia, public and media interest was strong because, after Fashanu's death, rugby league star Ian Roberts became the only remaining openly gay professional athlete in the world. Since coming out a few years earlier he had become a strong advocate for action on homophobic behaviour in sport and co-published a book containing evidence that children are being harmed (letters sent to him by children and parents (Freeman, 1997)).

Roberts requests to the sport industry and government to protect gay children were continually rebuffed (Walton, 1998). His passion for the topic, evidence of harm to children, and strong and sympathetic interest from the media created a substantial reputational risk for the Australian Government ahead of both the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the 2002 Sydney Gay Games (Hutchins & Mikosza, 1998).

A few months before the Olympics, the Australian Government released a legal warning (compliance direction) to the sport industry (Green, 2002). The 24-page document (see <https://bit.ly/3kGPjn0>) was titled “Harassment-free Sport: Guidelines to address homophobia and sexuality discrimination in sport” (Australian Sports Commission, 2000). It is unclear why the Government chose to call the document “guidelines” given the content was consistent with a compliance direction (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, 2020). The Government provided sport leaders with a clear definition of their legal obligations to stop homophobic behaviours and specific examples of “homophobia” that included casual language such as “queer jokes and put downs” including “you’re playing like a faggot” (p. 8) or a comment by athletes such as “gay men are ‘sissies’ and can’t play sport (p. 6).” It is important to highlight that the examples provided were of normative, day-to-day language used in sport, not language which has been intentionally used to express hate or vilify gay people (which is often a focus and limitation of anti-discrimination policies). The Government went on to warn sport leaders of legal consequences if they did not stop this behaviour. For example, the second page of the document says “some people in sporting organisations are still ignoring homophobia and sexuality discrimination” and then explained that this:

Violates their (the LGBTQ+ community's) right to be treated with respect, dignity and fairness ... Because sexuality discrimination is also against the law, those who allow such discrimination to occur can be vulnerable to legal claims from those who've been hurt as a result. This can mean unexpected costs, tarnished reputations and bad publicity for those concerned (p. 2)

The Australian Government said the sport industry "must" comply with the law and provided a series of steps for the industry to follow to develop multi-faceted preventative intervention strategy across four pillars (p. 10). The pillars included developing and enforcing effective policies designed to stop both overt and intentional discriminatory behaviours (vilification, hate) as well as normative, day-to-day homophobic language which are regularly used by athletes.

A year after the Government issued the compliance direction, evidence began to emerge that the sport industry was ignoring the detailed document. One of the first pieces of evidence was provided by Watts (2002) who contacted the AFL (governing body), all Australian Football League (AFL) clubs, and the AFL players and referee associations. He found the AFL and clubs were aware of the legal warning, and legal obligations, but found they had no intention to comply with the law. For example, he reported that one executive from the AFL Players Association, which is responsible for player welfare, said (p. 18): "as far as I am aware they (the warnings) haven't been discussed here at any level." Watts concluded that the AFL and its clubs had made the intentional decision to ignore their legal obligations to stop homophobic behaviours which were (p. 18): "a significant and well-documented factor in the tragically high youth suicide rate in Australia."

A major newspaper arrived at a similar conclusion that the AFL was “turning a blind eye” to homophobia and quoted an AFL spokesperson as saying homophobia is “just not an issue” that needs to be addressed unless a player decides to come out as gay (Green, 2002, p. 16). It is noteworthy that the AFL remains the only major professional male team sport in the world to never have had a male player come out as gay or bisexual.

The Australian Government choose to use a variety of ineffective supportive regulatory actions between 2000 – 2014 in response to consistent evidence that children were being harmed by homophobic behaviours in sport. As detailed in Chapter 3, much of this evidence came from research which the Government had funded. These regulatory actions typically involved providing money and/or intensive support to the industry to help it comply with the law. One of the most important of these actions is summarised below because it strongly informed the approach taken for this thesis.

Key supportive regulatory action: Fair Go, Sport!

The Australian Government provided approximately \$200,000 in funding to academic researchers in 2010 and asked them to work closely with officials from federal and state human rights and sport agencies. Together they provided the sport industry with intensive support over 16-months to help it develop effective interventions which could be adapted across all sports and used to: “increase awareness of sexual and gender diversity” and “promote safe and inclusive environments” (Fletcher, 2013, p. 10). The academics and officials decided to work with one sport, rather than all sports, to achieve this objective. They chose field hockey, a predominantly women’s sport in Australia, because hockey’s national and state governing body leaders had expressed a strong interest in the project and they had previously supported LGBTQ+ initiatives.

The academics and government officials worked closely with hockey governing body leaders and four large hockey clubs in Victoria. They supported the sport to develop various interventions, including new policies, poster campaigns, and visits to clubs from LGBTQ+ speakers. Consistent with research conducted since the mid-80's, the academics found homophobic language was used regularly by athletes (children and adults) and coaches in hockey as part of their “ongoing, insidious policing of gender and sexuality norms” and concluded that this behaviour is harmful to everyone in sport (Fletcher, 2013, p. 52).

The end-of-project evaluation reported disappointing results. It found evidence of increased “awareness” of sexuality issues in hockey, but no evidence of changes to homophobic behaviours. Indeed, leaders from both Hockey Australia and Hockey Victoria (current names) were quoted as acknowledging that they knew homophobic behaviours are harmful but that they were unable to find a way to stop this behaviour. They described key barriers to firm action as being uncertainty around how to change this behaviour and fear of a backlash from players, coaches, and parents. This fear was substantiated by evidence of resistance by some leaders at community hockey clubs who viewed action on homophobic behaviours as optional and a distraction from their core business of winning games. Resistance from the volunteers who coach or deliver sport is highly problematic for sport governing bodies because they heavily rely on these volunteers to deliver their sport. Overall, the evaluation by Fletcher et al (2013) concluded that stopping homophobic behaviours in sport would require:

1. Far longer than 16 months;
2. A large and long-term financial investment from the Government;
3. Multiple different types of interventions used in tandem, over time, which effectively target the multiple factors supporting this deeply entrenched normative behaviour.

Second punitive regulatory action in response to advocacy by LGBTQ+ leaders

Soon after the Fair Go, Sport! evaluation was released, a group of LGBTQ+ athletes (primarily gay rugby players) launched a multifaceted advocacy campaign tied to an international sport event called the 2014 Sydney Bingham Cup (Parry et al., 2021; Robertson et al., 2019). The Bingham Cup (the ‘world cup’ of gay and inclusive rugby) is the largest amateur rugby tournament in the world and attracts thousands of gay athletes and supporters.

The advocacy campaign was led by LGBTQ+ leaders (e.g. Andrew Purchas OAM, a long-time vice president of the largest AIDS charity) and supported by solicitors and barristers (litigators) from the largest human rights and LGBTQ+ advocacy organisations (Scattergood, 2015). Other support came from high-profile LGBTQ+ and heterosexual professional athletes including captains of three national teams: Alex Blackwell (cricket), David Pocock and John Eales (rugby union), and Greg Inglis (rugby league). Other athletes included Nathan Lyons (national cricket team), Sarah Walsh (national soccer team), and Mike Pyke (international AFL player). Importantly, the campaign received bi-partisan political support from (then) Prime Ministers Julia Gillard (Labor) and Malcolm Turnbull (Liberal) and from Anthony Albanese, who is the current Prime Minister (AAP, 2014; ABC News, 2014). More broadly, the campaign received funding from Australia’s largest bank, phone, and construction companies (major sponsors of sport) and strong support from national and international media outlets including Reuters and ESPN (Scattergood, 2015).

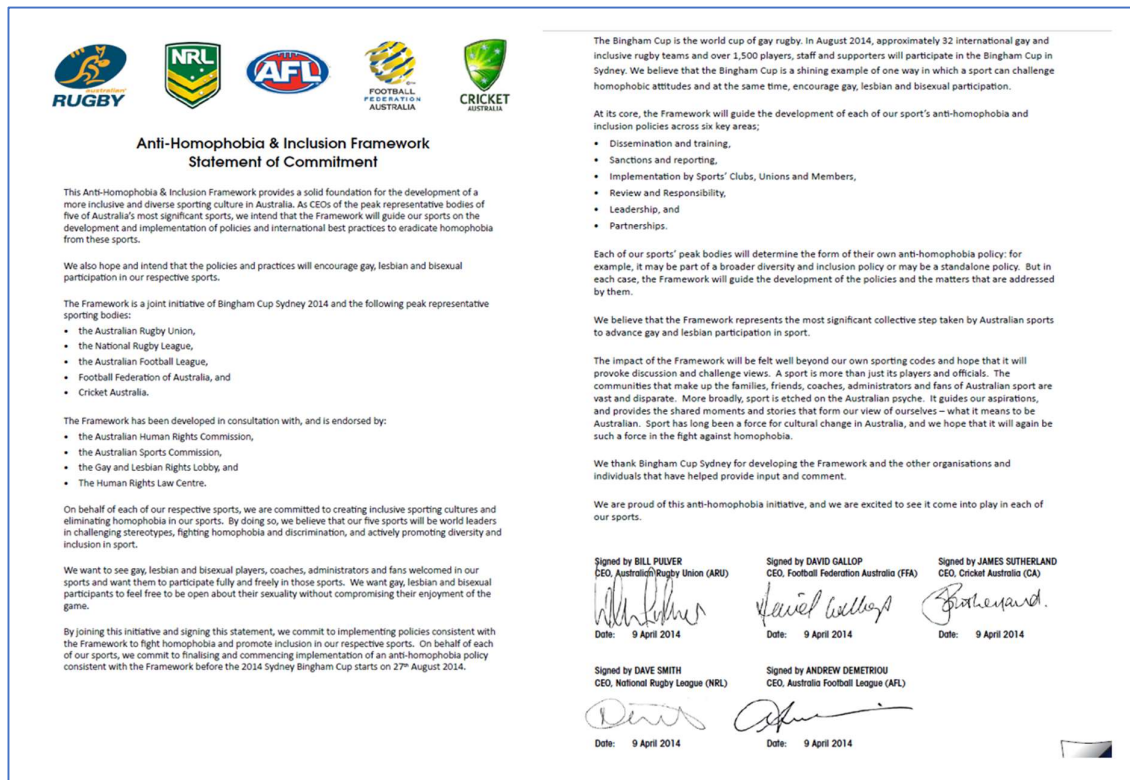
The lawyers from the LGBTQ+ and human rights organisations began working with the Australian Human Rights Commission and other federal agencies (e.g. Sports Commission), and then with the five largest Australian sport governing bodies. They co-developed a 32-page document titled the “Anti-homophobia and Inclusion Framework for Australian Sport” (Framework) (Robertson et al., 2019; Scattergood, 2015; Shaw & Cunningham, 2021). The national sport governing bodies involved oversee a large proportion of sport delivered in schools and communities (Rugby Australia, National Rugby League, Football Australia, Cricket Australia, and the Australian Football League).

After developing the Framework, the leaders of the five sports were then asked to appear together on national television. They jointly signed a commitment, on behalf of their organisations, to become “world leaders” and they committed their organisations to eliminate and “eradicate” homophobia from their respective sports (see Figure 2 below). They pledged to develop an implementation plan within five months for a variety of interventions across six pillars. These pillars included the development of effective and fit-for-purpose policies, training programs for people at all levels of their sport, monitoring of compliance at all levels, reporting systems which specifically track homophobic behaviours, and sanctioning of those within their sport who do not comply with the law (full document can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3kGPjn0>). It is noteworthy that the actions which the leaders committed to take in 2014 were largely the same as the ones the Government asked them to take in 2000 (see Table 2 below).

The signed commitment by the sport leaders is difficult to define, but it could be considered a low-level punitive regulatory action called an ‘enforceable undertaking.’ These are a unique and ‘constructive’ regulatory tool developed in Australia and used as an alternative to court action. Another benefit of this tool is that it can be co-developed with the legal representatives of a group that has been harmed, who could then seek compensation or redress through the courts for ongoing failures to prevent harm (Johnstone & King, 2008). Enforceable undertakings are considered appropriate in response to evidence of harm being caused to children only when an organisation is willing to accept that it has not complied with the law, commit to taking a series of agreed steps to correct the non-compliance, and leaders are willing to sign a personal commitment to ensure future compliance (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority, 2020). All of the above elements were included in the Framework.

The five sport leaders accepted that illegal homophobic behaviours remained common in their sports, they committed to “specific actions that the Sport Peak Body will take to tackle homophobia, including harassment, bullying and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation,” (p. 12), and signed a personal commitment to ensure future compliance.

Figure 2. Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework for Australian Sport



Connection between the Framework and this PhD thesis

This PhD project emerged from the joint commitment by the sport leaders. It sought to generate evidence that they could use to fulfil their pledge to implement “all aspects” of the Framework (see above). This included a pledge to develop and implement educational programs (interventions) for athletes.

Prior to this project, governments and academics had consistently recommended the use of educational interventions to change homophobic behaviours, yet, there was no research supporting this recommendation or research on the types of education needed to change homophobic behaviours. This PhD project, funded by an Australian Government scholarship, and over \$60,000 in donations from the LGBTQ+ community (which was optimistic the commitment by sport leaders was a turning point), sought to address the industry’s need for

evidence-based education programs. More broadly, the project responded to the need for academic research into the types of education that could be used to influence homophobic language in sport. The objective was to evaluate the current interventions being used in sport and determine which were the most effective. The findings could then be used by sport leaders to develop interventions to augment the other interventions which they had committed to implement, such as new policies designed to stop day-to-day normative language and new training programs for coaches. This multi-pronged approach was recommended by the evaluation of the Fair Go, Sport! project (described above). The Australian Human Rights Commission told the sport organisations that compliance with the law (i.e. eliminating homophobia) would require implementing all parts of the Framework (italics added to highlight key points which will be discussed in the final chapter):

The strength of the Framework lies in its *integrated* approach: it acknowledges that change happens from *all angles*. For example, sanctions for homophobic abuse can be effective *only if reinforced* by positive public support of the community and a dissemination of core ideals of diversity and inclusion to member clubs and players (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015, p. 22).

Chapter summary

This project responded to the urgent need for effective interventions that can be used in children's sport settings to stop the frequent use of homophobic language by athletes, coaches, and teachers. Both academics and government agencies have repeatedly recommended educational interventions should be used to change this behaviour, yet, no study had tested the benefits of this approach. This was the primary gap in the literature which this thesis sought to address.

Table 2. Similarities between 2000 and 2014 regulatory actions

| | Directions provided to industry - 2000 | Framework commitments - 2014 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Policy development</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement</p> | <p>Pillar 1: “Develop an antidiscrimination policy</p> <p>Each sporting organisation must comply with federal and state anti-discrimination legislation. The first step is to develop an anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Making everyone in the organisation or club aware of the policy will help to ensure that they know their legal obligations and their rights under the law ...</p> <p>An anti-discrimination policy should be designed to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate discrimination and harassment, and • ensure that everyone receives equal treatment, no matter what their sexual orientation. <p>It should cover all aspects of the sport, including ... (long list).</p> <p>If the policy is going to be effective, it must be developed in consultation with key stakeholders: board members, players, coaches, administrators, officials, volunteers, families, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people associated with the club or team.</p> <p>Consultations can be conducted using discussion groups, interviews, questionnaires, briefing sessions or surveys.</p> <p>The anti-discrimination policy should be adopted and endorsed by the most senior levels of the sporting organisation.”</p> | <p>“This Anti-homophobia & Inclusion Framework (Framework) sets out a structure for the development of Antihomophobia & Inclusion Policies (Policies) to be adopted (by each sport body).</p> <p>The aim of the Framework and Policies is to eradicate homophobia, including biphobia, from the five sports. This includes the eradication of discrimination, harassment, and bullying on the basis of sexual orientation. ...</p> <p>(The policy) should identify those persons and organisations who are to be bound by the Policy. The section should identify relevant national, state and community teams, member unions, competitions and organisations, as well as any relevant teams or franchises. ...</p> <p>(The policy) should define the type of discrimination the Policy is focused on and describe the type of environment the Policy aims to achieve that supports and encourages lesbian, gay and bisexual involvement. The feeling of being discriminated against, or of feeling excluded, is not always a reaction to an overt action or statement, but can be a reaction to a cultural environment that is inadvertently exclusionary, hostile or oppressive toward gay, lesbian or bisexual people. This should be defined.</p> <p>Pillar 4: Review and Responsibility</p> <p>The Sport Peak Body should establish an advisory or working group made up of Sport officials and members of the gay, lesbian and bisexual communities as well as representatives from human rights organisations and bodies, such as the Australian Human Rights Commission.</p> |

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Implementation | Pillar 2: Apply the policy | Pillar 1: Dissemination and training |
| Training | <p>“Organisations can ensure that their anti-discrimination policy is applied by doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging the board and committees to take action about sexuality discrimination; • publicising their anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and guidelines; reviewing their codes of conduct so that they reflect the aims and values of the anti-discrimination and antiharassment • policies (for example, including a statement that people representing a sporting organisation must treat everyone with respect at all times, regardless of their sex or sexual orientation); • establishing clear procedures for handling disputes about harassment and discrimination issues; and keeping a record of complaints and allegations about sexuality issues to monitor and evaluate the organisation’s performance in this area. This may also be useful if legal action is taken. | <p>The Sport Peak Body should disseminate the Policy to those members and participants covered by the Policy and other relevant organisations or people and ensure the implementation of the Policy by those other parties. This may include addressing issues concerning gay, lesbian and bisexual discrimination and participation in training programs already offered to players, coaches, referees and other administrators. The promotion of anti-homophobia and inclusionary messages developed as part of this Policy may be included as add-ons to existing training programs.</p> |
| Sanctions | Pillar 3: Implement a complaint mechanism | Pillar 2: Sanctions and reporting |
| Reporting | <p>“As stated in the previous section, sporting organisations are required to implement an effective and accessible internal complaints mechanism. The mechanism should balance fairly the rights of the complainant and the alleged harasser. It should also include options for informal and formal resolution of complaints.</p> <p>A good complaint procedure can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • convey the message that the organisation takes harassment seriously, • prevent escalation of a situation, ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, • reduce the likelihood of the involvement of external agencies, which can be time consuming, costly and damaging to the public image of the organisation, • alert the organisation to the presence of unacceptable conduct and highlight the need for prevention strategies in particular areas, and • reduce the risk of the organisation being held liable for harassment under anti-discrimination legislation.” | <p>The Sport Peak Body must develop appropriate sanctions for breach of the Policy, including identification of any relevant existing sanctions. If breaches of the Policy are to be punishable or are to be addressed in accordance with any existing member protection policies, codes of conduct, or like document, that document should be identified and the nature of the existing sanctions should be described. The Sport Peak Body is also encouraged to implement separate reporting of homophobic abuse or discrimination within the Sport.</p> <p>Pillar 3: Implementation by Sports’ Clubs, Unions and Members</p> <p>Each Member union or club must implement policies which are consistent with the Policy, such as prohibiting homophobic and abusive language within the clubs’ member protection policies, codes of conduct, or like documents.</p> |

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | The Sport Peak Body should also be supportive of the ongoing promotion of the Policy and its implementation and the visibility of its aims and objectives within, and outside of, the Sport. |
| Leadership | Pillar 4: Raise awareness | Pillar 5: Leadership |
| Education | <p>Anti-homophobia campaigns do not promote homosexuality. They aim to promote understanding and equity. Antidiscrimination policies send a clear, strong message that discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated.</p> <p>To raise awareness of these policies and foster support for them, sporting organisations may want to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organising a panel of gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender sportspeople to talk to athletes, administrators, coaches, officials and parents about their backgrounds and experiences; • conducting a discussion group, preferably with a trained facilitator, within a sport, at team, club or state level about sexuality issues. It is important that people are encouraged to talk about their concerns and that these are addressed in a nonjudgmental environment; • conducting training sessions for staff, coaches and officials on sexuality issues, particularly discrimination (to find an appropriate trainer or facilitator in your state or territory, and • participating in the 'Homophobia: what are you scared of?' campaign. | <p>As leadership concerning the aims and objectives of the Policy is important, the Sport Peak Body should be committed to visibility of the Policy outside of the Sport. The Sport Peak Body should be committed to gay, lesbian and bisexual inclusion through plans such as public relation campaigns, conferences, and partnerships with organisations and community groups involved in diversity promotion. This may also include the appointment of ambassadors for the Policy.</p> <p>Pillar 6: Partnerships</p> <p>The Sport Peak Body should indicate its willingness to work with gay, lesbian and bisexual community organisations to promote gay, lesbian and bisexual participation in all facets of the Sport.</p> |

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 – Research objectives, aims, and methods

The primary objective of this project was to identify educational interventions that are both effective in reducing the frequency of homophobic language and which can be effectively implemented in youth sport settings. These are distinct constructs. An intervention may effectively change a behaviour in a controlled setting (e.g. lab) but then prove to be difficult to implement in the real-world.

Academic investigations (Hanson et al., 2014; Whitley et al., 2019) have found implementation problems are the key factor in why interventions delivered in sport settings often fail to change athlete behaviours (e.g. healthy eating, stretching routines before games). Youth sport is typically resource-poor, loosely organised, chaotic, and delivered by volunteers (e.g. math teacher, parent) with full-time jobs (Spaaij et al., 2018; Storr, Jeanes, et al., 2020). Common implementation problems have included interventions being impractical (e.g. all-day seminar), not scalable (e.g. only works in one type of sport or sport setting), or not sustainable (e.g. requires too much financial investment). Implementation was particularly important for this project in light of evidence that coaches considered efforts to stop homophobic behaviours to be unimportant and a distraction from their core focus on winning games (Fletcher, 2013). For these reasons, the initial project proposal focused on identifying promising existing educational interventions that were already being used in youth sport settings, which meant they were more likely to be accepted by end-users, scalable, and sustainable.

Previous academic research (Chang et al., 2020; Hemphill & Symons, 2009) recommending the use of educational interventions suggested this approach could be used to change behaviour by filling knowledge gaps (e.g. I did not know it was harmful to use homophobic language) or through improving attitudes and changing stereotypes about gay people (e.g. I should be nice to gay people, gay people are not weak). However, prior to this

thesis, no statistical research had been conducted to confirm that this behaviour is associated with knowledge gaps and individual attitudes or that shifting these factors could change this behaviour. Thus, before it was possible to identify potentially effective educational interventions, it was first necessary to statistically confirm the reason(s) athletes use homophobic language.

Research objectives

1. Identify the factors which support the frequent use of homophobic language in sport;
2. Use this information to identify existing educational interventions are being used in sport settings which appear to target these factors;
3. Measure the effectiveness of the most promising of these interventions;
4. Proactively share the results with the sport industry to help it fulfil commitments to “eradicate” homophobic behaviours from sport.

Research questions

Building on the objectives above, the primary academic research questions were:

1. What factors underpin homophobic language use (e.g., fag, poof) by adolescent male athletes?
2. What types of educational intervention could be used to stop or reduce the frequency of this language in sport environments?

Research approach

A pragmatic research approach was used to answer the research questions above. A pragmatic approach is based on “a philosophy of knowledge construction that emphasises practical solutions to applied research questions” (Giacobbi et al., 2005, p. 18). Pragmatic research is less focused on the development of scholarly theory to “reveal underlying truths about the nature of reality” (Giacobbi et al., 2005, p. 21) and more focused on the identification of scholarly theories (potentially from a range of disciplines) that can be used to understand real-world problems and inform the creation and evaluation of “practical solutions to contemporary problems experienced by people and society” (Giacobbi et al., 2005, p. 21). This is not to suggest that pragmatic research is conducted only to solve “real world” problems. Indeed, conducting applied research is critical to the refinement or development of scholarly theory because it is a bridge between research and practice. Pragmatic and applied research creates the opportunity to test theories, identify ways which they could be improved, and/or identify the need for new theories (Lynham, 2002). Indeed, as will become clear in later chapters, this thesis has made major contributions to theoretical and scholarly understanding of the drivers of homophobic behaviours in male sport settings.

Pragmatic research methods are commonly used by social psychologists, the discipline in which this project sits, particularly those with an interest in the applied behavioural sciences (my desired area of specialisation). I drew heavily on psychological theory and research for this project and, consistent with pragmatic research approaches, drew on research and theory from other disciplines including sociology and sport management (French et al., 2012; Michie et al., 2014). Unlike clinical psychologists, who focus primarily on individual factors to explain behaviour (and psychological conditions), social psychologists focus more on understanding group-level factors and the way people perceive themselves, their place in social groups, and how this influences their behaviours, beliefs,

attitudes, and social conditions (American Psychological Association, 2014). According to the American Psychological Association (2014):

“Social psychologists are interested in all aspects of personality and social interaction, exploring the influence of interpersonal and group relationships on human behaviour. The way we perceive ourselves in relation to the rest of the world influences our behaviours and our beliefs. The opinions of others also affect our behaviour and how we view ourselves. Social psychologists are interested in all aspects of interpersonal relationships and the ways that psychology can improve those interactions (website).”

Social psychologists with an interest in the applied behavioural sciences often oversee the development, implementation, and testing of interventions to change behaviours (Michie et al., 2014). This is done primarily through positivist methodologies including experimental studies and quantitative data analyses. An ‘intervention’ is a coordinated and planned set of activities or techniques introduced into a social setting to change the behaviour of individuals (Araújo-Soares et al., 2019). Interventions can take many forms, such as policies or sanctions and penalties of those engaging in certain behaviours. This project focused on educational interventions (e.g. training programs, social marketing campaigns).

Finally, in social psychology, behaviours are considered to be driven by individual (e.g. traits, attitudes, knowledge), group (e.g. team), organisational (e.g. school, sport club), institutional (e.g. sport industry, sport type), and societal factors (e.g. laws, gender norms, societal norms) which need to be identified and, ideally, measured using quantitative methods (Araújo-Soares et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2015). An intervention is typically designed to create a statistically significant change to the factors that have been found to be most strongly associated with a behaviour. The effectiveness of an intervention is determined through

measuring changes to the associated factor(s) as well as changes to the frequency or forms of a target behaviour (Michie et al., 2014).

Research methods

My initial PhD project proposal was to identify 2-3 promising interventions which were already being used in sport settings and then conduct randomised controlled trials (RCTs) to evaluate their effectiveness. A key educational objective was to learn how to conduct RCTs in real-world settings. However, the results of my initial literature review were unexpected. As outlined in the first chapter, there I found hundreds of published papers on homophobic language in sport, however, nearly all of this research had used qualitative and observational methods. Data generated using these research methodologies are useful to gain a detailed understanding of the *potential* factors that could be driving a target behaviour, but qualitative data cannot be used to establish statistical relationships. Thus, before I could begin to identify potential intervention approaches which could be worthy candidates for an RCT, I first needed to conduct basic, quantitative, scientific research to identify the factors most strongly associated with homophobic language use by male athletes.

I chose a systematic methodology called “Six Steps for Quality Intervention Development” (Six Steps) to guide my research process (Wight et al., 2016). This “practical, logical, evidence-based” (p. 520) step-by-step methodology was developed to help researchers seeking to develop interventions to change behaviour and then evaluate their effectiveness, both in changing a behaviour, but also in terms of implementation: being sustainable and scalable in real-world settings.

The Six Steps (displayed below) help researchers collect the evidence that is necessary to gain a full and complete understanding of a problem behaviour. The steps then guide researchers through the process of identifying intervention approaches which could be used to change a behaviour, and then the process of planning the implementing and the evaluation. Importantly, throughout the Six Steps guidance Wight and colleagues cautioned that changing behaviours is hard and it is rarely possible with just one intervention approach (e.g. education program). Consistent with the conclusions of Fletcher and colleagues (2014) and the Australian Government (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015), Wight et al. concluded that changing behaviour typically requires multiple types of interventions (e.g. policies, laws, education, peer-influence) delivered at the same time. Different types of interventions are better at shifting specific types of factors and some factors exert a stronger influence on a behaviour than other factors. Thus, it is important to identify and catalogue all factors which drive a behaviour and how they interact before attempting to develop an intervention to change this behaviour.

Wight and colleagues suggested using a diagram to organise these factors and to visually see how they may be related because “it is only by understanding what shapes and perpetuates the problem (the causal pathways) that one can identify possible ways to intervene” (p. 522). Six Steps recommends using a socioecological model to organise the factors associated with a behaviour. As shown in Figure 2, this model organises these factors into five different categories or levels: societal, institutional, group, inter-personal, and individual. Examples of factors at each level are provided in Figure 1. A completed model is provided in Chapter 6, which is provided to visually report the findings from my research for this thesis into the drivers of homophobic language in sport. This completed model was a major contribution of this project.

Figure 3. Examples of sport-specific factors at different levels of a socioecological model



Summary of Six Steps for Quality Intervention Development

1. Define and understand the problem, including how it affects the population of concern, and the likely causes or contextual factors supporting the behaviour;
2. Clarify which causal or contextual factors influencing the behaviour could be malleable and have greatest scope for change through an intervention;
3. Identify how to bring about change to the behaviour: the theory of change/change mechanism;
4. Identify how to deliver the change mechanisms;
5. Test and refine on small scale;
6. Collect sufficient evidence of effectiveness to justify large scale implementation and rigorous evaluation.

The research conducted for this project, including the review papers and the four studies, generated the evidence that is required to satisfy the first five of the Six Steps methodology (see Figure 2). Completing the final step was beyond the scope of a PhD project. This step requires the generation of “sufficient” evidence to justify the large-scale implementation of an intervention. The role of each paper in this manuscript, relative to the requirements of the Six Steps methodology, and also relative to the requirements of a traditional thesis, is described in the introduction sections before each paper. The introduction sections create bridges between the papers and tie them together to create the narrative and thematic structure of a traditional thesis.

Table 3. Six Steps of intervention development and how they relate to thesis publications

| Method Steps | Study/Title |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Define and understand the problem 2. Clarify which causal or contextual factors influencing the behaviour and which are malleable and have greatest scope for change | <p>Paper 1: Reviewing the evidence on LGBTQ+ discrimination and exclusion in sport</p> <p>Paper 2: The relationship between ‘coming out’ as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and experiences of homophobic behaviour in youth team sport</p> <p>Paper 3: Relationships between attitudes and norms with homophobic language use in male team sport</p> |
| 3. Identify how to bring about change to the behaviour: the theory of change/change mechanism 4. Identify how to deliver the change mechanisms 5. Test and refine on small scale | <p>Paper 4: Reviewing evidence of harm to young people from homophobia in sport and potential intervention approaches</p> <p>Paper 5: Effectiveness of an educational intervention targeting homophobic language by young male athletes: a cluster randomised controlled trial</p> |
| 6. Collect sufficient evidence of effectiveness to justify rigorous evaluation / implementation | Beyond the scope of a PhD thesis |

Chapter summary

Research conduct in sport over the last half-century has consistently documented the frequent use of homophobic language by male athletes. In Australia, the leaders of the largest national sport governing bodies signed an undertaking to ‘eradicate’ this problem through the development and implementation of a broad range of interventions. This thesis, which received major funding from the Australian Government, sought to help them achieve this objective through identifying effective educational interventions which could be implemented in tandem with other types of interventions. This project used a systematic research method, called Six Steps, to guide the process of identifying the primary drivers of homophobic language use in male sport and then this method was used to identify interventions which could be used to target and alter these factors. The next chapter begins to report the results of my research, with a focus on gaining a detailed understanding of the prevalence, drivers, impact, and responses from coaches, teachers, and others to homophobic language use in sport settings.

CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3 – Published Paper – Review of research and evidence

This chapter reviews research conducted in Australia and globally. It contains a paper published in the Sport Management Review Journal (Impact Factor: 3.34) which reviews the global research and a timeline of Australian evidence. In addition, an interactive timeline was created to share key documents (www.outonthefields.com/evidence-timeline).

The reviews in this chapter satisfy the first step of the Six Steps process which requires researchers gain a complete understanding of the behaviour which they are trying to change, including the prevalence, drivers, and impacts. This chapter had the secondary aim of critically examining the lack of meaningful action by coaches, PE teachers, sport leaders, and government officials in response to evidence that homophobic language is common and harming children. Understanding the reasons for their failures to comply with human rights and child protection laws is important when trying to develop an intervention that can be successfully delivered in sport settings. Many interventions fail due to a lack of support from end-users (French et al., 2012). For this reason, the potential resistance and apathy of coaches and sport leaders needed to be understood.

Review methods

The literature reviewed in this chapter was identified through two systematic reviews. A systematic literature review attempts to identify, appraise and synthesize all the empirical evidence that meets pre-specified eligibility criteria to answer a specific research question (Cochrane Library, 2019). Researchers conducting systematic reviews use systematic search methods to minimise risk of bias and produce more reliable findings that can be used to inform decision-making (Cochrane Library, 2019). A protocol is typically created at the start of a review. It outlines the research questions and the criteria against which studies will be

assessed for inclusion or exclusion (PRISMA, 2019). Additionally, the protocol outlines the process for identifying, assessing, and summarising evidence that is found.

The protocol for the first systematic review was pre-registered with Prospero (a systematic review pre-registration database) and it is provided in Appendix 1. It can also be viewed here <https://bit.ly/3h9lycb>. The review focused on published and unpublished quantitative studies.

First systematic review questions

1. To what extent do LGB people experience prejudice and discrimination in sport?
2. What is the strength of the empirical evidence related to the discrimination experienced by LGB people in sport, including the causes?
3. What are the gaps in the evidence that need to be addressed?

The second systematic review followed a similar methodology to the first (Appendix 2). This review focused on published and unpublished research conducted to test the effectiveness of interventions used in sport to stop homophobic behaviour. No published or unpublished trials were found.

Second systematic review questions

1. What methods are currently being used in Western countries to address homophobic behaviour in team sport settings?
2. What is the impact or effect of current methods?
3. Are there gaps in the evidence that need to be addressed?

The data collected for the two reviews was synthesised using a qualitative thematic methodology which followed the method used for an earlier review of research, policy, and practice related to homophobia in sport (Brackenridge et al., 2008). The primary findings from each study or piece of research which was identified were recorded in a spreadsheet, along with the abstract. Key words were created to represent themes and to summarise the primary focus of the research (e.g., prevalence of language, homophobic attitudes, educational interventions). Data collected from other sources was included in these spreadsheets (on multiple sheets). Separately, interviews were conducted with sport leaders and LGBTQ+ organisations in Australia, Canada, the United States, Italy (EU), and New Zealand to understand their approaches to homophobia and the interventions used. Key conclusions from these interviews were populated into a spread sheet and qualitatively analysed. The findings were then checked and confirmed against reviews of interventions used in sport settings, and prejudice-related interventions, conducted by other scholars and separately shared in a report that was provided to a government agency in Australia titled “LGBTI+ Inclusion within Victorian Sport: A Market Analysis.” Further details on the research methodologies that were used and additional findings not reported in the paper in this chapter can be found in the VicHealth Market Analysis document provided in the supplementary material folder (<https://bit.ly/3kGPjn0>).

Summary of Australian evidence

My reviews identified an extensive and rich body of research and evidence generated in Australia on homophobic behaviours in sport and the impact to children and adults. Australian researchers (Connell, 1982; Kessler et al., 1985, 1985; Walker, 1988) conducted some of the first research in the world focused on understanding the drivers and impact of this behaviour to children. Indeed, Connell et al. used data collected in Australian schools to develop the dominant theoretical framework used to study this behaviour (see first chapter). Beyond the hundreds of articles published by Connell and colleagues, the reviews found 40 other sources of evidence on homophobic behaviours and the harm caused to young people in Australian sport, including reports from Royal Commissions and national inquiries.

The Australian Government has been the largest funder of research on this topic; since 1982 it has funded 12 academic studies (six have been conducted over multiple years) and 3 government inquiries. In addition to this, Australian Government sport officials have co-authored 3 peer-reviewed papers. Evidence generated by the Australian Government is highlighted on the summary table below. The second largest funder of research (at least 9 studies) has been the state Government of Victoria. The reviews identified just two pieces of research which reported major funding from the Australian sport industry (Cricket and Tennis governing bodies).

A variety of different methods have been used to collect data on homophobic behaviours in sport, including interviews, focus groups, 'life history' profiles, surveys, observation, ethnography (over multiple years in schools), public hearings, and first-person accounts from athletes and PE teachers.

Data on homophobic behaviour being common have been collected in all sport settings, including PE classes, school sports, community sports, elite tournaments, and professional teams. Data have also come from dozens of different sports including field hockey, cricket, Australian football, rugby, rugby league, tennis, soccer, and ice hockey.

The tables below first provide a summary of the Australian evidence and then a more detailed summary is provided. As Table 4 shows, the reviews identified over 30 reports and studies with data on the prevalence of homophobic language, the impact (harm) to young people from this behaviour, or the responses to this behaviour from coaches, teachers, or other adults. The reviews found less evidence on the drivers of this behaviour.

Table 4. Evidence on homophobic behaviour in Australian Sport by type

| Type | Total | Prevalence ² | Drivers | Impact ³ | Response ⁴ |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Academic | 30 | 28 | 18 | 26 | 25 |
| Sport Industry¹ | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Federal inquiries & Royal Commissions | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| State inquiries | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Local government | 2 | 2 | | 1 | 2 |
| Evidence from pro athletes⁵ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 40 | 37 | 25 | 35 | 35 |

Notes. 1. Research written by the IOC involving Australian sport and/or government officials and data; 2. Evidence that homophobic behaviours, specifically language, occur in sport settings; 3. Evidence on the negative impact of homophobic behaviours in sport setting to athletes or to wider society; 4. Evidence on the responses from coaches, teachers, sport leaders, and government to this problems; 5. Book written with Ian Roberts which contains written evidence of harm from children and adults

Table 5. Timeline summary of Australian evidence on homophobic behaviours in sport

Shaded/bold indicates funding or involvement by the Australian Government. Prev. = data on prevalence, Drive = data on drivers of behaviour, Imp. = data on impact/harm, Res. = data on response to behaviour from sport or government.

Key documents can be found at: www.outonthefields.com/evidence-timeline

| Date(s) | Lead author | Summary | Sample/focus | Method | Prev. | Drive | Imp. | Res. |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| 1982 – 2022 | Connell, R | Research by these authors was the first to report homophobic behaviours being frequently used by coaches, and report them teaching this to children. The found it is used by both coaches and athletes to police conformity by others to a form of masculinity that is dominant in sport settings. | 3000+ elementary students, parents, teachers, coaches | Observation, interviews, focus groups | X | X | | X |
| 1987 – 1992 | Walker, J | The authors found boys regularly used slurs such as “poof” and “queer” toward other boys, regardless of sexuality, and often in combination with sexist language. This language was used to demonstrate to their peers and coaches that they conforming to masculine norms in sport through rejecting all things feminine. | 103 high school students ages 14 – 20 | Ethnographic | X | X | X | X |
| 1995 – 2022 | Roberts, I | The first openly gay Australian athlete, rugby league star Ian Roberts, provided evidence of harm from his own experience and shared letters sent to him from suicidal children and their parents. | Rugby league players, children | First person, written evidence | X | X | X | X |
| 1998 | Hutchins, B | The authors tested the claims made by Ian Roberts and found them to be supported with evidence that homophobic behaviours are common in his sport and often linked to sexist and violent behaviours. They found sport leaders were aware of this behaviour but could find they had done nothing, publicly, to protect children from being harmed. | Rugby league players, gay youth | Evidence review, policy review | X | X | X | X |
| 1998 | Hillier, L | The first of three waves of the Writing Themselves in periodic national study of LGBTQ+ youth found half (52%) of young people had experienced verbal abuse at school. Participants identified sport environments as the setting they considered to be the least safe and least protected by adults from being harmed by homophobic abuse. | 748 LGBTQ+ youth (ages 14 – 21) | Survey (Quant/Qual) | X | | X | X |
| 1999 – 2010 | Plummer, D | The lead author, a medical doctor, conducted life-history interviews with young men and found detailed evidence of “officially sanctioned” homophobic victimisation, including violent attacks, in school and community sport which is directed to any male who does not conform to rigid gender norms (e.g. all sexualities). He found evidence of long-term psychosocial harm from victimisation. | 30 men, ages 18 – 33 selected from larger pool for balance | Interviews, evidence review | X | X | X | X |
| 1999 | Hillier, L | The authors, public health researchers, found schools were failing in legal duties to protect children from harmful homophobic behaviours in sport. They reviewed the evidence of harm from homophobic victimisation experiences. | LGBTQ+ youth | Policy and practice reviews, evidence review | X | | X | X |

| Date(s) | Lead author | Summary | Sample/focus | Method | Prev. | Drive | Imp. | Res. |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| 1999 | Lewis, S | The authors conducted a detailed evidence review and mixed-method research with future PE teachers (students) and education faculty. The found a "dominant" culture in school and community sport which denigrates gay people and women, and negatively impacts the development of boys and young men. | 57 pre-service PE teachers, academic educators | Evidence review, surveys (Quant, Qual), interviews | X | X | X | X |
| 2000 - 2001 | Gard, M | The author, a PE teacher undertaking his PhD, provided first-person evidence of "ritualised" homophobic violence in school sport and failures by teachers to protect children from harm due to lack of training and their fears of backlash from students, despite awareness amongst teachers that boys are being "physically and emotionally" harmed. The author supported his findings with mixed-method data collected from boys. | PE teacher; 23 boys aged 12 - 14 | First person, evidence review, interviews | X | X | X | X |
| 2002 | Watts, R | The author reviewed contacted the AFL and its clubs to investigate their compliance with human rights laws. He found that they were aware homophobic behaviour is common, it is harmful, but that they had no intention on taking action to stop this behaviour unless an AFL player came out as gay. | 20 AFL players, journalists, club representatives | First person, evidence and policy review, interviews | X | X | X | X |
| 2005 | Hillier, L | The second wave of the Writing Themselves In national study of LGBTQ+ youth found no significant change to the verbal abuse reported in the first wave, but additionally found that 39% of participants had experienced "overt" discrimination, with numerous sport examples provided in the qualitative responses. The authors found victimisation had a "profound" impact on their mental health. Sport was again ranked as the least safe social setting. | 1741 LGBTQ+ youth (ages 14 - 21) | Survey (Quant & Qual) | X | | X | X |
| 2006 - 2010 | McCann, P | Using similar method as Plummer (1999), but a larger sample, the authors replicated many of the earlier findings. They found homophobic language was used regularly in sport, particularly in PE classes, and this behaviour was typically directed toward any boy who did not conform to gender norms. They found evidence of long-term harm to heterosexual men, 25 years after homophobic victimisation in sport settings. | 63 men (mixed sexuality), ages 19 - 100 years | Life-history interviews | X | X | X | X |

| Date(s) | Lead author | Summary | Sample/focus | Method | Prev. | Drive | Imp. | Res. |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------|----------|----------|
| 2007 | International Olympic Committee (IOC) | An IOC scientific Consensus Statement, which was co-authored by senior Australian Government sport official, concluded homophobic behaviours occur "in all sports and at all levels" and are enabled by "non-intervention" and "denial." It defined this behaviour as a form of "sexual and gender-based harassment" due to gendered nature and found associations with sexual assault and abuse in sport. | LGBTQ+ children, all children, sport leaders, policy makers | Evidence review, policy review, practice review | X | X | X | X |
| 2009 | Australian Gov. Future of Sport – National Inquiry | An Australian Government national inquiry found homophobic behaviours were common in sport, children who were victims "fared worse on every indicator of health and well-being," and it found the legal requirement for the sport industry to protect children had been "largely neglected." It concluded that stopping homophobic behaviour "must" be a priority for the Government. | LGBTQ+ children, sport leaders, policy makers | Public hearings, written evidence, evidence and policy review, practice review | X | X | X | X |
| 2009 | Hemphill, D | The authors conducted an evidence and practice review, which included data collected through interviews with government and sport industry leaders. They found consistent evidence the sport industry had done little to stop "illegal" homophobic behaviours despite evidence provided to it of wide-ranging "deleterious" impacts. | LGBTQ+ children, PE teachers, sport leaders, policy makers | Evidence review, policy review, practice review, interviews | X | X | X | X |
| 2010 | Hillier, L | The third wave of the Writing Themselves In national study of LGBTQ+ youth found a significant increase in verbal abuse compared to 1998 (70% vs. 46%) with changing rooms identified as key location. Victims "fared worse on every health indicator." Sport was again ranked as the least safe social setting. Written responses provided new evidence that PE teachers were engaging in behaviours and schools where failing in legal duties to protect children | 3134 LGBTQ+ youth (ages 14 – 21) | Survey (Quant & Qual) | X | | X | X |
| 2010 | Symons, C | The authors collected current and retrospective sport data from adults. They found that nearly a third (29.2%) of males had experienced verbal homophobic victimisation in sport and this had a long-term impact on their sport participation as adults. This was shown by their low rates of participation relative to women (half). Participants reported that fear of discrimination, particularly in Aus. Football (AFL), was a key factor in their avoidance of sport. | 307 LGBTQ+ people, ages 18 - 71 | Survey (Quant & Qual) | X | | X | |

| Date(s) | Lead author | Summary | Sample/focus | Method | Prev. | Drive | Imp. | Res. |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| 2010 | Fletcher, G | The authors of this review paper concluded that "it is beyond doubt" that homophobic behaviours are common in children's sport and harmed all children. The authors further found victimisation was a risk factor for suicide and suggested the Australian Government had intentionally omitted the LGBTQ+ community and need for action on this problem from national sport strategies. | LGBTQ+ children, all children, sport leaders, policy makers | Evidence review, policy review, practice review | X | X | X | X |
| 2013 | Victoria Gov. Inquiry into the handling of child abuse in institutional settings | The inquiry found evidence that fear of being stigmatised as gay in sport was a risk factor for child abuse not being reported by victims. It further found that the sport governing bodies were aware that their policies prohibiting this behaviour were being ignored in local clubs and schools. The sport industry told the inquiry that the governing bodies had few levers of control over sport clubs and schools which they oversee. | Children, coaches, community clubs, sport leaders, policy makers | Public hearings, written evidence review, policy review, practice review | | X | X | X |
| 2013 | Fletcher, G | The authors found homophobic language was used regularly in field hockey by athletes and coaches and that state and national governing body leaders were aware of this behaviour, that is illegal, and that it is harmful. They further found strong resistance to addressing this problem the leaders of community sport clubs and reluctance by governing bodies (the regulators) to apply pressure on these leaders because they rely heavily on these volunteers to deliver their sport. | LGBTQ+ children, all children, sport leaders, policy makers | Interviews, observation, surveys (Quant & Qual) | X | X | X | X |
| 2014 | Mattey, E | This paper, co-authored by staff from the Australian Government, provided direct evidence that homophobic victimisation in sport causes children to attempt suicide. They described a suicide attempt at a national volleyball competition and found homophobic behaviours were common in the sport. | All state representative volleyball players in Queensland | Evidence review, observation, surveys (Quant & Qual) | X | X | X | |
| 2014 | Symons, C | The authors found 98.5% of LGBTQ+ young people had heard homophobic language used in PE classes, 94.6% in school sport, and 80% in community sport settings. Participants self-reported experiencing "distress" when hearing this language, which was supported by psychiatric measures that found relationships between this language and clinical depression, anxiety, and stress. | 399 LGBTQ+ young people aged 14 - 23 | National surveys (Quant & Qual) | X | X | X | |

| Date(s) | Lead author | Summary | Sample/focus | Method | Prev. | Drive | Imp. | Res. |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| 2014 | Mumberson, C | This Australian Capital Territory Government-led study found 40% of male participants had experienced "verbal homophobia" in sport from as early as 6 years of age. Males were significantly less likely than females to play team sport, with a fear of discrimination and a lack of protection from teachers and coaches a key deterrent. | 292 LGBTQ+ and heterosexual participants aged 17 – 71 | Online survey (Quant & Qual) | X | | X | X |
| 2014 | Fletcher, G | The authors conducted a detailed policy and evidence review retrospective sport data from participants. They found homophobic language is used regularly "at all levels of sport" and that this behaviour appeared to be normative. They further found this behaviour deters gay children and adults from playing sport and causes long-term harm (trauma). | 21 LGBTQ+ and 5 straight athletes, aged 25 to 70 years & reference group of Gov. and sport officials (incl. AFL) | Interviews, paper and pen survey, evidence and policy review, observation | X | X | X | |
| 2015 | Denison, E | The study was the first international study and largest conducted in Australia. Most (80%) Australians had witnessed/been a victim of homophobic behaviours in sport. While 50% of gay males under 22 reported victimisations. Most (76%) believed sport was unsafe for LGB children and PE classes were identified as the second most dangerous setting (after stadiums). Importantly, 33% / 44% of adult gay males said they did not play sport due to fear of rejection / negative PE experiences (respectively). | 3006 LGBTQ+ and heterosexual Australians (6488 from other countries) | Online survey (Quant & Qual) | X | X | X | X |
| 2015 | Australian Human Rights Commissioner National Consultation | National hearings conducted by the Commission found evidence that gay and bisexual male experience homophobic exclusion, violence, and harassment in sport, and that youth sport is particularly unsafe for this population. It further found that victimisation was linked to clinical depression and self-harm. It concluded that the sport industry "must" start taking action through the comprehensive prevention strategy outlined in the Anti-Homophobia Framework leaders signed. | Evidence provided by 1518 people and 78 organisations and through 37 meetings | Public meetings, online survey, written evidence, policy and practice reviews | X | X | X | X |
| 2015 | Yarra Ranges Council | This study investigated the need for Pride Cups in local communities through multiple surveys with different groups. Across all surveys 89% of participants agreed that "homophobia is an issue in Australian sport which needs to be addressed." All coaches agreed it was their responsibility to stop this behaviour. | 1286 athletes, LGBTQ+ fans, sport leaders, corporate sponsors, local politicians, coaches | Paper and pen and online survey (Quant & Qual) | X | | | X |

| Date(s) | Lead author | Summary | Sample/focus | Method | Prev. | Drive | Imp. | Res. |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| 2016 | McCloughan, L | This paper, co-authored by an Australian Government official, provided a detailed review of evidence that homophobic language and bullying is common in sport, harmful to children, "illegal," and that coaches are failing to stop this behaviour. It described a coach education program and the negative reception by some coaches who suggested the info "was too new" to them. | 19 elite-level volleyball coaches | Survey (Quant & Qual) | X | | X | X |
| 2016 | International Olympic Committee | The IOC updated its 2007 Consensus Statement and drew heavily on Australian research. It confirmed homophobic behaviours remained "widespread" and updated its Statement to conclude LGBTQ+ children are at highest risk, relative to peers, of experiencing all forms of abuse (physical, sexual, psychological) due to the stigmatisation of their identity. It further found systemic "heteronormative" cultures were a key barrier to change. Finally, it concluded that victimisation is "extremely damaging" to a child's overall health and harmful behaviours were enabled by "denial and resistance" from leaders. | Everyone involved in sport | Evidence review, policy review, practice review | X | X | X | X |
| 2016 | Aus. Royal Commission into institution. response to Child Sexual Abuse | The Royal Commission found the Aus. Gov was aware that homophobic abuse within sport institutions was "well-documented" including "high levels of sexualised bullying and homophobic taunts" and was aware this behaviour causes harm and is a key risk factor for sexual abuse to occur. Consistent with the IOC, it found LGBTQ+ children are "particularly vulnerable" to abuse, homophobic behaviours are a risk factor, but this behaviour is "shrugged off." | 8000 interviews and 1000 written statements from victims | Public meetings, interviews, written evidence, policy and practice reviews | X | X | X | X |
| 2016 | Nicholson, M | Over half (62%) of participants in 1 st wave of this research conducted to evaluate the Pride Games held by two AFL clubs reported verbal homophobia or transphobia at a game and 80% believed homophobia "is a problem" in their sport. The AFL clubs involved acknowledged the strong evidence provided to them of links between this language and high rates of gay youth suicide. | 556 fans and supporters of St Kilda or Sydney Swans FCs | Online survey (Quant & Qual) | X | | X | X |
| 2017 | Storr, R | The authors found homophobic language is commonly used at all levels of male cricket, and experienced by 89% of gay and bisexual males. The majority of LGBT (86%) and non-LGBT participants (82%) understood this language is harmful, yet there was a "distinct" lack of support from cricket leaders to stop behaviours. | 355 cricket players, administrators, coaches throughout Aus. | Online survey (Quant & Qual), interviews | X | X | X | X |

| Date(s) | Lead author | Summary | Sample/focus | Method | Prev. | Drive | Imp. | Res. |
|---------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------|-------|------|----------|
| 2017 | Nicholson, M | Over half (55%) of participants in the 2 nd wave of the Pride Game evaluation reported verbal homophobia or transphobia at a game (90% multiple times). 25% of participants had been victimised whilst 87% of LGB participants believed the AFL needed to be doing more to ensure they LGB people are safe in the sport. | 826 fans and supporters of Sydney Swans or St Kilda FCs | Online survey (Quant & Qual) | X | | X | X |
| 2018 | Lumby, C | The author of this pro-bono research for the National Rugby League found nearly a quarter (22.8%) of professional players had witnessed homophobic behaviours (48% of players 30+) and this was reported at every club. Just 15% of witnesses had challenged the behaviour. | 407 professional rugby league players | Online survey (Quant and Qual) | X | | | X |
| 2018 | Spaaij, R | The authors collected data over three years in youth sport settings in the community. They found homophobic language was used regularly but that club leaders/coaches denied this language was problematic and did nothing in response. The leaders and coaches said they believed this language wasn't harmful because it wasn't meant to be discriminatory. | 101 club leaders, coaches, players, and volunteers | Observation, interviews | X | | | X |
| 2019 | Piggens, J | The majority (63%) of young Aus. Football players in this study self-reported they had used homophobic slurs and 73% had heard their teammates use this language in the previous two weeks. Only 1% of the participants said homophobic language "never" occurs. The authors concluded that this behaviour is normalised and the AFL's anti-discrimination policies were poorly designed and ineffective. | 250 Australian football players aged 16 – 20 | Paper and pen survey | X | X | X | X |
| 2019 | International Olympic Committee | A new Consensus Statement focused on mental health. It reconfirmed homophobic behaviours occur "in all sport and at all levels" and that LGBTQ+ youth are at "high risk" of abuse which can have "devastating" long-term impacts. It also found harm to witnesses of homophobic victimisation, particularly when their coaches didn't stop behaviour. | Everyone involved in sport in all settings | Evidence review, policy review, practice review | X | | X | X |

| Date(s) | Lead author | Summary | Sample/focus | Method | Prev. | Drive | Imp. | Res. |
|---------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| 2020 | Drummond, M | The majority of LGBTQ+ (63.7%) and heterosexual (59.2%) participants in this South Australian Government commissioned study had witnessed or been the victim of homophobic language, across multiple sports. Victims described coaches and referees ignoring behaviour and the authors found long-term harm from this “insidious” problem. | 93 LGBTQ+ and 53 straight sport participants aged 16 to 62 years | Online survey (Quant/Qual), focus groups | X | X | X | X |
| 2020 | Storr, R | The authors of this Tennis Australia study found “reoccurring” evidence of homophobic language in children’s tennis along with psychological and physical abuse with “severe” health consequences. They found tennis leaders at all levels “claimed” to be inclusive but ignored their legal obligations to stop these harmful behaviours. | 45 LGBTQ+ tennis players and non-players | | X | X | X | X |
| 2020 | Storr, R | This study replicated the findings of Plummer (1999) and McCann (2006) with “almost all” participants reporting homophobic behaviours in school and/or community sport, physical abuse in changing rooms, and long-term harm from victimisation. The authors found a lack of intervention by teachers and coaches. They concluded that sport is a culture that “perpetuates, both explicitly and implicitly” harm to LGBTQ+ children and that “not much has changed” in the 37 years since “systemic” homophobic discrimination was first reported to the Government and Industry. | 13 LGBTQ+ young people aged 18 – 24 | Detailed interviews | X | X | X | X |

| Research and evidence connected to this thesis | | Sample/focus | Method | Prev. | Drive | Imp. | Res. |
|------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| 2019 | Denison, E | The majority (69.3%) of participants on teams which have not held any LGBTQ+ activities had heard their teammates use homophobic slurs in the past two weeks and 61.4% self-reported they had used slurs themselves with teammates. Despite the frequent use of this language, players had a perception that a gay person would feel welcome on their team. None of the players identified as gay. | Paper and pen survey | X | X | | X |
| 2019 | Jeanes, R | The authors conducted a detailed review of research and policies and conducted interviews with multiple national and state sport governing bodies. They found "strong evidence from multiple studies conducted in Victoria and Australia that LGBTQ+ people face discrimination in sport leading to exclusion" including homophobic language, stigma, and exclusion from school sport settings. The review further concluded that "there appears to be little change, with findings from studies conducted recently echoing those conducted in the late 90's." | Evidence review, policy review, practice review, interviews | X | X | X | X |
| 2020 | Denison, E | More than half (52%) of young people in the study had been the victim of homophobic behaviours in sport, with those who came out to teammates and coaches the most likely to report victimisation. | Online survey | X | | X | |
| 2020 | Denison, E | Over half of the participants self-reported they had used slurs with their teammates (53.6%) and 69.1% reported their teammates had used homophobic language in the previous two weeks. There was no significant difference in behaviour between the rugby ice hockey players, despite rugby signing a pledge to eradicate homophobia. | Paper and pen survey | X | X | | |
| 2020 | Jeanes, R | At clubs which have not hosted any pro-LGBTQ+ games, 36% of male participants self-reported they had used homophobic slurs with their teammates and over half (57%) reported their teammates had used slurs in the previous two weeks. This behaviour was most commonly used by players at Australian football clubs | Paper and pen survey, interviews | X | | | X |
| 2022 | Denison, E | Half of teenage rugby union players (49.1%) reported they had used homophobic slurs in the past two weeks with their teammates and 72.7% reported that their teammates had used this language. This language was used on 100% of teams that participated in the study, which was all teams with players ages 16 – 20 in the Australian state of Victoria. | | X | | | X |



Reviewing evidence of LGBTQ+ discrimination and exclusion in sport

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ABSTRACT

Sport organisations continue to place a low priority on addressing the exclusion and discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, questioning/queer, and sexual/gender diverse). It was previously thought this was due to a lack of quantitative evidence of a problem; however, over the past decade, a large body of quantitative research has been conducted, including two international studies, providing strong evidence that discriminatory behaviour remains common in sport and is harmful to this population. In this paper, the authors summarise existing quantitative evidence and consider why sport organisations continue to be slow to address LGBTQ+ exclusion. They argue sport management scholars are in a unique and privileged position to address current resistance to action and drive change through conducting research aimed at identifying pragmatic, practical approaches to end harmful discriminatory behaviours. Finally, the authors describe why such research has the potential to mitigate harm while also advancing the discipline in ways described as being needed by leading scholars.

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1. Introduction

Improving demographic diversity in recreational sport has been a major focus of sport policy makers over the last two decades (Cunningham, 2019a; Spaaij et al., 2018). Governments want traditionally underrepresented or marginalised groups to gain the psychosocial and health benefits that can come from sport participation (Bailey, 2006; Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013). Recent funding announcements suggest a focus on diversity will continue after the COVID-19 pandemic (NZ Government, 2020; Sport England, 2020). Governments are a key source of revenue for many sport organisations, hence progressing the diversity agendas of policy makers has become a major focus of sport managers.

Action on diversity has been uneven, though there are positive signs of progress on increasing representation of women, people with disability, and people from underrepresented racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (Cunningham, 2019a; Spaaij, Knoppers, & Jeanes, 2019). One area of diversity that has received limited funding and attention is

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addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, questioning, and those who are sexuality and gender diverse). Scholars who have reviewed inclusion and diversity programs implemented in sport settings have found few initiatives focused on the needs of this community (DeFoor, Stepleman, & Mann, 2018; Jeanes, Denison, Bevan, Lambert, & O'Connor, 2019; Marivoet, 2014).

Shaw (2019) describes the resistance of sport to the broader societal shifts related to LGBTQ+ people (e.g., same-sex marriage) as an “enigma” (p. 247) while Cunningham and Hussain (2020) suggested it is a “paradox” that “on the one hand, prejudice and discrimination limit the access and opportunities for LGBT athletes. On the other hand, an increasing number of (professional) teams are reaching out to the LGBT community” (p. 2) through events such as pride games or the creation of rainbow-themed merchandise.

Few researchers have examined why “sport as an institution has been relatively slow to embrace LGBT rights at the level of policy and practice compared with its responses to gender, race and disability” and how to motivate action in this area of diversity (Brackenridge, Aldred, Jarvis, Rivers, & Maddocks, 2008, p. 31). Robertson, Storr, Bakos, and O'Brien, (2019) describe LGBTQ+ diversity as “absent” (p. 394) from recent discussions in the sport management literature around barriers and resistance to diversity. In this paper, we advocate for greater attention to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community by sport management scholars. We support our position with a narrative review of the quantitative evidence that discrimination and exclusion of LGBTQ+ people in sport remains common. We focus on quantitative data in light of the findings by Brackenridge et al. (2008), who conducted a comprehensive international literature and policy review and concluded a key reason LGBTQ+ inclusion was not a priority within the sport sector was that metric (i.e. ticket sales, points scored) or business-case driven sport practitioners consider there to be a lack of evidence, particularly quantitative evidence, that shows LGBTQ+ exclusion and homophobia/transphobia is commonplace. Brackenridge et al. (2008) also found sport managers were generally uncomfortable with dealing with issues related to sexuality and gender identity and concluded that the “lack of hard data/evidence as to the extent of any problems” (p. 10) made it possible for them to acknowledge there were issues related to the LGBTQ+ community in sport but ignore the need for action. The researchers found sport managers avoided responsibility for the discrimination that LGBTQ+ people experience by claiming they lacked the expertise to develop solutions. Brackenridge et al. (2008) acknowledge the contentious nature of what constitutes “hard” (p. 10) evidence; we have also detailed the limitations of the sport sector's reliance on statistical data to shape policy and practice (Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014). Although problematic, policy makers and practitioners across many areas continue to place greater value on large-scale quantitative data than they do to the in-depth understandings that qualitative data can provide (Piggin, Jackson, & Lewis, 2009). Whilst not supporting the prioritisation of quantitative data, we acknowledge that it reflects the perspectives of many practitioners and managers within the sporting sector.

The purpose of this paper therefore is two-fold. Our first aim is to review existing quantitative research which has examined the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals in sport to determine whether there remains the lack of quantitative research described by Brackenridge et al. (2008). From this we consider whether insufficient evidence of a problem may remain a key factor explaining the apparent resistance within the sports sector to addressing the discrimination faced by the LGBTQ+ community, or whether

other factors need to be considered. We conclude the paper by outlining some avenues for future research that can address some of the issues raised throughout the review.

2. Is sport becoming more inclusive for LGBTQ+ people?

In recent years there has been a rapid shift in societal attitudes toward gay people, which has led some to question whether a similar shift has occurred in sport settings (Cunningham, 2019a). We recently examined this question as part of a series of commissioned and requested literature reviews (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019; Denison, 2019; Jeanes et al., 2019) and an ongoing systematic review (Denison, O'Brien, Jeanes, & Faulkner, 2019). As we detail in this paper, our reviews found many of the gaps in evidence identified by Brackenridge et al. have been addressed in the last decade by the “veritable explosion” (Fish, 2020, p. 3) of quantitative research on LGBTQ+ people made possible through the inclusion of sexuality and gender identity measures in ongoing population health surveys by governments and public health agencies. For example, the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) biennial youth surveillance surveys of high-school students now provide reliable data across a wide range of areas relevant to sport managers, including showing 14.6% of high-school aged young people identify as LGBQ (Kann et al., 2018), and 1.8% identify as transgender (Johns et al., 2019). However, it is difficult to determine if there have been improvements in attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people in sport settings similar to those that have been documented in wider society (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019; Fetner, 2016). This is because the evidence of societal-level shifts comes from reviews of large, ongoing studies, conducted in multiple countries using consistent and/or validated measures over time (Fetner, 2016). No similar large-scale or comparable research has been conducted in sport.

Evidence from the relatively few studies that have measured attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people in sport using validated and comparable measures (Baiocco, Pistella, Salvati, Lovernio, & Lucidi, 2018) suggests athletes, particularly males, are more likely than the general population to express homophobic attitudes (Anderson & Mowatt, 2013; Cunningham & Melton, 2012, 2014; Lee & Cunningham, 2014; McKinney & McAndrew, 2000; O'Brien, Shovelton, & Latner, 2013; Sartore-Baldwin & Cunningham, 2007; Worthen, 2014). Male athletes who play traditionally male sports, such as American football, seem especially likely to express prejudice toward gay people (Lee & Cunningham, 2016; Osborne & Wagner, 2007; Southall et al., 2011). Even with potential improvements in attitudes over time, researchers (Cunningham & Pickett, 2018; MacDonald, 2018) have recently found more than a quarter of male athletes report being uncomfortable with having a gay teammate and an even higher proportion would be uncomfortable with a trans teammate. Although less recent, Southall et al. (2011) conducted research with teenage American football players in which more than half (57%) said they would harass or reject a gay teammate. This finding is consistent with research by Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette, and Steinfeldt (2012) which also reported more than half (55%) of American football players say they engage in homophobic bullying at school, and 11% say they do this often or always. Evidence that a sizable proportion of athletes would be uncomfortable or actively reject/harass a gay or trans teammate is problematic in a sport context

where players need to work cooperatively, spend a great deal of time together, and often share rooms when travelling.

Homophobic language (e.g., faggot, dyke) is also commonly used in sport by athletes, regardless of whether they also claim to have positive attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people (Atteberry-Ash, Woodford, & Spectrum Center, 2018; Digital, Culture, Media, Culture, and Sport Committee, 2017; Greene, 2010). Researchers have found more than half of male athletes self-report recently (e.g., last two weeks) using homophobic slurs (e.g., fag) and three-fourths have heard their teammates use this language (Denison & Toole, 2020; Denison, O'Brien, Jeanes, & Faulkner, 2018; Greene, 2010; Harlequin, 2020; MacDonald, 2018). Southall, Nagel, Anderson, Polite, and Southall (2009) found male athletes are more likely than females to use this language (70.8% vs. 37%). Evidence that homophobic slurs continue to be used frequently in sport highlights an important limitation in studies that measure attitudes and do not also examine behaviours related to LGBTQ+ sport discrimination. It is not uncommon to find disconnects between what people say and what they actually do in relation to prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviours (Lapierre, 1934; Zitek & Hebl, 2007). In community sport settings, Spaaij et al. (2019) have found people claim to be inclusive and accepting of diverse groups to conform to prevailing social norms that value diversity, and including LGBTQ+ people, but they do not also change their exclusionary or discriminatory behaviours. This may be shown by Magrath's (2017) study of teenage football (soccer) players in the UK; he found two-thirds self-reported regularly using homophobic language with teammates despite expressing inclusive attitudes (e.g., support same-sex marriage) towards gay people. The athletes defended their use of slurs (e.g., fag) as normal banter and humour in sport which they perceived to be harmless because they believed they did not have any gay teammates. The athletes in Magrath's study seemed unaware that LGBTQ+ athletes try to hide their sexuality or gender identity because homophobic and transphobic language makes them feel unwelcome (Denison & Kitchen, 2015; Greenspan, Griffith, Hayes, & Murtagh, 2019; Pistella et al., 2020).

3. Experiences of LGBTQ+ people in sport

Studies conducted by researchers in a wide-range of sport settings now provide evidence that LGBTQ+ people regularly experience discrimination and exclusion in sport (Baiocco, Pistella, Salvati, Ioverno, & Lucidi, 2018; Brackenridge, Rivers, Gough, & Llewellyn, 2007; Cunningham, Pickett, Melton, Lee, & Miner, 2014; Demers, 2017; Englefield, Cunningham, Mahoney, Stone, & Torrance, 2016; GLSEN, 2013; Greenspan, Griffith, Hayes, et al., 2019; Kokkonen, 2019; Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong, 2018; Kulick, Wernick, Espinoza, Newman, & Dessel, 2019; Mumberson, 2014; Rivers, 2011; Smith, Cuthbertson, & Gale, 2012; Stonewall, 2009, 2012; Storr, Sullivan, Symons, Spaaij, & Sbaraglia, 2017; Symons, O'Sullivan, & Polman, 2016; Symons, Sbaraglia, Hillier, & Mitchell, 2010). The most comprehensive data comes from two international studies (34 countries) with a combined sample of over 12,000 participants. The most recent study (Menzel, Braumuller, & Hartmann-Tews, 2019) was the first to recruit LGBTQ+ participants from all EU countries ($N = 5524$) and the first to recruit a large international sample of trans participants (16.7% of the overall sample). Menzel et al. reported 82% of participants had witnessed homophobic or transphobic language in sport in the last six months and 90% considered

homophobia and transphobia to be a current problem in sport settings. Trans women (46.2%) were the most likely to report they had been the victim of direct discrimination in the last year.

The study by Menzel et al. (2019) replicated many of the findings of earlier research (Denison & Kitchen, 2015) that focused on the sport experiences of LGB people ($N = 7000$) from six countries (USA, Canada, UK, Ireland, NZ, Australia). Denison and Kitchen (2015) also found 82% of their participants had witnessed or experienced homophobic behaviour in sport, including verbal insults and slurs, bullying, physical assaults, and threats of violence. Most gay and bisexual males (71%) and half (50%) of gay and bisexual females in their study believed homophobia to be more common in team sporting environments than in general society, and only 1% of participants believed LGB people are completely accepted in sport environments. Data from Denison and Kitchen's study also suggest youth sport environments are particularly problematic, for example, most participants (73%), including those under the age of 20 at the time of the study, said it is not safe for LGB youth to come out to their teammates. Indeed, a recent secondary analysis of the data from their study found young LGB participants who came out to their teammates were significantly more likely to report they had been the target of homophobic abuse than those who remained in the closet (Denison, Jeanes, Faulkner, & O'Brien, 2020). The findings of large-scale studies are consistent with studies by researchers of young people in Canada (Morrison, Jewell, McCutcheon, & Cochrane, 2014) and Australia (Symons, Sullivan, Andersen, & Polman, 2014) who have found most (89 - 98.4%) LGBTQ+ students have heard homophobic language in school sport and half (47% - 59%) report this behaviour occurs frequently or often. LGBTQ+ youth also consistently identify sport environments as the school settings they are most likely to feel unsafe (Kosciw et al., 2018) and most coaches and physical education teachers (92.7%) report they have heard homophobic language being used by students toward other students (Piedra, Ramirez-Macias, Ries, Rodriguez-Sanchez, & Phipps, 2016).

Taken together, the available quantitative evidence suggests discrimination and homophobia continues to be an issue within sports contexts. The findings by researchers using quantitative methods reflect and are consistent with a rich and detailed range of recent studies by researchers who have examined homophobia, transphobia, and the discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people in sport from a qualitative perspective (Caudwell, 2011, 2014; Greenspan, Griffith, Hayes, et al., 2019; Hargie, Mitchell, & Somerville, 2017; Melton & Cunningham, 2012; Petty & Trussell, 2018; Sartore-Baldwin, 2012). This is further illustrated by consistency with the findings of researchers who have reviewed and synthesised the available qualitative evidence (Kavoura & Kokkonen, 2020; Landi, Flory, Safron, & Marttinen, 2020; Perez-Samaniego, Fuentes-Miguel, Pereira-García, López-Cañada, & Devís-Devís, 2019).

We recognise, however, that it is important to acknowledge there is a body of research that suggests homophobia is decreasing and no longer such a prominent issue within sport (E. Anderson, Magrath, & Bullingham, 2016; Gaston Magrath, & Anderson, 2018; Magrath, Anderson, & Roberts, 2015). Although it is reasonable to assume that attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people are improving in sport settings, particularly amongst young people, a large and diverse body of quantitative and qualitative research has found LGBTQ+ people continue to experience discrimination and exclusion in sport settings. We now consider the implications of homophobic, transphobic and discriminatory behaviours in sport on LGBTQ+ participants.

4. Impact of stigma and discriminatory language in sport

Greenspan, Griffith, and Watson (2019) recently conducted a systematic review of research on LGBTQ+ youth in sport and concluded sport settings are a prime community setting for this population to experience discrimination and described the harm as a “critical public health concern” (Greenspan, Griffith, and Watson 2019, p. 170). Their conclusions are supported by a recent position statement (Chang et al., 2020) from the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine which described good and consistent evidence supporting the need to address LGBTQ+ discrimination and exclusion in sport due to the detriment it causes to the mental and physical health of this population. The concerns of public health officials and doctors are based on evidence from multiple systematic reviews (Fedewa & Ahn, 2011; Marshal et al., 2011; Russell & Fish, 2016) and recent health-focused research conducted in sport (Blais, Duford, Boislar, & Hébert, 2015; DeFoor et al., 2018; Greenspan, Griffith, Hayes, et al., 2019; Herrick & Duncan, 2018). Researchers consistently find discrimination to be a key risk factor for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing moderate-severe depression, abusing alcohol or drugs, self-harming, or attempting suicide (Russell & Fish, 2016). For example, Ybarra, Mitchell, Kosciw, and Korchmaros (2015) found victims of sexuality-based bullying to be five times more likely than non-victimised youth to report suicide ideation (wishing they were dead for at least a day in the last week). The CDC has found LGB youth (Kann et al., 2018) report attempting suicide in the past year at rates more than four-times higher than heterosexual youth (5.4% vs. 23%) while trans youth (Johns et al., 2019) report attempting suicide at rates more than six-times higher than cisgender youth (5.5% vs. 34.6%). Evidence that community exposure to discriminatory behaviours is harmful to this population has led policy makers (Digital, Culture, Media, Culture, and Sport Committee, 2017), public health officials (Blais et al., 2015; CDC, 2018) and United Nations Agencies (United Nations Human Rights Commission, 2015) to call for coordinated and concerted efforts to identify ways to end this behaviour.

Discriminatory behaviours also deter LGBTQ+ youth from playing sport. Greenspan, Griffith, and Watson (2019) found evidence is stronger for males than it is for females and trans people, concluding, there is now “ample data to suggest the prejudicial nature (of sport environments) can serve as a deterrent for athletic participation for gay males, in particular, as this population appears to be targeted harshly” (p. 181-182). Their conclusions are supported by recent population studies by the CDC (Kann et al., 2016, 2018), and by public health researchers in Canada who have found young gay males play team sports at half the rate (32.8% vs. 67.6%) of peers (Doull, Watson, Smith, Homma, & Saewyc, 2018). The CDC (Kann et al., 2018) reports lesbian (51.7%) and bisexual (38.1%) girls also play team sports at lower rates than their heterosexual peers (61.2%), but the impacts of sexuality-based discrimination is less clear because sexist and homophobic discrimination is intertwined for females in sport (Krane, 1997; Robertson et al., 2019; Storr et al., 2017; Symons et al., 2016).

For women and girls, the social processes affecting sport participation can become conflated and challenging to disentangle (Sartore-Baldwin & Cunningham, 2009). There is also evidence that women who play traditionally male sports are often assumed to be lesbians and experience discrimination regardless of their sexuality (Robertson et al., 2019; Sartore-Baldwin & Cunningham, 2009; Storr et al., 2017). Adding to the complexity is

evidence that female sport participation is impacted by systemic inequality, which may be linked to homophobic attitudes, such as lower rates of funding and less media coverage (Brackenridge et al., 2007; Hemphill & Symons, 2009; Sartore-Baldwin & Cunningham, 2009).

Less quantitative evidence is available on the impact of discrimination on sport participation for trans and gender diverse youth because population studies have only recently begun asking about gender identity. However, evidence from recent literature and systematic reviews (Cunningham, Buzuvis, & Mosier, 2018; Greenspan, Griffith, Hayes et al., 2019; Herrick & Duncan, 2018; Jones, Arcelus, Bouman, & Haycraft, 2017; Perez-Samaniego et al., 2019) suggests the primary barrier to sport participation for trans people is structural or institutional, rather than interpersonal forms of discrimination. This includes government or sport governing body sanctioned policies which are explicitly, and legally, exclusionary. Rankin and Beemyn (2012) conducted a large study of trans youth ($N = 3500$) in which participants felt excluded from almost all sport settings due to the typical binary gender divisions. Similarly, Menzel et al. (2019) found 62% of trans participants who had never participated in sport outside of physical education class said this was due to discomfort related to their gender identity.

5. Response from sport organisations and managers

As the review has highlighted, there is now a wide body of quantitative research providing evidence that LGBTQ+ people experience discrimination in sport and this has a range of negative impacts on their mental and physical health. Brackenridge et al. (2008) hypothesised this type of evidence was key to driving action by sport policy makers and managers; however, research by Shaw (2019) suggests evidence of the problem may not be enough to drive change. Shaw studied a task force of sport managers from the five largest New Zealand (NZ) sports (rugby, cricket, football, netball, hockey) created in response to social (media) and political (a lesbian parliamentarian) pressure to address homophobic behaviour. This followed the release of the study by Denison and Kitchen (2015) who found homophobic behaviour was common in NZ sport. Shaw's descriptions of the response of sport managers to LGBTQ+ inclusion are strikingly similar to those of Brackenridge et al. (2008) a decade earlier. For example, some sport managers on the task force refused to accept there was a problem, though most acknowledged solutions were needed, but felt addressing LGBTQ+ inclusion was complex and established themselves as "inexpert" around how to move forward (pg. 254). Shaw describes this as a form of resistance to this area of diversity because acknowledging the need for solutions, but taking a position of "unknowing" allowed the task force members to symbolically be "seen to be doing something positive; however, by establishing a lack of knowledge in the area, they are also able to avoid final responsibility for pursuing change" (pg. 254). Ultimately, the task force did not complete its assignment. Instead of developing targeted and unified approaches to address homophobic behaviour, the members decided they would instead take a broad diversity approach that allowed them to include LGBTQ+ people under the umbrella of their organisation's work across traditional areas of diversity (e.g., race, women, and disability). This is illustrated by the taskforce's #sportforeveryone (2018) website which appears to be its only output, and has an about section that makes no mention of LGBTQ+ people. Shaw concluded the taskforce members took this

approach because they “were more comfortable picking a target group that suited their organisational mission or values, rather than address the insidious problem of homophobia in sport” (p. 255).

Whilst there is limited research explicitly examining the potential reasons for the lack of engagement by sport policy makers and practitioners in LGBTQ+ inclusion found by Shaw (2019) and researchers in other countries (Brackenridge et al., 2007; Chang et al., 2020; DeFoor et al., 2018; Jeanes et al., 2019; Marivoet, 2014; Phipps, 2020), a number of studies have examined diversity work within sport more broadly. Researchers have found there is general resistance by the sports sector to engage with diversity and their findings may point to theoretical understandings of why LGBTQ+ inclusion is largely ignored. The work of Spaaij et al. (2014, 2018) draws on the understanding that diversity work is generally driven by either a social justice perspective (driven by a rights based belief that everyone should have access to economic, cultural, and social goods) or a business case (diversity is good for business and supporting diversity will equate to economic gain). Their research highlights that many sports providers are driven by a business case in their decision to embrace particular forms of diversity; for example, one sport, recognising their membership base was reducing considerably targeted their promotion work at newly arrived multicultural communities who they considered were a new market to increase their membership base (Spaaij et al., 2014). This approach was less focused on supporting the inclusion of diverse populations within sport than on ensuring survival. The business case is inherent in much of the diversity work within sport that has looked to increase the numbers of women participating, with recognition that economically it does not make sense to ignore half the population (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014). Drawing on the conclusions of these studies, that diversity work in sport is largely driven by a business rather than a social justice framework, the LGBTQ+ community has potentially been disadvantaged by not being perceived to be an important market or one that will yield a significant economic return for sports and therefore not considered to be a worthwhile investment, at least from a participation point of view. This underscores the “paradox” described by Cunningham and Hussain (2020, p. 2) in that sport organisations apparently see little value in addressing LGBTQ+ discrimination while at the same time professional organisations, such as the National Hockey League and the Australian Football League, increasingly target LGBTQ+ consumers (e.g., pride games, rainbow merchandise) (Heraux, 2019). Sport organisations are often praised for this work and some scholars also suggest these actions are a sign of progress in these sports on LGBTQ+ diversity (Mortazavi, 2017). It is noteworthy, however, that the NHL has held widely publicised pride games for nearly a decade yet homophobic language remains common in ice hockey (Denison & Toole, 2020) and this behaviour seems to be unsanctioned by officials (MacDonald, 2016, 2018). LGBTQ+ people are also less visible in hockey than in other sports which is illustrated by the NHL being the only major North American sporting league to never have a male player (current or retired) come out as LGBTQ+ (Heraux, 2019). Mumcu and Lough (2017) suggest the pro-LGBTQ+ activities by these professional sport teams are designed primarily to attract a cohort of fans who “have become an important target market for all industries due to large amounts of disposable income” (p. 43).

The lack of engagement by governments on LGBTQ+ inclusion would also contribute to sport managers seeing little commercial value in engaging in this area of diversity. For example, we have identified nearly a dozen studies conducted in Australia (Jeanes et al.,

2019) which provide local evidence of the need for action. Despite this evidence, LGBTQ+ populations continue to be omitted from multi-year government sport participation strategies (Sport Australia, 2018; Victoria State Government, 2017). This omission sends a powerful message to sport managers as these documents provide guidance around where to focus their energy to maximise government funding opportunities. This is further underscored by Shaw's study (2019) which found some sport managers embraced social justice arguments for action on LGBTQ+ diversity but were "unable to prioritise this work in a system that is governed by a focus on funded priorities" set primarily by Sport NZ (p. 260). Shaw suggests the lack of engagement and funding support from sport policy makers in NZ made it inevitable the work of the task force would fall "in on itself" (p. 260).

Spaaij et al. (2018) have also drawn on the work of Sara Ahmed (2012) to consider resistance to diversity work within the sports sector. Ahmed's work can provide further insights into the lack of engagement by sports organisations. Ahmed (2012, 2017) outlines the importance of diversity champions in advocating and driving organisational change typically using their influence and a mix of both social justice and business arguments. Research by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) also highlights the importance and power of champions in driving commitment by peers, and thus their organisations, to diversity agendas. Retired male athletes are typically the leaders of sport and thus, they are also influential champions or resisters of diversity activities (Melton & Cunningham, 2014). As previously discussed, male athletes appear to be more likely than the general population to express prejudice toward gay people (O'Brien et al., 2013; Osborne & Wagener, 2007; Worthen, 2014) and research suggests prejudice is the strongest predictor of whether a person will be a diversity champion or resister (Cunningham & Sartore, 2010). It is therefore reasonable to suspect that elevated levels of prejudice amongst sport leaders may be a key reason this area of diversity hits a "brick wall," which is a figurative concept Ahmed (2012) uses to describe the ongoing resistance diversity workers face from organisations to make changes that will embrace different dimensions of diversity.

Ahmed (2012) also refers to the concept of "non-performative speech acts" (p. 117) as a key form and useful indicator of resistance to an area of diversity. Just like individual athletes, at a macro level, sport organisations also conform to societal norms around diversity and seem to embrace the concept of diversity within their rhetoric, such as in policies, mission statements, or the verbal claims of leaders, however these are not reinforced by specific actions that demonstrate an actual embrace of and commitment to diversity. Spaaij et al. (2019) suggest this occurs within community sports contexts with many sports providers claiming that they are inclusive and open for all but refuse to change particular practices that can result in othering and excluding certain groups. Trusell, Kovac, and Apgar (2018) provide specific LGBTQ+ examples of this, where sports clubs considered they were inclusive of diverse sexualities and genders but have not changed practices, such as altering registration forms containing heteronormative descriptors that reinforced the gender binary i.e. male/female boxes and for young people, requesting details for mothers and fathers. Brackenridge et al. (2008) and Shaw (2019) provide evidence of this occurring among sport managers who suggest they address LGBTQ+ diversity as "part of their overall equalities approach (yet offering nothing whatsoever to evidence this claim)" (Brackenridge et al., 2008; p. 51). Storr, Parry, and Kavanagh (2018) suggests the highly publicised commitments by sport leaders

to “eliminate” (Mulvenney, 2014; online) or “stamp out” homophobia (Digital, Culture, Media, Culture, and Sport Committee, 2017, p. 6; Home Office, 2011) are examples of non-performative speech acts because there is little evidence of subsequent action or change in the discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people.

6. The role of sport management scholars

There is no longer the lack of “hard evidence/data” that LGBTQ+ people experience discrimination in sport that Brackenridge et al. (2008) suggested was a key barrier to action. It seems other factors likely explain the resistance by sport managers to engage with this area of diversity. In this paper we have suggested some factors that could be relevant to explain this unique resistance but future research will be needed to confirm whether these are actual barriers to progress. Without a doubt LGBTQ+ inclusion is complex. Although it is clear that resistance can be found in the claims by some sport managers that they lack the expertise to develop their own solutions in this area, the study by Shaw (2019) and our own work with sport managers (Denison, O’Brien, Jeanes, & Faulkner, 2019; Spaaij et al., 2019) has found there are some who legitimately want to engage in this area of diversity but they are uncertain on how to move forward. There is little research that they can use to guide the creation of evidence-based and validated programs, policies, or interventions. This is illustrated by the results of a comprehensive review by Bartos (2016) and Bartos, Berger, and Hegarty (2014) of published and unpublished studies which have been conducted to evaluate the effect of interventions designed to address homophobic attitudes and behaviour in a wide range of social settings (e.g., schools, military, hospitals, construction sites). The reviewers found no studies conducted in sport settings. The need to address the gap in solution-focused research has been described as critical (Greenspan, Griffith, Hayes, et al., 2019) in light of the breadth of evidence of a range of negative health and psychosocial outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth associated with experiences of discrimination in sport. Much of this evidence has been generated by public health scholars who say “a concerted effort is needed to develop large-scale, empirically driven, and rigorously tested strategies” to mitigate this harm (Fish, 2020, p. 4). We urge sport management scholars to engage with this issue because they are in an ideal, unique, and privileged position to lead these research efforts due to their access to sport, and specialised knowledge of the unique challenges of implementing sustainable programs in sport settings (Spaaij et al., 2019). Unlike public health researchers, sport scholars are also more likely to know how to navigate typically chaotic, loosely organised, volunteer driven, and poorly resourced sport environments.

Conducting such research has the potential to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ people and it also aligns with the research agendas proposed by leading scholars (Chalip, 2006; Cunningham, 2014; Doherty, 2013a; Frisby, 2005; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). For example, Chalip (2006) and Doherty (2013a) call on sport management scholars to engage with scholars and practitioners across a wide range of disciplines, such as those in public health. Shaw and Frisby (2006) and Meyerson and Kolb’s (2009) for critical scholars to “get out of the arm chair” (p. 554) can be applied to research in sport settings, where there is a need for scholars to put a greater focus on working collaboratively on diversity issues with engaged sport organisations. Similarly, Fink (2016) suggests sport scholars “must

begin to move away from merely “admiring the problem” and toward the discovery of changes that positively transform sport organisations” (p. 5). Robertson et al. (2019) provide a useful case study of the benefits of such an approach. These researchers have worked closely with Cricket governing bodies in Australia over the past five years providing them with research and evidence to inform practice and collaborating on the creation of solutions (Storr et al., 2017). This has led to notable changes and progress, including Cricket Australia becoming the first national sport governing body in Australia to issue comprehensive guidelines for trans inclusion. This rare example of leadership by a sport organisation highlights how collaboration between scholars and sport managers can help sport organisations engage with this area of diversity.

Finally, scholars have called for the development of new, sport-specific theories that align with the “relevant issues and challenges in the field” (Doherty, 2013b, p. 8) and are therefore more likely to be applied and used by sport practitioners and also by scholars in other disciplines. Some suggest this is important to advance and develop the field (Chalip, 2006; Doherty, 2013b). Other researchers have also identified the need to validate theoretical models, derived from other disciplines, developed to understand diversity processes at sport organisations (e.g., Cunningham, 2009; Robertson et al., 2019; Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Research on LGBTQ+ sport inclusion could create an opportunity to develop or test and validate theories around the underlying causes of homophobic, heteronormative, and sexist behaviours in sport. Theories used to develop effective methods to change discriminatory behaviours in sport could then be of great utility to scholars working in other settings where homophobic and transphobic behaviours remain common (e.g., police forces).

7. Implications and recommendations

Consistent evidence that LGBTQ+ people continue to experience discrimination and exclusion in sport supports the need identified by UN agencies, public health agencies, and scholars for urgent, collaborative, solution-focused research to identify ways to stop discriminatory behaviours and mitigate any harm being caused to members of this population. However, the primary barrier to action seems to be a lack of engagement in this area of diversity by government policy makers who play a powerful role in setting the agendas and focus of sport managers. We hope the diverse range of quantitative research reviewed in this paper is useful to practitioners and advocates in lobbying for greater attention by governments and sport managers to this area of diversity. We also hope this paper makes an important contribution to the continuing debates among scholars surrounding the persistence of homophobia, transphobia and exclusionary behaviours in sport contexts. Whilst there is a counter narrative that sport is now a welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ people (Anderson et al., 2016; Gaston et al., 2018; Magrath, 2017), the current evidence, including large-scale, quantitative, international research with LGBTQ+ people, largely supports Shaw’s (2019) description that “sport is inherently homophobic” (p. 247) and Sartore-Baldwin’s (2013) description of sport as a “heterosexist institution” (p. 129) which continues to be used to reinforce traditional gender roles and binaries.

Future research will need to address the gaps in the literature in two areas. The first is investigating and identifying effective methods to overcome resistance by government policy makers and sport managers to engage in LGBTQ+ sport diversity. We need to identify the role

of scholars in this process and how they can support and collaborate with sport managers who are legitimately unsure of how to navigate the complexity of LGBTQ+ diversity or how to overcome resistance and become much-needed champions within their sector (Cunningham & Sartore, 2010). It could be useful to start by building on the work of Storr et al. (2018) who examined the actions that followed public commitments of sport leaders to address homophobia in Australia (Mulvenney, 2014). Similar commitments have been made in the United States (Buzinski, 2013; Hine, 2016; Portwood, 2015), UK (Home Office, 2011), Canada (Bucholtz, 2016), and New Zealand (New Zealand Herald, 2017). It is important to understand the specific barriers to meaningful action.

The second gap in the literature that needs to be addressed is the lack of research focused on identifying practical, pragmatic, and scalable solutions to stop the discrimination and exclusion of LGBTQ+ people in sport. Scholars (Chang et al., 2020; Kulick et al., 2019) often suggest a need for educational resources or training programs, yet over the last two-decades, dozens of online and printed educational programs, resources, and manuals on LGBTQ+ inclusion and diversity have been created (e.g., Australian Sports Commission, 2000; Birch-Jones, 2014; Fletcher, 2015; Griffin, Perrotti, Priest, & Muska, 2002; Jehu, 2016; Stonewall, 2018). There is no published evidence that creating these resources has improved the sport experiences of LGBTQ+ people or that they are valued and used by sport managers and coaches. The task force members in Shaw's (2019) study had access to a range of online and printed educational resources/manuals yet still said they lacked expertise to develop solutions. It would be prudent to conduct rigorous evaluations of existing materials before additional charitable or public funds are used to develop additional training resources. Building on this, many of the educational resources are based on assumptions of the underlying factors supporting discrimination and exclusion (e.g., prejudice). Studies are needed to confirm the contextual and psychosocial factors theorised (Cunningham et al., 2018; Hemphill & Symons, 2009; Sartore-Baldwin & Cunningham, 2009) to underpin discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people (e.g., prejudice, heteronormativity, gender norms) and whether altering these factors actually improves sport experiences for LGBTQ+ people. Research is also needed to understand the nuances and intersections (where appropriate) in the forms of discrimination between different sexualities and gender identities (Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). Broad-brush, or "one size fits all" (Anderson, 2017, p. 38) approaches have proven ineffective in driving diversity changes in other settings (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016, 2017) and may confound and ignore the unique challenges, needs, and factors underpinning discrimination, stigma, and exclusion of the subgroups of the LGBTQ+ community (Phipps, 2020; Worthen, 2013). Intersectionality is an important theoretical concept but in practice, tailored approaches will likely be needed – put simply: stopping homophobic language by teenage athletes will likely require a very different approach than that used to stop the state-sanctioned exclusion of trans people.

A final area of research which holds promise is the growing body of evidence that suggests LGBTQ+ diversity may have direct benefits to the overall success of sport teams and improve the experiences of everyone in sport settings (Cunningham, 2011; Cunningham & Hussain, 2020; Cunningham & Nite, 2020). Much of this evidence comes from research conducted in American university sport settings. Expanding this research and generating evidence from a wider range of sport settings could be a useful approach to help

overcome any perceptions of sport managers that there is little commercial benefit to act on the discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people.

We hope this paper has provided a useful overview of the body of quantitative evidence that can be used as a foundation to support teaching, advocacy and solution-focused research by scholars across all fields and disciplines.

Declaration of Competing interests

The authors report no declarations of interest.

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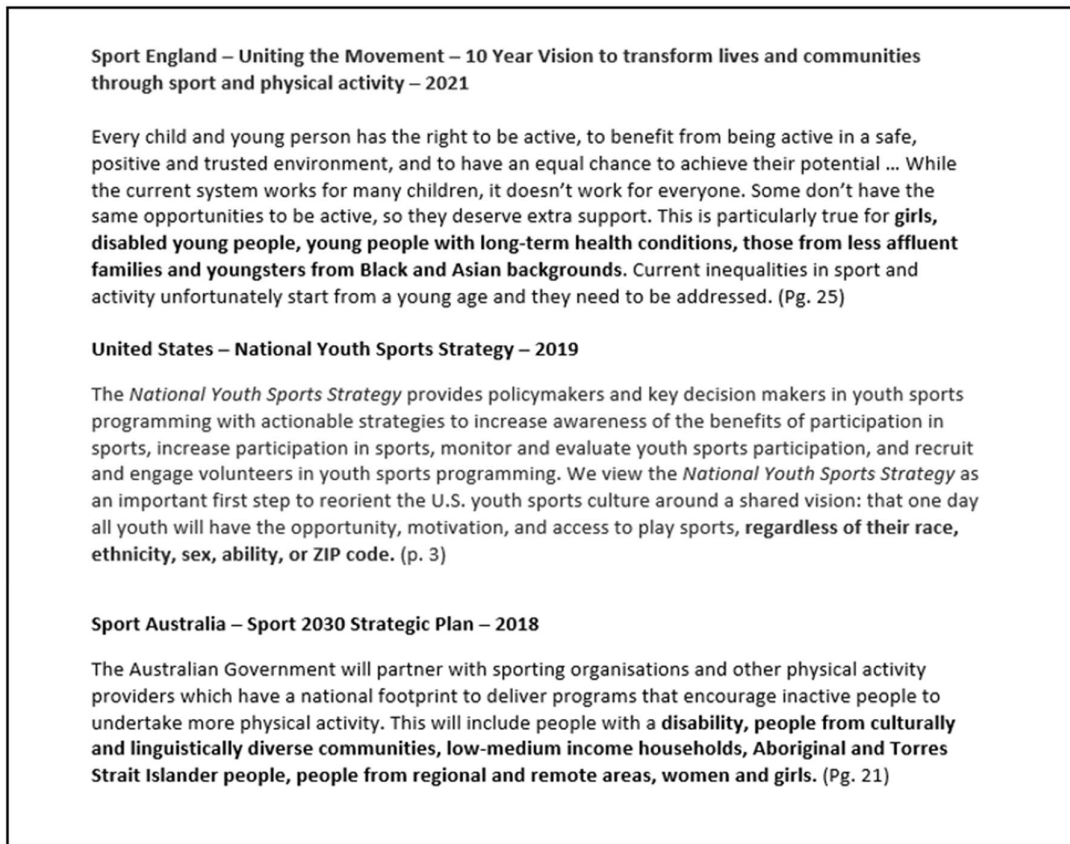
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CHAPTER FOUR

Chapter 4 – Published paper – The relationship between ‘Coming Out’ and experiences of homophobic behaviour in youth team sports

This previous two chapters reviewed the existing evidence on the prevalence, drivers, and impacts of homophobic behaviours in sport. More broadly, they examined potential factors which enable this behaviour to remain common in sport and found a key factor is denial within the sport industry of the extent of the problem or a refusal to accept there is a need for solutions. This apathy is not limited to the sport industry, with government sport policy makers similarly refusing to prioritise addressing the harmful discrimination experienced by the LGBTQ+ community. This was shown by the omission of LGBTQ+ populations from comprehensive, multi-year national sport strategies released by Australia, the United States, and England (Sport Australia, 2018; Sport England, 2021; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). As illustrated by Figure 3 below, the national strategy documents outline support for a range of other “priority” youth populations and programs to address various forms of discrimination. This omission would send a powerful message to the leaders of sport governing bodies. These leaders use these documents to determine where to focus their energy to maximise government funding opportunities.

Figure 4. Excerpts from English, American, and Australian sport strategies



The omission of this population from the Australian strategy is particularly perplexing given the significant amount of money spent by the Australian Government on research which has consistently provided strong evidence of the urgent need to protect LGBTQ+ children in sport and prioritise action on homophobic behaviours. Moreover, the Australian strategy was created by the Australian Sports Commission, which played a central role in the creation of the Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework five years before this strategy was developed.

One potential explanation for the lack of action by the sport industry and government sport policy makers is a perception that homophobia in sport is a problem of the past. Given the rapid and positive shift in public attitudes toward gay people in western societies, they may believe that homophobic behaviours are no longer common in sport.

When I started this project the extent of the strong evidence of a problem, reviewed in the last chapter, was not known. Collating and summarising this evidence in multiple ways (tables, published papers, media commentary) will be a major contribution of this thesis. However, early in my literature review I identified there was a lack of large-scale, international statistical data on the extent that LGBTQ+ youth experience homophobic victimisation in sport. I sought to address this gap through the paper in this chapter. The other aim was to gather data that could be used to better understand the drivers of homophobic language in youth sport settings.

About the study

The study in this chapter was published in the journal *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* (Impact factor 3.62). The study sought to generate the evidence required by the Six Steps process which includes gaining a detailed and complete understanding of a problem behaviour, including its pervasiveness and drivers (Wight et al., 2016). The study sought to achieve this objective through an analysis of survey data from an international sample of LGB youth (N = 1173; 15-21 years) from six countries. More broadly, the paper provides much-needed, large-scale quantitative data on the experiences of LGB youth people in sport and can be used to better understand why they experience homophobic victimisation.

This data for this paper is a subset of the data collected as part of the large-scale international research study funded by the Australian Government in 2014 (see Chapter 1, Table 1). This large study was conducted to collect baseline data which could be used to assess the impact of the actions by the sport leaders who made the commitment to “eradicate” homophobia (see Chapter 3, Table 5 for context). The paper in this chapter reports the first published, secondary-analysis of this data.

Research questions

1. How common is behaviour which LGB young people perceive to be homophobic in youth team sport settings? Is this behaviour more common in male sport settings?
2. How common is it for LGB young people to report they have been the target of behaviour which they, themselves, describe as homophobic?
3. Do LGB young people feel the need to hide their sexuality from others when they are in team sport settings?
4. Are young people who come out as LGB to others in team sport more, less, or equally likely to report they have had homophobic behaviour directed toward them?

Investigating norms and attitudes as drivers of behaviour

According to stigma theory (Goffman, 1963) if LGB young people who openly identify as LGB are not stigmatised in sport settings, and instead they are welcomed and embraced as some have recently suggested (Anderson et al., 2016) then LGB young people would not feel the need to hide their sexuality from others. Consistent with this, very few young people would report behaviours occurring in sport settings which they, themselves, defined to be “homophobic.” Most important, there would be no evidence that LGB young people who came out to their teammates are more likely to be a target of homophobic behaviours than those who remained in the closet. If this was found, that everyone is a target of homophobic behaviour regardless of their publicly-shared sexuality, this data would support the hypothesis that this behaviour is normative and shifting these norms would need to be the focus on an educational intervention. However, if the identities of LGB young people are stigmatised in sport, then LGB young people would report that they try to hide their sexuality

from others, they would report being the target of behaviours which they defined as homophobic, and those who came out in sport would be the most likely to report homophobic victimisation experiences. If this was found then it would suggest that homophobic behaviours are motivated by a desire by athletes to express hate or antipathy toward LGB people. This would suggest that attitudes are the primary driver of this behaviour and shifting these attitudes would need to be the focus of an educational intervention.

Six Steps progress table

| Method Steps | Study/Title |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Define and understand the problem | <p>Paper 1: Reviewing the evidence on LGBTQ+ discrimination and exclusion in sport</p> <p>This chapter: The relationship between ‘coming out’ as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and experiences of homophobic behaviour in youth team sport</p> |
| 2. Clarify which causal or contextual factors influencing the behaviour and which are malleable and have greatest scope for change | |
| 3. Identify how to bring about change to the behaviour: the theory of change/change mechanism | |
| 4. Identify how to deliver the change mechanisms | |
| 5. Test and refine on small scale | |



The Relationship Between ‘Coming Out’ as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual and Experiences of Homophobic Behaviour in Youth Team Sports

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Abstract

Introduction Homophobia appears to be greater in sport settings than in others. However, little is known about whether lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) young people experience discriminatory behaviour in team sports because of their sexuality and whether coming out to sport teammates is associated with homophobic behaviour.

Method This study used a sample ($N = 1173$; 15–21 years; collected in 2014–2015) from six countries (United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland) to examine whether LGB youth who ‘come out’ to teammates experience homophobic behaviour.

Results Close to half of the sample (41.6%) reported having been the target of homophobic behaviour (e.g. verbal slurs, bullying, assaults). Multivariate logistic regression models adjusting for age, gender, country and contact sport participation found that participants who ‘came out’ as being LGB to sports teammates were significantly more likely to report being a target of homophobic behaviour. There appeared to be a dose response with coming out to more people associated with a greater likelihood of experiencing homophobic behaviour.

Conclusion The study results suggest a relationship between coming out as LGB and encountering homophobic behaviour in team sports. LGB experiences of homophobic behaviour appear common overall in this sample, but are greater in those who have come out to teammates.

Policy Implication Sports administrators and governments need to develop programs and enforce policies that create safe sports environments where LGB youth can participate without encountering homophobic behaviour.

Keywords Homophobia · Sports · Gay · Lesbian · Bisexual · Stigma · Coming out

Introduction

Increasing participation in sport is a public health priority in many countries (Mansfield & Piggan, 2016). Participation in

sport and particularly team sports provides unique psychosocial and physical health benefits to young people (Dohle & Wansink, 2013; Eime et al., 2013). Youth who play a team sport report higher levels of self-esteem, confidence, resilience, better social skills, and fewer depressive symptoms than those who do not play a team sport (Bailey, 2006; Dodge & Lambert, 2009; Vella et al., 2014). Accordingly, playing a team sport could be of particular benefit to lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth (LGB) who experience disproportionately high rates of depression, suicidality, and self-harm (Blais et al., 2015; Kann et al., 2018; Birkett et al., 2015; Lourie & Needham, 2016; Mereish & Poteat, 2015). However, recent population studies, such as large-scale longitudinal research ($N \approx 99,000$) in Canadian high schools, have found that LGB youth are consistently less likely to report playing a team sport than heterosexual youth (Doull et al., 2018).

The most recent wave of data in the Canadian study shows that the largest disparity is between gay and heterosexual males, with gay males reporting active participation in team

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sports at half the rate of heterosexual peers (32.8% vs 67.6%). Similar disparities in sports participation rates have also been found in biennial national surveys conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in American high schools (Kann et al., 2016, 2018). The latest report found 61.2% of heterosexual males and 54.1% of females reported playing a team sport during the last 12 months compared with 40% of gay/bisexual males and 38% of lesbian/bisexual females.

There are multiple reasons why a young person may choose to play, or not to play, team sports. However, low levels of participation among LGB youth would suggest that there are specific barriers discouraging this population from joining a team. Literature reviews and government reports in the United Kingdom (UK), Canada and Australia suggest that homophobia and homophobic behaviour are likely to be a primary participation deterrent (Brackenridge et al., 2007; Government of British Columbia, 2017; Greenspan et al., 2019a; Sport and Recreation Victoria, 2017; Sport England, 2018; UK Government, 2015). A recent UK Parliamentary Inquiry (Digital, Culture, Media, Culture, and Sport Committee, (UK), 2017) also called for action by sports governing bodies to end homophobia and homophobic behaviour because it had “serious concerns over the effects of low participation among LGB youth on their mental and physical health and well-being ... It appears that young players and athletes sometimes feel (due to fear of being the target of discrimination) that they have to make the active choice between either coming out or continuing to participate in their chosen sport” (p. 9).

UK Parliamentarians highlighted the need for quantitative research examining the extent to which LGB youth experience homophobic behaviour in team sports and the impacts of that behaviour. A range of studies similarly note the need for published quantitative research investigating team sports experiences in LGB youth samples (Anderson et al., 2016; Brackenridge et al., 2007; Greenspan et al., 2017). However, the majority of research in LGB youth samples to date has adopted qualitative methods, which while crucial to understanding the issues, cannot establish the statistical relationships between the various factors at play. Such information is often important in shaping government policy.

Although there is a paucity of published research with LGB youth, it is reasonable to suggest that homophobic behaviour would be a factor in lower participation rates in light of quantitative evidence that homophobic behaviour in team sports has a range of negative impacts on LGB young adults (Pistella et al., 2020) including deterring them from participation (Baiocco et al., 2018). Quantitative studies (Herek, 2007, 2015; Herek & McLemore, 2013) in non-sport environments have also found that LGB youth avoid environments, or hide their sexuality, in settings where homophobic behaviour is common and where those that come out (reveal their sexuality) as LGB are likely to be the target of homophobic

behaviour. For example, LGB youth are more likely to avoid school if they perceive homophobic attitudes and behaviour to be common and if they have been the target of this behaviour (Black et al., 2012).

Research has described homophobic attitudes and behaviour to be common in youth team sports (Brackenridge et al., 2007; Greenspan et al., 2019a; Morrow & Gill, 2003; O'Brien et al., 2013; Osborne & Wagner, 2007; Southall et al., 2011). Research in Canadian high-schools has also found that 89% of LGB students who entered locker rooms or school sport environments reported hearing homophobic language (e.g. fag, dyke) and nearly half (48%) heard this language ‘frequently’ or ‘often’ (Morrison et al., 2014). These findings are consistent with quantitative research conducted with physical education (PE) teachers and heterosexual athletes (Atteberry-Ash et al., 2018; Elze, 2003; Gill et al., 2010; Southall et al., 2011). Piedra et al. (2016) found that 92.7% of PE teachers had witnessed homophobic behaviour by students toward other students.

However, evidence from qualitative studies examining whether LGB youth are the target (victimised) by homophobic behaviour in sport settings is mixed. A range of studies have described youth team sports as environments where LGB identities are stigmatised and homophobic behaviour is common (Brackenridge et al., 2007). For example, a recent study of American youth ($N = 71$; 13–18 years) reported half of LGB participants had experienced sexuality-based harassment or assaults in the last year while playing sports and described “immense feelings of discomfort, and minimal ally ship or effective intervention from athletic staff even in the face of blatant homophobic and transphobic comments (from others)” (Greenspan et al., 2019a, p. 425). Male sports, particularly contact ball sports like rugby or American football, have been found to have highly masculine cultural milieu where individuals (e.g. gay people) who do not conform to traditional gender roles and norms are rejected and denigrated (Cunningham, 2019; Greenspan et al., 2019a; Osborne & Wagner, 2007; Steinfeldt et al., 2012).

Girls and women also report being stigmatised/stereotyped as lesbians and experience discrimination if they play traditionally male team sports (Greenspan et al., 2019a; Jeanes & Kay, 2007). In traditionally female sports (e.g. volleyball, netball), lesbians or bisexual women also report discrimination for not conforming to feminine appearance norms (Brackenridge et al., 2007; Krane, 2016). Homophobic behaviour in both male and female youth team sports appears to have multiple purposes including being used by athletes to distance themselves from homosexuality, signal their conformity to gender norms, facilitate bonding (e.g. through derogatory jokes about gay people), or just to insult others (Magrath, 2017; McCann et al., 2009; McCann et al., 2010).

However, detailed studies by Anderson, Adams, Magrath and colleagues suggest that homophobic attitudes and behaviours are no longer as common in team sport environments as

the literature above would suggest (Adams & Anderson, 2012; Anderson et al., 2016; Magrath, 2017; Bush et al., 2012). They argue that this is due to changes in gender norms that underpin traditional attitudes and behaviours in these settings, with younger people in particular more accepting of diverse sexual identities. Anderson and colleagues ethnographic research suggests high school, university and community-based levels of sport are now “safe spaces” for gay and lesbian athletes with few reporting being the target of homophobic behaviour (Anderson et al., 2016, p. 147). Magrath (2017) acknowledges that the use of words such as ‘fag’ and derogatory jokes about gay people remain common in sport, but also suggests this “homosexually-themed” behaviour is not necessarily directed toward LGB athletes and is not considered by LGB athletes to be “homophobic” (p. 118). Instead of seeing this language as damaging to LGB youth, some studies suggest this language and phrases such as ‘that’s so gay’ are used without malice or homophobic intent and provide a bonding mechanism between heterosexual and gay men. Anderson et al. (2016) suggest that low participation rates of gay men in sport may not be due to homophobia *per se*, but could be related to other factors including tastes and preferences as well as wider social factors. In summary, the literature presents conflicting findings regarding homophobia within sport. The current study seeks to provide further understanding of the experiences of LGB youth in team sports environments.

This brief research paper reports the results of an analysis of survey responses from both closeted, and openly LGB youth ($N=1173$; ages 15–21) from six countries. We investigated whether these young people reported being the target of behaviour in team sport settings which they perceived to be homophobic (e.g. slurs, bullying, assaults). Our focus was on whether participants who had come out as LGB to their teammates were more, less or equally as likely as those who remained closeted to report they had been the target of homophobic behaviour. The aim of this paper is to provide evidence that can add to existing understanding of homophobic behaviour in sport and assist in informing future policy directions.

Methods

Participants and Data Procedures

Participants were LGB young people ($N=1173$; males $N=781$, 66.6%) who were recruited as part of a larger survey ($N=9494$; 26% heterosexual) examining homophobia and the experiences of LGB people in team sports. Participants ranged in age from 15 to 21 years ($M=19.01$, $SD=1.61$ years) and most (83%, $N=975$) reported playing a sport team. Participants were asked to write their sexual identity lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual or other, within an open

text box. The majority of males identified as gay (91.2%; $N=712$), with 8.8% ($N=69$) identifying as bisexual. The majority of the females identified as lesbian (64.5%; $N=253$) with 35.5% ($N=139$) identifying as bisexual. Participants were from six countries, United States ($N=263$; 22.4%), United Kingdom (371; 31.6%), Australia ($N=199$; 17%), Canada ($N=158$; 13.5%), Ireland ($N=94$; 8%) and New Zealand ($N=88$; 7.5%).

Measures

Sports Participation

Participants were asked if they had played on a youth sport team and which sports they played. They were provided with an initial list of 18 team sports (e.g. soccer, rugby, basketball, Gaelic football, lacrosse) and/or could provide the team sport they played via a text box. Because previous research (e.g. Southall et al., 2011) has found higher levels of homophobia in male contact ball sports, we created a dichotomous variable to indicate (0 = No, 1 = Yes) whether participants who had specifically played a contact ball sport (i.e. Rugby Union, Rugby League, American Football, or Australian Football).

Came Out to Teammates

Participants who played on a sport team were asked if they had come out to their teammates. Specifically, they were asked if they had ‘come out’ to: no one, one or two people, some people, everyone.’ This measure was adapted from the biennial surveys of American LGB high-school students (Kosciw et al., 2015). To avoid problems with the existing measure whereby distinctions between two response options for indicating how many people they had come out to would be difficult ‘one or two’ and ‘some’ people, we collapsed these two responses and associated data to form a single category called ‘partially out’ to people. Accordingly, three responses (scores) were used for analysis (0 = Not out to anyone, 1 = Partially out, 2 = Out to everyone).

Experienced Homophobic Behaviour

The outcome variable was whether participants had been the target of homophobic behaviour in team sports. While there are a number of measures of general bullying, there was no existing measure to specifically assess whether an LGB person had experienced (been a target) of homophobic behaviour within team sports. To assess this, participants were asked if homophobic behaviour had been directed toward them in a team sport environment. Examples of the homophobic behaviours were provided (“e.g. jokes, humour, assaults, bullying, slurs”) in the survey. Participants responded yes or no to this

question. For analysis, yes and no responses were coded as 1 and 0, respectively.

Procedure

Participant recruitment and data collection were conducted between June 2014 and January 2015. Data was collected via a 10-min online survey conducted by Nielsen Sports on behalf of key partners including government, non-government/sport and corporate organisations. These organisations included the Australian Government, International Gay Rugby, Bingham Cup Sydney 2014, International Federation of Gay Games, You Can Play (charity), ACON (health charity) and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. Participants were asked to participate in a “study into the lesbian, gay, bisexual community’s experiences, primarily in organised and competitive team sport which will greatly assist in helping the wider community understand issues affecting the LGB community.”

The study was promoted using professional sport athletes who encouraged people to take the survey and ‘share their story’ regardless of sexuality or sport experience.

The survey link was also shared by mainstream sporting organisations (e.g. World Rugby, Cricket Australia), mainstream sport media outlets including ESPN (global), EuroSport (UK), TSN (Canada), Sky Sports (Australia) and by LGBT+ media outlets including Pink News (UK), Star Observer (Australia) and Outsports (USA). Links to the study were also paid ‘promoted’ on Facebook by the LGBT+ charities Stonewall (UK) and Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Finally, cards advertising the study and iPads with direct links to the survey were provided to sportspeople and spectators at two international sporting events: The Gay Games (Cleveland) and the Sydney Bingham Cup (world-cup of gay and inclusive rugby). The use of multiple methods, and channels, to recruit LGB people, follows guidelines for conducting research with this marginalised population from the American National Academy of Medicine (National Academy of Medicine, 2011). Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Human Research Ethics Committee clearance was sought, but deemed not to be needed for this secondary analysis of the dataset provided, which contained no identifying information.

Analyses

Because we were interested in the experiences of young LGB people who had played team sport, all statistical analyses were conducted on LGB team sports participants only ($N=975$, 83% of total sample; male $N=611$, 78% of all males). Cross-tabulations and Chi-square values were calculated to test for differences between males and females on variables

of interest. Spearman’s correlation coefficients were calculated to establish bivariate relationships between variables.

Multivariate logistic regression models tested the relationship between experiencing homophobic behaviour and demographic variables (gender, age, country), contact ball sports participation and coming out to teammates.

Results

Table 1 displays frequencies, proportions and significant differences on variables of interest by gender. Female participants (92.9%; $N=364$) were more likely than male participants (78.2%; $N=611$; $\chi^2(1)=39.784$, $p<.001$) to reporting playing on a sport team. Most participants reported hiding their sexuality from some or all of their teammates. The majority of participants reported being out to ‘no one’ on their sport team, with just 20% of the sample reporting being out to ‘everyone.’ Males were significantly more likely than females to report playing a contact ball sport. Males were also more likely than females to report they had experienced homophobic behaviour in team sports environments. Nearly three-fifths of participants who came out to everyone (57.7%; $N=109$), and nearly half who partially came out (46.6%; $N=118$) reported they had been the target of homophobic behaviour in team sports, whereas two-fifths (40.4%; $N=203$) of participants who came out to no one reported being a target of this behaviour. Table 2 displays Spearman’s correlation coefficients for the variables of interest. Significant relationships were only found between gender, coming out to teammates and experiencing homophobic behaviour. Participants who came out were significantly more likely to report being the target of this behaviour.

As can be seen in Table 3, after accounting for other variables in the model, only gender (being male) and coming out to teammates were associated with experiencing homophobic behaviour. Participants who partially came out to their teammates had 1.5 times higher odds, and those who came out to everyone had 2.2 times higher odds, of reporting they had been the target of homophobic behaviour, compared with participants who did not come out to anyone. Finally, the odds of experiencing homophobic behaviour were 2.1 times higher for males than females.

Discussion

There had been no quantitative research examining whether coming out as LGB to sport teammates is associated with being more or less likely to be a target of homophobic behaviour in a sport setting. The present study examined this question in a multi-country sample and found that coming out in a team sport setting was associated with a greater odds ratio for

Table 1 Characteristics of team sport participants indicated by frequencies (%), and significant differences by gender. We also report mean and (standard deviations) for age

| | Female (N = 364) | Male (N = 611) | Chi ² (df) | Total |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Age | 18.91 (1.64) | 19.11 (1.61) | | |
| Target of behaviour (all countries) | 132 (36.3) | 318 (52)** | 26.933 (1) | 541 (46.1) |
| United States | 47 (42.3) | 72 (47.4) | | 119 (45.2) |
| United Kingdom | 33 (40.2) | 170 (58.8) | | 203 (54.7) |
| Canada | 24 (42.1) | 48 (47.5) | | 72 (45.6) |
| Australia | 22 (26.5) | 50 (43.1) | | 72 (36.2) |
| Ireland | 8 (28.6) | 38 (57.6) | | 46 (48.9) |
| New Zealand | 5 (16.1) | 24 (42.1) | | 29 (33) |
| Contact ball sports | 84 (23.1) | 198 (32.4)* | 9.657 (1) | 282 (28.9) |
| Out to teammates | | | | |
| Out to no one | 154 (43.4) | 349 (59.2)** | 22.761 (2) | 503 (53.2) |
| Partially out | 119 (33.5) | 134 (22.7)** | | 253 (26.8) |
| Out to everyone (all countries) | 82 (23.1) | 107 (18.1) | | 189 (20) |
| United States | 32 (31.1) | 20 (14.9) | | 52 (21.9) |
| United Kingdom | 19 (27.5) | 52 (28.4) | | 71 (28.2) |
| Canada | 9 (17.3) | 11 (12.8) | | 20 (14.5) |
| Australia | 14 (18.2) | 11 (11.8) | | 25 (14.7) |
| Ireland | 3 (12) | 8 (17.4) | | 11 (15.5) |
| New Zealand | 5 (17.2) | 5 (10.4) | | 10 (13) |

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

experiencing homophobic behaviour. There is some evidence for a dose-response relationship whereby coming out to more teammates is associated with greater odds of having encountered homophobic behaviour. More broadly, a large proportion of the sample reported having been the target of this behaviour in sport, regardless of whether they had come out to teammates or not.

There had been some suggestion in the research literature (Southall et al., 2011) that participating in contact ball sports might be associated with more experiences of homophobic behaviour. Here, we did not find that playing a contact ball sport to be associated with homophobic behaviour in either bivariate or multivariate analyses. However, consistent with previous studies (Brackenridge et al., 2007; O'Brien et al.,

2013), males in our study were found to have higher odds ratios for being the target of homophobic behaviour than females. It is also worth noting that the majority of young people in the study reported concealing their sexuality from their teammates. The results of our study raise the question of whether LGB youth in team sports may be less likely to come out to others than in non-sport settings. For example, US

Table 2 Spearman's correlation coefficients for all variables

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|----------------------------------|--------|------|-------|------|
| 1. Gender ^a | | | | |
| 2. Age | .05 | | | |
| 3. Target of behaviour | .15** | -.03 | | |
| 4. Contact ball sports | .10* | .04 | .01 | |
| 5. Out to teammates ^b | -.14** | .05 | .13** | .10* |

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$ ^a Gender: 0 = F, 1 = M^b Out to teammates: 0 = No one, 1 = Partially, 2 = Everyone**Table 3** Unadjusted odds ratio's (OR) and adjusted odds ratio's (Adj. OR) with 95% confidence intervals for bivariate and multivariate associations between the variables of interest and having encountered homophobic behaviour

| | OR (95% CI) | Adj. OR (95% CI) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Gender (ref female) | 1.93** (1.50, 2.48) | 2.09** (1.56, 2.79) |
| Age | 0.97 (0.90, 1.04) | 0.97 (0.90, 1.06) |
| Country (ref USA) | | |
| United Kingdom | 1.46* (1.07, 2.01) | 1.19 (0.82, 1.74) |
| Canada | 1.01 (0.68, 1.51) | 1.13 (0.73, 1.74) |
| Australia | 0.69 (0.47, 1.00) | 0.70 (0.47, 1.08) |
| Ireland | 1.16 (0.72, 1.86) | 1.07 (0.61, 1.87) |
| New Zealand | .60* (0.36, 0.99) | .67 (0.39, 1.16) |
| Contact ball sports | 1.06 (0.80, 1.40) | 1.05 (0.77, 1.42) |
| Out to teammates (ref out to no one) | | |
| Partially out | 1.29 (0.95, 1.75) | 1.45* (1.05, 2.0) |
| Out to everyone | 2.01** (1.43, 2.83) | 2.15** (1.50, 3.08) |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$; 1. Nagelkerke R^2 : .08

research in LGB high-school students (Kosciw et al., 2015) found that 21.6% of students had not come out to anyone at their high school, whereas the present study found that 53.2% of participants had not come out to anyone in their team. Although the unadjusted odds of having encountered homophobic behaviour in the United Kingdom and New Zealand appear to be higher and lower, respectively, when compared with the United States (Table 3), after adjusting for other factors, there was no significant difference in the odds of encountering homophobic behaviour. Future research examining whether coming out is more or less common in sport vs. non-sport settings would be of interest, as would research examining differences across countries and different sports.

This paper provides new evidence suggesting that homophobic behaviours remain problematic in youth team sport settings. The results of our study are consistent with the findings of quantitative studies conducted with LGB high-school students (Elze, 2003; Greenspan et al., 2019a; Greenspan et al., 2019b; Morrison et al., 2014), LGB young adults (Baiocco et al., 2018; Pistella et al., 2020), physical education teachers (Piedra et al., 2016) and heterosexual athletes (Gill et al., 2010; MacDonald, 2018; O'Brien et al., 2013; Southall et al., 2011; Steinfeldt et al., 2012). These studies have reported homophobic attitudes and behaviour to be common, particularly in male team sports environments. However, the findings differ to the conclusion of several studies that suggest LGB people who come out in team sports do not experience discrimination, and, therefore, homophobic behaviour is not an ongoing issue (Anderson et al., 2016; Magrath, 2017). This may be due to differences in the sports and or clubs examined by these researchers. It is also potentially due to differences between studies in what is understood by homophobic behaviour, with Anderson et al. (2016) suggesting that slurs and homophobic language may not be indicative of homophobic intent and therefore do not constitute homophobic behaviour.

Collectively, the results of the present and other studies suggest that homophobic behaviour is commonly encountered in youth sports environments (Greenspan et al., 2019a; Shaw, 2019). Whether some of this behaviour represents negative attitudes and antipathy toward LGB youth is uncertain, as some authors suggest that it may simply be due to unthinking casual normative language and behaviour that is not necessarily intended to be derogatory or hurtful (Anderson et al., 2016). Regardless, research on the effects of stigma suggests that such behaviour does negatively impact LGB youth, and accordingly, they may be more likely to try to avoid environments, such as sport, due to the presence of this homophobic behaviour (Herek, 2007, 2015). This may also explain the large disparities in team sports participation between LGB youth and their heterosexual peers reported by recent population studies (Doull et al., 2018; Kann et al., 2018).

Being the target of homophobic behaviour is harmful and associated with higher rates of suicide, self-harm and

depression among LGB youth (Birkett et al., 2015; Burton et al., 2013; Lourie & Needham, 2016), whereas playing team sports in a safe and supportive environment, free of discriminatory behaviour, has been shown to provide LGB youth with many psychosocial benefits (Blais et al., 2015). Ending discriminatory behaviours and encouraging more LGB youth to play team sports has the potential to help close the gap across a wide range of negative psychosocial and health disparities between LGB youth and their peers (Greenspan et al., 2019a).

The results provide empirical support to calls by other scholars (Greenspan et al., 2019b), LGB advocates (Englefield et al., 2016), educators (GLSEN, 2013) and policy makers in various countries (Digital, Culture, Media, Culture, and Sport Committee, (UK), 2017; Shaw, 2019) for action on homophobic behaviour by sport organisations. The leaders of large sport organisation in the United Kingdom, United States, Australia and New Zealand have also made public commitments to end homophobia in their sports (Home Office, 2011; Portwood, 2015; Shaw, 2019; World Rugby, 2015). The findings of this study suggest that these commitments may not have been followed by meaningful action to end this discriminatory behaviour (Shaw, 2019; Storr et al., 2018). The findings also support the need for sport administrators, clubs and coaches to put in place policies and procedures for sanctioning homophobic language and behaviour. The current data, and research by Anderson et al. (2016) suggest that this may not be occurring.

There are limitations to the study. Although the study followed recommended sampling approaches for difficult to reach and highly stigmatised populations (Kosciw et al., 2015; Kull et al., 2016; National Academy of Medicine, 2011), the sample is purposive in nature and this limits generalisability of the findings. The sampling approach used may also have resulted in recruitment of LGB youth who were more likely to have encountered homophobic behaviour and thus were more likely to want to share their experiences. However, the results suggest that there was considerable heterogeneity in the sample for age, gender, those encountering homophobia and/or those participating in contact ball sports. Although it is reasonable to suggest 'coming out' precedes experiences of homophobic behaviour, the correlational design of the study means that causal inferences cannot be made on the relationship. The measure of homophobic behaviours used did not distinguish between different types of homophobic behaviour. As such, we were unable to examine if specific types of homophobic behaviour are more or less affected by coming out. The lack of psychometrically developed and tested measures in this area is a challenge for the field to address. Large-scale, longitudinal studies using representative samples and multi-dimensional scales are needed to address many of these limitations. The absence of rigorous longitudinal research speaks to the expense of such studies, and the absence of funding to support them.

Notwithstanding the limitations, this study investigated for the first time whether coming out to team mates would be

associated with more or less experiences of homophobic behaviour by LGB young people. In doing so, the research has addressed an important gap in the literature and provided much needed evidence to guide policy makers and sports administrators interested in increasing participation in sport and creating a more inclusive sporting environment for all. Stronger policy stances that engage the public and provide better protections and rights are associated with improved attitudes towards LGB populations (Ofosu et al., 2019). Worryingly, the results suggest that being openly LGB may result in encountering more homophobia. This may, to some extent at least, explain why there are so few openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual athletes in high profile sports. There are multiple possible reasons why sportspeople may engage in homophobic behaviour, including the possibility that such behaviour reflects an unconsidered adherence to current social norms amongst other players or fans, rather than being driven by negative attitudes towards LGB people per se, an argument advanced in McCormack et al. (2016) examination of homophobic language use amongst young men. Clearly, more research is needed to better understand why LGB youth continue to encounter homophobic behaviour and language in sport settings.

The present results, alongside a large body of research detailing the extent and nature of homophobia in sport, provide policy makers and sport administrators with supportive evidence in which to develop strategies aimed at reducing homophobic behaviour in sport. Although there is some evidence that education may be effective in reducing homophobia (Baams et al., 2017), stronger regulatory principals and actions are needed to address prejudices around sexuality. In so doing, better regulations and policies can enhance the health and well-being of LGB youth through their increased and/or ongoing participation in team sport.

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CHAPTER 5

Chapter 5 – Published paper – Relationships between attitudes and norms with homophobic language use in male team sports

The study in the previous chapter contributed to existing strong evidence that homophobic behaviour remains common in youth sport, particularly amongst male athletes. It added to existing data showing most LGB youth hide their sexuality from others in sport. In addition, the paper provided new data which showed gay and bisexual boys who came out to others in sport as gay were significantly more likely than those who hid their sexuality to report being the target of homophobic behaviour. Taken together, there is strong, consistent evidence that homosexuality continues to be stigmatised in male sport and homophobic behaviour remains a serious problem.

However, the findings reported in the last chapter raised important questions which could not be answered through the secondary analysis of the data provided. This is because the study found a large proportion of participants who remained in the closet reported they had been the victim of homophobic behaviour. This suggests that factors other than antipathy towards gay people were motivating this behaviour.

Table 6. Percentage of LGB youth targeted with homophobic behaviours

| | All | Female (N = 364) | Male (N = 611) |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Out to no one | 40.4% N = 203 | 24% N = 37 | 47.6% N = 166 |
| Out to some | 46.6% N = 118 | 41.3% N = 49 | 51.5% N = 69 |
| Out to everyone | 57.7% N = 109 | 48.8% N = 40 | 64.5% N = 69 |

It is reasonable to assume that some young people experienced homophobic behaviour because their efforts to conceal their sexuality were not successful. These young people may have been the target of homophobic behaviour because their appearances or behaviours did not conform to traditional gender norms (e.g. males are aggressive, dominant). Homophobic language and other behaviours are often directed toward young people who do not conform to norms in sport, including gender norms (Kagesten et al., 2016). Moreover, male athletes report hearing homophobic language used by teammates and coaches regularly from a young age (Greenspan, Griffith, & Watson, 2019). There is qualitative evidence that they adopt this behaviour because they believe it is required to be accepted by others (Magrath et al., 2015; Petty & Trussell, 2018). Further evidence that homophobic language use in sport is not always motivated by homophobia comes from the interview responses of teenage male athletes who said they know using words like “fag” could be perceived to be homophobic by a gay person, but they perceived that everyone around them is heterosexual (Magrath et al., 2015).

There is a need for quantitative research to tease out the role of homophobic attitudes and norms in the use of homophobic language by male athletes. This was the objective of the study reported in this chapter. In addition it generated evidence required by the Six Steps intervention development process, which suggests that interventions are more effective when they target changes to factors which are most strongly associated with a behaviour. Currently, nearly all interventions that are used to address homophobic language in sport settings focus on changing individual homophobic attitudes (Jeanes et al., 2019). This suggests that the designers believed that homophobia, rather than norms, are the primary driver of homophobic language use. If norms are found to be the primary driver, or they are found to be associated with this behaviour, then different intervention approaches may be needed (Paluck, 2012).

The study in this chapter was published in the Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport (Impact factor 3.60). It investigated the role of homophobic attitudes (subtle and overt) and norms (descriptive and injunctive) in the use of homophobic language by Australian male rugby union players (n = 97; ages 16 -18) and ice hockey players (n = 146; ages 16 - 31).

Research questions

1. What is the relationship between homophobic attitudes and homophobic language use by male athletes?
2. What is the relationship between norms and homophobic language use by male athletes?
3. Which of these factors is most strongly related to homophobic language use by male athletes?

Six Steps progress table

| Method Steps | Study/Title |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Define and understand the problem | <p>Paper 1: Reviewing the evidence on LGBTQ+ discrimination and exclusion in sport</p> <p>Paper 2: The relationship between ‘coming out’ as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and experiences of homophobic behaviour in youth team sport</p> |
| 2. Clarify which causal or contextual factors influencing the behaviour and which are malleable and have greatest scope for change | <p>This chapter: Relationships between attitudes and norms with homophobic language use in male team sports</p> |
| 3. Identify how to bring about change to the behaviour: the theory of change/change mechanism | |
| 4. Identify how to deliver the change mechanisms | |
| 5. Test and refine on small scale | |



Original research

Relationships between attitudes and norms with homophobic language use in male team sports

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study addresses a need for quantitative research examining factors supporting the frequent use of homophobic language (e.g., fag) in male team sports which has a range of negative health impacts on gay and bisexual males. Intervention methods are needed to stop this behaviour, but little is known about why this language remains common.

Design: Cross-Sectional survey.

Method: Male Rugby Union (n=97; ages 16–18 years) and Ice Hockey players (n=146; ages 16–31 years) self-reported their use of homophobic language and completed measures of homophobic attitudes and descriptive and injunctive norms related to language use on their team. Bivariate and multivariate analyses examined factors associated with this behaviour.

Results: Over half of participants self-reported using homophobic language at least once in the previous two weeks. No relationship was found between homophobic attitudes and language use. In contrast, norm measures had a strong, positive relationship with this behaviour. In multivariate analyses, norms uniquely accounted for almost one-half of the variance in language use. The addition of descriptive norms into the full model led to the largest increase in R^2 of .340 ($F(1,200)=130.816$, $p<.001$).

Conclusions: Homophobic language use was related to norms, rather than homophobic attitudes. Interventions targeting changes to these norms could be an effective method to change this behaviour. This finding contributes to a growing body of evidence that norms are associated with a range of negative behaviours by male athletes.

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Practical implications

- Frequent exposure to homophobic language in male team sport has a range of negative health impacts for gay and bisexual males.
- Over half (53.6%) of the teenage rugby union players, and mixed-aged hockey players participants self-reported they had used homophobic language at least once in the previous two weeks, and nearly two-thirds (69.1%) perceived their teammates to do the same.
- Social norms, rather than homophobic attitudes, were found to explain the use of this homophobic language.
- These findings indicate that current programs designed to reduce homophobic language in sport may be more effective if they focus

on changing social norms, rather than ‘tackling’ homophobic attitudes.

1. Introduction

Studies conducted over the last half-century have consistently reported the use of homophobic language, such as words like ‘fag’ or derogatory jokes about gay people, to be common in male team sport environments.^{1–4} A recent position statement by the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine identified “consistent, good-quality” evidence supporting the need for effective interventions to stop the use of this language due to it being associated with a range of negative health outcomes for young gay and bisexual males.⁵ Similarly, a recent systematic review² of this evidence described the need to stop this language as a “critical public health concern” because sport settings appear to be a prime community setting for members of this population to report discrimination experiences. Exposure to homophobic language is a key risk factor

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for gay and bisexual youth experiencing depression, anxiety, alcohol or drug abuse, self-harm, and suicidality.⁶ Policy makers⁴ and public health agencies,⁷ including the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), have identified a need to address the range of discrimination-linked health disparities between heterosexual and non-heterosexual youth, for example, gay and bisexual male youth report attempting suicide at rates more than four times higher (4.1% vs. 18.3%) than their peers.⁸

The CDC has also raised concerns about large disparities in sport participation between LGB youth and their peers.⁸ Canadian research has found gay youth play team sports at half the rate (32.8% vs. 67.6%) of heterosexual males.⁹ Research indicates gay and bisexual males may avoid sport because they view the use of homophobic language as expressions of homophobic attitudes by teammates and feel unsafe and unwelcome.¹ A review by Greenspan and colleagues concluded, “there is ample data to suggest the prejudicial nature of (sport environments) can serve as a deterrent for athletic participation for gay males.”² Playing sport has been found to generate a range of benefits to physical and mental wellbeing for young people, however, exposure to homophobic language may also impact the psychosocial benefits that gay and bisexual males receive. Research suggests these benefits may only be gained when participation occurs in a supportive environment.¹⁰

Together, these findings indicate a clear need for effective interventions to stop homophobic language in sport. Unfortunately, the reasons why this language remains commonplace, despite positive shifts in public attitudes toward the acceptance of gay and bisexual people in western societies,¹¹ remain poorly understood. There is a paucity of quantitative research investigating the psychosocial factors underpinning this behaviour in sport.² As such, it is unclear if current intervention approaches funded by public health agencies and governments, and adopted by major sporting organisations (e.g., National Hockey/Australian Football Leagues’ ‘Pride Games’; English Premier League’s ‘Rainbow Laces’) are focused on the appropriate underlying mechanisms supporting the use of homophobic language.^{7,12,13} The present study responds to the need for quantitative research on this topic.

Sport organisations appear to believe prejudice is the primary driver of this homophobic language given ‘fighting homophobia’ is consistently described as the objective of their current interventions.^{4,13} Their approaches are supported by research that describes homophobic attitudes and behaviours as “central agents” used to construct male identities in sport settings.¹⁴ Drawing on stigma theory, Herek and McLemore¹⁵ have found homophobic attitudes and behaviours to be particularly common amongst men when their gender identity may be open to challenge by other men, such as may occur in male sport. Consistent with this hypothesis, studies have found male athletes are more likely than female athletes to use homophobic language,² and more likely than female athletes and members of the general population to express homophobic attitudes, as measured through agreement with statements contained in measurement scales such as “I think male homosexuals are disgusting.”^{14,16} There is also recent evidence from non-sport settings (e.g., schools) that homophobic attitudes and language are related.¹⁷ However, a growing body of qualitative evidence has raised questions about the association of homophobic attitudes to homophobic language use in male sport.

Qualitative studies of teenagers playing British football¹⁸ and rugby union¹⁹ as well as Canadian ice hockey²⁰ describe athletes regularly using homophobic language despite expressing generally positive attitudes toward gay people, including openly supporting same-sex marriage.

The athletes in these studies reported that they were aware this language could be perceived to be homophobic by a gay person but defended their language as harmless because it was being

used around teammates they perceived to be heterosexual and not directed toward a gay person. This finding is consistent with studies conducted in school settings which have also found the meaning of homophobic slurs has broadened beyond expressing prejudice toward gay people.^{21–23}

As has been found in schools, qualitative research conducted in sports settings^{18–20} describes athletes homophobic language to express general displeasure or dissatisfaction with something or someone (e.g. about an unfair referee) or when a teammate isn’t conforming to group norms and expectations, such as leaving a training session early (e.g. don’t be such a fag). The authors of these studies suggest this language is not a product of overt homophobic attitudes (though they suspect subtle attitudes may still be a factor), but instead this language is part of normalised ‘banter’ or teasing which can play an important role in team cohesion and social connection. These findings, which need quantitative examination, support suggestions by some theorists that this language may be related to norms, rather than homophobic attitudes.

A ‘multi-level model’ developed by Cunningham¹¹ to understand the experiences of gay and bisexual athletes in sport describes heterosexuality in sport as the “norm or expected standard” and as a result, identities that vary from the standard may be cast as “other” and “subsequently marginalized.” Cunningham posits that customs and practices, such as the use of homophobic language, are maintained by context-specific norms that have become entrenched in sport.¹¹ According to social norm theory, individuals tend to conform to the behaviours they perceive to be normal (descriptive norms) or that are approved/disapproved of by others (injunctive norms) in the groups (e.g., sport team) to which they want to belong.²⁴ Based on this theory, and previous research examining the influence of norms, if a young man joins a sport team and observes teammates using homophobic language, it is likely that he will adopt this behaviour to conform with the group.²⁴ Norms may also exert a uniquely powerful effect in team sport settings, where social acceptance is paramount and the behaviour of teammates and coaches is highly salient.²⁵

Both descriptive and injunctive norms have also been found to be associated with a range of negative behaviours in male sport, including on-field and off-field violence, and drug and alcohol usage, but research on the impacts of norms on homophobic language is lacking.²⁶

The current study investigates the role of homophobic attitudes (overt and subtle) and norms (descriptive and injunctive) in explaining the use of homophobic language by members of teenage rugby union teams and semi-professional ice hockey teams. We hypothesized that norms and attitudes would be related to homophobic language use. However, in light of evidence that norms may exert a uniquely powerful influence on this behaviour in sport, we further hypothesized that in multivariate regression models, norms would have the largest association with this behaviour. Consistent with other research on this topic^{1,22} we use ‘homophobic’ as an adjective to describe words that have historically been used to express prejudice toward gay people. We do not use this adjective to suggest intent. Some have suggested ‘homonegative’ might be a better adjective, however, this term also suggests intent and we agree with Shaw’s argument⁴ that the term homonegative is not used outside of academia, whereas homophobic “is the term used in everyday media and sport conversations” by the policy makers and practitioners we expect to benefit from our research.

2. Methods

The sample comprised of all six Under 18 rugby union teams (n = 97) in the state of South Australia (age range 16–18 years; mean age: 17.01 years, SD = 0.73), and all eight semi-professional teams

($n = 146$) that compete nationally in the Australian Ice Hockey League (age range 16–31 years; mean age: 25.31, $SD = 5.25$).

Players completed a paper and pen, 10-minute survey prior to their normal practice in the last month of the 2018 season. The estimated participation rate was 92% for rugby and 90% for ice hockey. This is based on average player numbers at this time of the season, which is typically different than the number of registered players due to injuries. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical approval was obtained from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Participants reported being born in a range of countries, including Australia ($n = 132$; 54.8%), Canada ($n = 32$; 13.3%), United Kingdom ($n = 27$; 11.2%), New Zealand ($n = 11$; 4.6%) and the United States ($n = 7$; 2.9%). Most ($n = 182$; 75.5%) described their ethnicity as being Anglo-European and almost all ($n = 228$; 94.6%) identified as straight with just one participant (0.4%) identifying as gay and 3 (1.2%) identifying as bisexual. The remaining participants ($n = 9$; 3.8%) either did not answer this question or chose 'not listed.'

Homophobic language use by participants was measured using the Homophobic Content Agent Target (HCAT) measurement approach.¹⁷ This approach does not ascribe homophobic intent to language, which is important in light of evidence that male athletes may not perceive their language to be homophobic.²⁰ The stem asks "Some people use words such as fag or poof. In the past two weeks how often have you used words like these, for any reason, with your teammates?" Response options were: never (0), 1–2 times (1), 3–4 times (2), 5–6 times (3), or 7+ times (4).

Homophobic attitudes were measured in two ways. The first method used five semantic-differential scale items designed to measure subtle forms of homophobia. This scale has been used in previous studies examining factors associated with adolescent homophobic bullying.¹⁷ Each item is preceded by the stem: "When you think of gay men, as a group, what words describe your feelings?"

Participants indicated their responses on a series of six-point Likert scales which used the following labels: respect-disapprove, negative-positive (reverse-coded), friendly-hostile, trusting-suspicious, dislike-admire (reverse-coded). Responses were averaged to form a scale with good internal consistency ($\alpha = .85$); with higher scores indicating more homophobic attitudes.

The second method used to measure homophobic attitudes was the three-item Attitudes Toward Gay Men (ATG) scale¹⁵. Items were: 'sex between two men is just plain wrong'; 'homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men (reverse-coded)'; and, 'I think male homosexuals are disgusting.' A six-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

Scores were averaged to form a composite scale, with higher scores indicating more homophobic attitudes. Cronbach's alpha for the three-item scaled used in this study ($\alpha = .64$) was acceptable.

Descriptive norms were measured by asking participants to report how often they perceived their teammates had used words like 'fag' in the previous two weeks. Response options were: never (0), 1–2 times (1), 3–4 times (2), 5–6 times (3), or 7+ times (4).

Injunctive norms were measured using two methods designed to measure both prescriptive (approved behaviours) and proscriptive (disapproved behaviours) injunctive norms. Prescriptive injunctive norms were measured using a single-item asking participants to indicate what percentage of their teammates would agree "it is okay to make jokes about gay people, if no gay people can hear the jokes." Proscriptive injunctive norms were measured by asking "what percentage of your teammates do you think would be critical of you (think or act negatively) if you" and then two scenarios were provided 'made a joke about gay people' and 'called an opponent a 'fag' in a game.' These questions were adapted from a scale designed to measure norms in sporting contexts.²⁷ The two proscriptive items (correlation coefficient $r = .64$) were combined

and averaged to form a composite scale. Response options for all injunctive norms measures were 0 = 0% to 10 = 100%.

Spearman's correlation coefficients were calculated to estimate bivariate relationships between variables. Hierarchical multivariate regressions were used to examine the extent to which demographic variables, homophobic attitudes, and norms (descriptive and prescriptive/proscriptive injunctive norms) explained variance in homophobic language use.

3. Results

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for all measures. Over half of participants ($n = 125$, 53.6%) self-reported they had used homophobic language at least once in the previous two weeks, and the majority ($n = 161$, 69.1%) also perceived their teammates to do the same.

Table 2 presents Spearman's correlation coefficients between all variables. Measures of homophobic attitudes were significantly related to each other, as were measures of norms. Playing rugby had a small-medium association with homophobic attitudes, however, the sport played and the age of participants were unrelated to the use of homophobic language. We also found no relationship between either measure of homophobic attitudes and language use. In contrast, we found both measures of injunctive norms had a small-medium association with this behaviour, and the measure of descriptive norms had a large association.

The results of the multivariate regression models are presented in Table 3. We examined the associations between all variables and the use of homophobic language. Variables were entered in four steps. In the first step, we included only demographic control variables (sport and age). In the second step, we added measures of homophobic attitudes. Step 3 added injunctive norms, and Step 4 added descriptive norms.

Measures of homophobic attitudes were not associated with language use in any model. Age was significantly associated with this behaviour, but only when homophobic attitudes and injunctive norm variables were added; this relationship was no longer significant when the descriptive norms variable was added to the final model. Injunctive norms were associated with language use in model 3, but this relationship was also no longer significant in the final step, when descriptive norms were added.

In the final model, which adjusted for all factors, only descriptive norms were significantly associated with language use. The introduction of descriptive norms in the final step also resulted in the largest R^2 increase of .340, $F(1,200) = 130.816$, $p < .001$. The full model including all variables explained a statistically significant amount of variation in homophobic language use ($R^2 = .480$, $F(7,200) = 26.371$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .462$).

4. Discussion

The present study addressed a need for quantitative research on the psychosocial factors associated with homophobic language use in male team sport. This research provides new evidence that can be used to support the development of targeted interventions to change this behaviour. Consistent with previous studies, which have described this language to be common, over half of the rugby and hockey players in our study self-reported using homophobic language and perceiving their teammates to do the same, at least once, in the two weeks prior to completing an anonymous survey. It is also noteworthy that just 1.6% of participants identified as gay or bisexual. Previous research has found gay and bisexual males may avoid sport or attempt to conceal their sexuality from others because they perceive homophobic language to be expressions of prejudice.²

Table 1

Descriptive statistics: Means and standard deviations and number/percentages for each scale point.

| | Homophobic language | | | Homophobic attitudes | | | Injunctive norms | |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Self-used | Teammates used(Desc. Norms) | | Semantic differential | ATG | | Prescriptive | Proscriptive |
| M(SD) | 1.1 (1.4) | 1.4 (1.4) | | 2.3 (.98) | 2.6 (1.2) | | 3.4 (2.9) | 2.9 (2.6) |
| 0 | 108(44.8%) | 72 (30.9%) | 1 | 85 (37.3%) | 72(31.0%) | 0 | 46 (19.9%) | 59 (25.5%) |
| 1-2 | 60 (24.9%) | 74 (31.8%) | 2 | 70 (30.7%) | 72(31.0%) | 10% | 28 (12.1%) | 36 (15.5%) |
| 3-4 | 23 (9.5%) | 37 (15.9%) | 3 | 61 (26.8%) | 56(24.1%) | 20% | 32 (13.9%) | 37 (16.0%) |
| 5-6 | 16 (6.6%) | 19 (8.2%) | 4 | 10 (4.4%) | 19 (8.2%) | 30% | 16 (6.9%) | 27 (11.7%) |
| 7+ | 26 (10.8%) | 31 (13.3%) | 5 | 2 (0.9%) | 15 (5.2%) | 40% | 25 (10.8%) | 17 (7.3%) |
| | | | 6 | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (0.4%) | 50% | 36 (15.6%) | 17 (7.3%) |
| | | | | | | 60% | 13 (5.6%) | 19 (8.1%) |
| | | | | | | 70% | 8 (3.5%) | 6 (2.6%) |
| | | | | | | 80% | 9 (3.9%) | 5 (2.1%) |
| | | | | | | 90% | 12 (5.2%) | 2 (0.8%) |
| | | | | | | 100 | 6 (2.6%) | 7 (3.0%) |

Note. n = 241. Language: Use of slurs in past two weeks. Attitudes: Semantic/ATG = Negative statements about gay men (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree). Scores on multi-item scales were rounded to the nearest whole number for presentation in this table.

Table 2

Spearman's correlation coefficients.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|---------|--------|-------|--------|---------|
| 1. Sport (Rugby) ¹ | | | | | | | |
| 2. Age | -.71*** | | | | | | |
| 3. Used language | 0.01 | -0.06 | | | | | |
| 4. Homophobic attitudes (Semantic differential) | .18** | -0.1 | 0.01 | | | | |
| 5. Homophobic attitudes (ATG) | .18** | -0.09 | 0.01 | .60*** | | | |
| 6. Prescriptive injunctive norms | -0.07 | .18** | .28*** | 0.11 | 0.11 | | |
| 7. Proscriptive injunctive norms | -.14* | 0.05 | -.28*** | -0.11 | -.16* | -.20** | |
| 8. Descriptive norms (teammates) | 0.05 | -0.06 | .70*** | 0.06 | 0.04 | .32** | -.32*** |

Notes. *p < .05, **p < .01 *** p < .001.

¹ Sport is coded 0 = Hockey and 1 = Rugby.

ATG = Attitudes toward Gay Men scale.

Table 3

Regression models reporting unstandardized (B) and standardized beta's (β) and standard errors (SE) for all variables and their relationship with homophobic language use with teammates.

| | | B | SE | β | sr2 |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------|-----|--------|-----|
| 1 | Sport (Rugby) | -.25 | .26 | -.09 | .00 |
| | Age | -.03 | .02 | -.13 | .01 |
| | R ² | .01 | | | |
| 2 | Sport (Rugby) | -.26 | .27 | -.09 | .00 |
| | Age | -.03 | .02 | -.13* | .01 |
| | Homophobic attitudes (Semantic diff) | .02 | .12 | .02 | .00 |
| | Homophobic attitudes (ATG) | .00 | .10 | .00 | .00 |
| | R ² | .01 | | | |
| 3 | Sport (Rugby) | -.39 | .25 | -.14 | .01 |
| | Age | -.05 | .02 | -.20* | .02 |
| | Homophobic attitudes (Semantic diff) | -.02 | .11 | -.02 | .00 |
| | Homophobic attitudes (ATG) | -.05 | .10 | -.05 | .00 |
| | Prescriptive injunctive norms | .11 | .03 | .24*** | .05 |
| | Proscriptive injunctive norms | -.12 | .03 | -.24** | .05 |
| | R ² | .14*** | | | |
| 4 | Sport (Rugby) | -.33 | .20 | -.12 | .01 |
| | Age | -.03 | .02 | -.13 | .01 |
| | Homophobic attitudes (Semantic diff) | -.08 | .09 | -.06 | .00 |
| | Homophobic attitude (ATG) | .00 | .08 | .00 | .00 |
| | Prescriptive injunctive norms | .03 | .03 | .07 | .00 |
| | Proscriptive injunctive norms | -.03 | .03 | -.07 | .00 |
| | Descriptive norms | .64 | .06 | .64*** | .34 |
| | R ² | .48*** | | | |

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. ATG = Attitudes toward Gay Men scale.

The study found some evidence of homophobic attitudes amongst the athletes. This is illustrated by the descriptive data: less than a third (31%) of participants 'strongly disagreed' with all statements in the overt homophobic attitude scale (e.g. 'I think male homosexuals are disgusting'). However, contrary to our hypothesis, and recent research conducted in school (rather than sport) settings,¹⁷ we found no significant bivariate or multivariate associations between homophobic attitudes and homophobic language

use by participants. These findings provide quantitative evidence consistent with qualitative research with teenage British soccer and rugby union and Canadian ice hockey teams.^{18–20} Participants in our study who expressed positive attitudes toward gay people were just as likely as those who expressed negative attitudes to use homophobic language.

As proposed by the model developed by Cunningham,¹¹ we found the use of homophobic language was associated with norms,

rather than attitudes toward gay people. The hockey and rugby players were more likely to use homophobic language if they perceived their teammates viewed this behaviour as acceptable (injunctive norms), and even more so if they perceived others around them used this language (descriptive norms). In multivariate regression models, the norm variables together explained almost half of the variance in homophobic language use. These findings add to a growing body of evidence that norms are associated with a range of negative behaviours by male athletes.²⁶

These results also extend previous research indicating that norms can influence people to adopt discriminatory behaviours towards a social group, even when those behaviours contradict their expressed attitudes about that group (e.g., racist language and African Americans).²⁸

Previous research has found age is positively associated with homophobic attitudes¹⁵, but less research has examined if age is associated with use of homophobic language. Our study was not designed to thoroughly examine this relationship (our sample only included only participants between 16 and 31). However, in two of the four models examined, we found age was significantly negatively associated with homophobic language use after adjusting for homophobic attitudes and injunctive norms (the relationship was not significant after adding descriptive norms to the model). This finding indicates that older players may be slightly less likely to use homophobic language, but this relationship needs to be confirmed in larger studies of participants from a wider range of ages.

Our findings have important implications for sport administrators, government, and public health officials who are tasked with developing effective interventions to boost sport participation rates by LGB young people and mitigate harm from exposure to homophobic language in sport. Evidence from the present study and qualitative research described earlier^{18–20} suggests male athletes do not consider words like 'fag' to be 'homophobic' behaviour unless these words are used with the explicit intent of expressing prejudice and directed toward a gay person. This may explain why the current intervention approaches used by sport organisations globally to change this behaviour, which focus almost entirely on 'ending homophobia in sport'^{12,13} seem to be ineffective. In order to stop this language, the current body of evidence^{21–23} suggests intervention methods (e.g. 'Rainbow Laces,' 'Pride Games') may be more effective if sport organisations shift their focus away from trying to change attitudes, and instead focus on correcting misperceptions that the language athletes use is harmless. There is also a need to change the norms that support this language. Intervention developers may want to explore approaches shown to change norms and discriminatory language in school settings, such as one evaluated by Paluck and colleagues.²⁹

The intervention approach used in schools identified the most influential (popular) students at a school (using social network analyses) and then trained these 'social referent' students to actively challenge the discriminatory language being used by their peers. This type of intervention would likely be amenable to sport given the most influential individuals (i.e. captains, highest scorers) can be quickly identified and researchers³⁰ have found these individuals already play a central role in regulating the behaviour of others.

There are limitations to our study. First, it remains possible that findings may differ in sporting contexts outside the specific ones studied here (Australian youth Rugby Union and Australian Ice Hockey). Second, the cross-sectional design used here limits the extent to which causality can be inferred. This means that it remains possible that the association between norms and homophobic language may causally operate in the opposite direction (homophobic language influencing norms), or be explained by a third factor not explored here. These limitations could be overcome through similar empirical studies in other countries/sports or, ideally, through

randomised, controlled studies that examine the effectiveness of interventions that specifically target norms.

5. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations just noted, this study provides important quantitative evidence that norms, rather than homophobic attitudes, largely explain the use of homophobic language in male team sport. This adds to a growing body of evidence that norms influence a range of negative behaviours in male team sport. These findings have substantial implications for designing interventions to reduce homophobic behaviour in sport. They indicate that interventions targeting social norms, rather than homophobic attitudes, are needed.

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CHAPTER 6

Chapter 6 – Paper – Reviewing evidence of harm to young people from homophobic behaviours in sport and potential intervention approaches

About the narrative review

The review paper in this chapter was written to integrate the new evidence generated by the first three papers of this thesis into the existing literature on homophobic language in male sport. The paper in this chapter sought to tie together the evidence that had been generated by these three papers with the rationale for the intervention approach which was chosen for evaluation. More broadly, the paper sought to address the requirements of the first four steps of the Six Steps intervention development process. This is explained below.

Objective

The first four steps of the Six Steps process require intervention designers to gain a detailed understanding of a behaviour, including the history of the behaviour and the factors which shape and have perpetuated this behaviour over time. The steps suggest researchers consider the system/context(s) in which a problem exists, who it affects most (e.g., males or females, young or old) and in what ways (e.g., mental health harm, participation). Finally, the Six Steps suggests that intervention developers should ideally use or build from interventions that are already being used, even if major modifications are required (Wight et al., 2016). This is because the introduction of an entirely new intervention program can lead to implementation problems such as backlash and resistance from end-users. This is an important consideration because of the backlash to homophobia interventions in Australian sport which were reported by Fletcher and colleagues (2013).

Six Steps progress table

| Method Steps | Study/Title |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. Define and understand the problem</p> <p>2. Clarify which causal or contextual factors influencing the behaviour and which are malleable and have greatest scope for change</p> | <p>Paper 1: Reviewing the evidence on LGBTQ+ discrimination and exclusion in sport</p> <p>Paper 2: The relationship between ‘coming out’ as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and experiences of homophobic behaviour in youth team sport</p> <p>Paper 3: Relationships between attitudes and norms with homophobic language use in male team sports</p> <p>The paper in this chapter illustrates how the findings from these three papers addressed gaps in the literature and how these findings were synthesised, integrated, and considered with other evidence</p> |
| <p>3. Identify how to bring about change to the behaviour: the theory of change/change mechanism</p> <p>4. Identify how to deliver the change mechanisms</p> <p>5. Test and refine on small scale</p> | <p>This chapter</p> <p>This and the next chapter</p> |

Reviewing evidence of harm to young people from homophobia and other harmful behaviours in sport and potential intervention approaches

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All authors conceived this work and contributed to the search methodologies. ED reviewed identified abstracts and articles in consultation with NF and KS (prevalence and antecedents) and RJ and NF (impact, intervention approaches, policy responses). ED and RJ extracted and synthesised the data, which was checked by NF. KS assessed quality. ED and RJ wrote the first draft with major input from NF and KS. ED prepared the panels and figures, with contributions from KS and NF. All authors contributed to revising and editing the paper and approved the final manuscript.

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47 **Reviewing research on the health impact of homophobia and related forms of abuse in**
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ABSTRACT

Encouraging young people to play sport is high on global health agendas. Sport participation can provide a range of important short and long-term benefits. However, sport settings can also be an environment where children experience harassment, discrimination, and abuse which can cause long-term harm. The International Olympic Committee and United Nations agencies have both found a lack of progress by the sport industry in efforts to prevent these problems. Remarkably, these issues have received little attention from the health sector and few people are researching solutions. Recent international reviews found no prospective trials of interventions designed to prevent abuse or discrimination in youth sport settings. This narrative review highlights the urgent need for the health sector to begin driving prevention research. The sector will need to gain an understanding of the different types of harmful behaviours in sport. This paper focuses on homophobic behaviours, which remain pervasive and have a negative impact on all young people. Indeed, homophobic sport environments are themselves a risk factor for gender-based violence, sexual abuse, bullying, and hazing. The authors examine the common and unique factors enabling homophobia and other types of harmful behaviours with a focus on research and theory that can inform prevention strategies. They conclude with a critical review of the interventions currently being used to address homophobia in sport, provide evidence-based recommendations for improvement, and close with clinical considerations for practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

Decades of government, independent, and criminal investigations have documented repeated failures by the sport industry to protect children from discrimination, harassment, and abuse.¹⁻⁴ Multiple new inquiries were launched in 2021, including the American Senate's "*Dereliction of Duty*" investigation into the factors which enabled sport physician Larry Nassar to abuse over 300 young gymnasts.^{5,6} At hearings in September, one of the victims, 24-year-old Olympian Simone Biles, began sharing her story by quoting Nelson Mandela who said "there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children".⁵ She then said, "I blame an entire system that enabled and perpetrated his abuse ... we suffered and continue to suffer, because no one at the FBI, USA Gymnastics, or the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee did what was necessary to protect us".

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) does not deny the failures by the sport industry to protect children and it agrees that discrimination, harassment, and abuse are "serious and widespread" problems.^{7,8} The IOC says prevention efforts are being hindered by "passive attitudes/non-intervention, denial or silence by people in positions of power in sport".⁷ Research by United Nations agencies^{2,3,9} and by academics^{4,10,11} has similarly concluded that the multiple commitments by sport leaders to implement comprehensive prevention strategies has led to little action beyond the creation of frameworks and ad hoc initiatives. This is shown by recent research with over 8000 German sports clubs which found less than half (39%) were actively engaged in prevention efforts.¹² Similar data has been reported in the UK,¹³⁻¹⁵ USA,^{16,17} Canada,¹ and internationally.^{4,10,18}

Remarkably, these issues have received little profile in health journals and few researchers are looking for solutions.¹⁹ This is illustrated by a 2021 multi-lingual, cross-cultural Campbell Collaboration review which searched for published and unpublished research on interventions (eg, policies, programmes) used to prevent abuse, neglect, or harm to children in institutional settings. The authors found no intervention research in sport.²⁰ Other reviews have found no trials of interventions designed to prevent discrimination in sport.^{10,21,22}

This narrative review introduces these issues to readers through a health lens (see supplementary panel 1 for methods). The World Health Assembly has called on health researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to help lead efforts to prevent intentional harm to children in sport and other settings.²³ The health sector will need to gain an understanding of the impact and drivers of the different forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse in sport settings which have been identified and defined by the IOC.⁷ This paper focuses on homophobic behaviours and the impact on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning youth (LGBQ), however, as we will outline, all young people are harmed by homophobia in sport (including trans youth). Importantly, as we will explain in this paper, homophobic sport cultures are an important risk factor for sexual abuse, gender-based violence, bullying, and hazing.^{7,24,25}

Before moving forward, it is important to provide a few definitions. We use ‘homophobic’ to describe behaviours and language (eg, fag) in the same way someone would use ‘racist’ to describe the N word or behaviours which an ethnic group would perceive to be racist, regardless of intent. When we use ‘sport sector’ this refers to the people who deliver sport and ‘sport industry’ refers to policy makers (ie. sport ministers, Sport England) and governing bodies (ie, English FA, FIFA, USA Gymnastics, Hockey Quebec, etc.).

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Social scientists have conducted extensive research on homophobia in sport over the last half-century. Consistent with other LGBTQ health topics, most evidence comes from population or small and large-sample studies in the UK and USA.^{26–28} The evidence-base recently began to broaden with two government-backed (European Union and Australia) international studies (34 countries) with a combined sample of over 12,000 LGBTQ participants.^{29,30} The 2015 and 2019 international studies both found that 82% of LGBTQ people have witnessed and/or have been the victim of homophobic behaviour in sport settings (eg, slurs, bullying, assaults, threats, exclusion) while the earlier study reported most participants (73%) believed sport is not safe for LGBTQ youth.²⁹ Industry groups also conduct international research, such as a 2018 survey of over 50,000 soccer fans in 38 countries that found between 21% (Russia, Jordan) and 66% (Spain) have witnessed homophobic behaviours at games.³¹ The majority of participants across all countries (68%) believed sport clubs need to address this problem.

A 2017 British Parliamentary Inquiry examined the existing evidence and concluded that homophobic behaviours are more common in sport than other forms of discrimination (eg, racism, sexism) and they harm all young people.³² The IOC has similarly found all young people can be the target of homophobic abuse, but that the stigmatised identities of LGBTQ youth puts them at high-risk, relative to other minority populations, of experiencing every form of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse in sport.^{7,8}

Potential sidebar links:

Out Sport study and resource hub (2019): <https://www.out-sport.eu/>

Out on the Fields study and resource hub (2015): www.outonthefields.com

UK Parliamentary Inquiry into homophobia in sport: <https://bit.ly/2Hi4TEg>

IOC Consensus Statement on harassment and abuse in sport: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27118273/>

The IOC's conclusions are supported by a 2020 paper which reported half (52%) of LGBTQ young males and a third (36%) of young females living in six Western countries (N = 1173; ages 15 to 21) had been the victim of homophobic behaviours in sport (eg, slurs, bullying, assaults).³³ Of particular concern, male and female participants who "came out" to teammates/coaches were significantly more likely than those who did not report victimisation (58% vs. 40%). This data is corroborated by research with heterosexual athletes in which the majority (52-71%) of teenage and university-aged males who play rugby union,³⁴ soccer,³⁵ American football,^{36,37} ice hockey,³⁸ and other team and individual sports,^{39,40} self-reported recently (ie, last two weeks) using homophobic slurs (eg, fag) or engaging in bullying. Males are more likely than females to use homophobic language (eg, 71% vs 37%).³⁶

International reviews have found school physical education (PE) classes are the highest-risk sport setting for homophobic behaviours.⁴¹⁻⁴³ American and Australian studies report that most (eg, 98%) LGBTQ youth have witnessed these behaviours^{42,44,45} and a quarter have experienced recent physical abuse.^{42,44} Unsurprisingly, LGBTQ youth try to avoid these classes using elaborate strategies (eg, faking illnesses).^{41,42,46} A lack of adult supervision makes changing rooms particularly dangerous.⁴⁶⁻⁴⁸ However, even when PE teachers are present they rarely stop homophobic behaviours.^{41,43,47} In Spain, one in five (21%) PE teachers self-reported using homophobic slurs with students and the majority (63%) used heteronormative language (ie, positioning heterosexual as expected).⁴⁹ This behaviour has similarly been found in USA, Britain, Finland, Canada, Brazil, and New Zealand.^{41,43,46,50,51} PE teacher behaviour likely explains why they are the least-trusted school staff.^{28,41,46} This is problematic when you consider these teachers often deliver health and sex education.^{41,42}

It is often assumed that athletes use homophobic language to express overt hate toward LGBTQ people. This is rarely the case.³⁴ Instead, as Kagesten and colleagues found, homophobic behaviours are typically used to project conformity to traditional masculine and feminine gender norms or this behaviour is directed toward children who do not conform to these norms.⁵² Homophobic behaviours are more common in settings if gender norms are salient (ie, PE changing rooms).^{10,52} This is explored more in later sections.

Kagesten et al. examined research across different languages and cultures to identify factors which shape gender-norm attitudes and behaviours (eg, homophobic) in early adolescence.⁵² They found limited cross-cultural variation. Boys continue to believe they *should* be heterosexual, athletic, stronger than girls, aggressive, competitive, unemotional, and risk-oriented.^{10,52} Girls continue to believe they *should* be heterosexual, physically attractive to males (eg, not sweaty), inherently weaker than boys, emotional, and submissive.^{10,52} In addition, girls generally view contact and football sports as male domains and fear being teased as a lesbian or a “tom-boy” if they play these sports.^{52,53} The consistent and strong links between male identity and sport are believed to have emerged through the use of physical competitions to teach boys how to fight, hunt, and prove manhood.^{52,54}

HEALTH AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Sport participation could provide LGBQ youth with many health and psychosocial benefits which could mitigate their poor health across most indicators.^{55,56} UN agencies are particularly concerned about high rates of suicidality.^{57,58} For example, American CDC data indicates 23.4% of LGB youth attempted suicide in 2019, compared to 6.4% of heterosexual youth.⁵⁵ Encouraging sport participation could be one way to address this problem. Young males (2.9%) and females (8.8%) who play sport are less likely to report recent suicide attempts than non-athlete peers (5.7% / 12.8%).⁵⁹ However, Callwood and Smith⁶⁰ urge caution before practitioners encourage LGBQ youth to play more sport. Consistent with other research, they found memories of homophobic abuse in youth sport, particularly PE classes, “can be traumatic and long-lasting”.^{42,46,60} Furthermore, both LGBQ and heterosexual youth are at greater risk of poor health and suicidality if they experience homophobic victimisation⁶¹ and sport’s benefits are lessened, or even eliminated if young people have negative experiences.^{62,63}

Potential sidebar link:

Out on the pitch: sport and mental health in LGBT people (Callwood & Smith):

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32646-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32646-7/fulltext)

Minority stress theory is commonly used to understand the health impact of victimisation.⁶¹ According to this theory, if a young person is repeatedly rejected in a setting or sees others rejected for a characteristic they themselves possess (gender-norm non-conformity), this can put them in a chronic state of stress. This stress-state is theorised to reduce resilience to other sources of psychological or physical stress and this increases their risk of poor health. Young people adopt a range of behavioural responses to reduce stress and the risk of victimisation, the most common behaviours being avoidance and projecting a gender-norm conforming identity. The health implications of these behaviours are discussed below.

Sport avoidance

Many girls avoid or drop-out of traditionally male sports to avoid being negatively stereotyped as a lesbian,^{8,53,64} though LGBQ girls may gravitate to these sports because they believe they will find acceptance.^{46,65} In contrast, many LGBQ males avoid sport entirely due to fears of discrimination and/or an internalisation of negative stereotypes that they are inherently unathletic.^{47,48} The extent of this problem has only recently become clear following the inclusion of sexuality measures in population health surveys.

Researchers in the UK,⁵⁶ USA,⁵⁵ and New Zealand⁶⁶ have found large disparities in rates of sport participation and physical activity between LGBQ youth and their peers. This research challenges stereotypes that lesbians are overrepresented in team sports.

Canadian data collected since 1998 has raised particular concern. The most recent data shows gay boys playing sports at half the rate of heterosexual boys (eg, 33% vs. 68%),⁶⁷ which is a disparity similar to that found elsewhere. However, there were significant declines in rates for gay boys and bisexual youth over time, while rates for heterosexual youth have remained relatively stable (see Figure 1). Given LGBTQ young people are now one of the largest minority youth populations in most countries⁵⁵ (14.6%) there is an urgent need for targeted strategies to address the pervasive discrimination which deters them from participation in sport and physical activity.^{43,47,68}

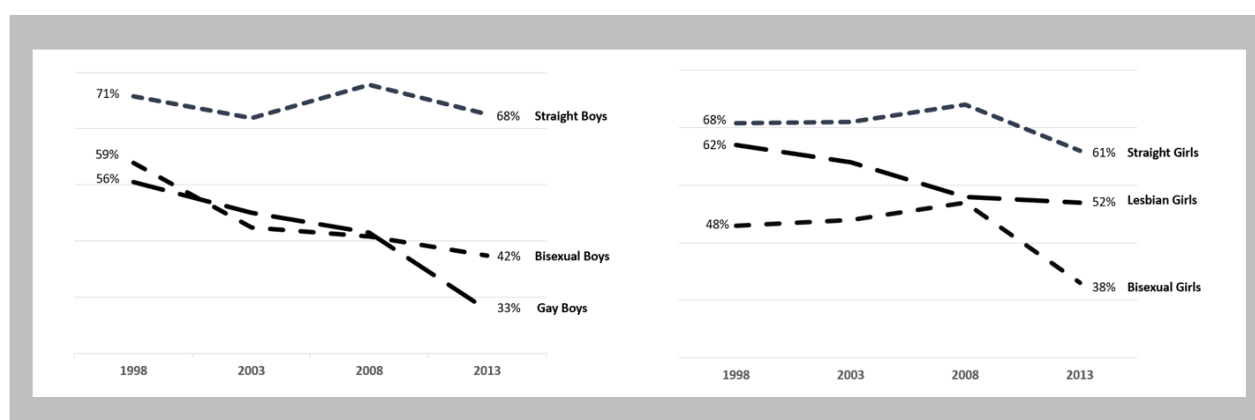


Figure 1: Canadian high-school students – Self-reported participation in coached sport

Performing Heterosexuality

Most LGBTQ youth remain in the closet when playing sport.^{33,47} Heterosexual youth engage in similar identity management behaviours to convey heterosexuality and gender-norm conformity. The American Medical Society for Sports Medicine (AMSSM) found some behaviours are relatively benign (eg, girls wearing make-up while playing rugby) while others are harmful to peers (eg, homophobic and sexist behaviour, aggression, bullying) or to a young person's own health (eg, sexual promiscuity, alcohol abuse, doping, overtraining, dangerous risk-taking, avoidance of medical care).^{69,70}

Gender-based violence researchers recently called attention to the associations (eg, 3x higher odds⁷¹) between athletes using homophobic language and gender-based violence, which is believed to be because this language is, itself “a particular form of gender-based victimisation and sexual harassment”.²⁴ Consistent with this perspective, the IOC has defined homophobic behaviours as a form of sexual and gender-based violence since 2007.¹⁰ Extending the links further, there is extensive international evidence that sexual abuse and violence are more likely to occur in homophobic sport settings because victims may fear being stigmatised as gay.^{14,25} The Independent Review of Sexual Abuse in Scottish Football (2021)¹⁴ described the fear of experiencing homophobic abuse “as silencing men and boys around any experience or personal issue that the young man believes will be construed as ‘weak’ or not meeting the ‘norms’ of masculinity often so forcefully imposed by those engaged in sport.”

Potential sidebar links:

EU review of research and practice related to gender-based violence in sport (ie, homophobia):

https://ec.europa.eu/sport/sites/default/files/gender-based-violence-sport-study-2016_en.pdf

Independent Review of Sexual Abuse in Scottish Football: <https://bit.ly/3CxeH3R>

DRIVERS OF HOMOPHOBIC BEHAVIOURS

Multiple reviews have identified a myriad of interconnected factors at the societal, institutional, community, interpersonal, and individual levels that support homophobic behaviours in sport.^{4,7,10,27,41,47,52,64,72,73} Figure 2 is a visual summary. In this section we examine the common institutional factors enabling homophobic and other harmful behaviours and then review research and theory on the individual and interpersonal factors underpinning homophobic behaviours which could be used to inform prevention strategies.

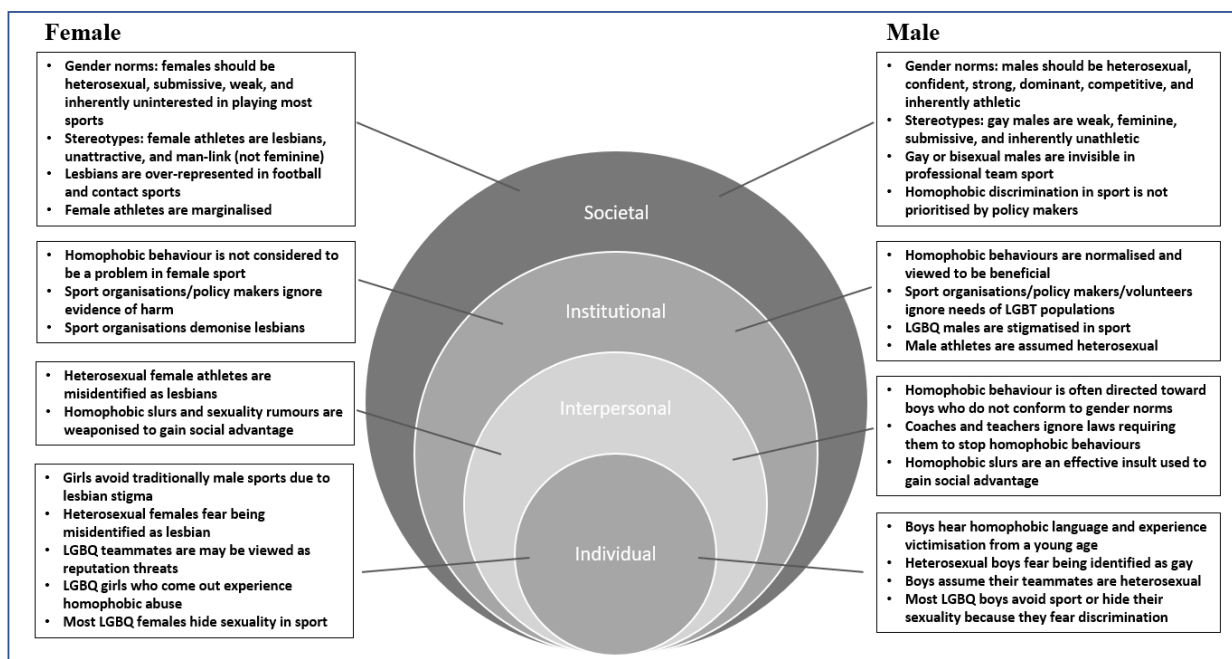


Figure 2: Socioecological factors associated with homophobic attitudes and behaviours in sport

Institutional factors

A recent systematic review⁴ found three primary institutional factors enable harassment, discrimination, and abuse in youth sport. They are “organisational tolerance” for behaviours which are accepted as normal (eg, boys will be boys, coaches know best), pressures to conform to deeply embedded behaviour and identity norms (eg, violence, heterosexuality, male dominance), and institutionalised beliefs that harmful behaviours have important functions (eg, winning games, bonding).⁴ The IOC similarly concluded that “ignorance, denial and resistance among sports leaders – and even athletes themselves – is often a challenge to risk mitigation and prevention”.⁷

311 UN agencies have found the sport sector is largely immune from consequences or
312 accountability for its violations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.^{2,3,74}
313 Research suggests lawmakers view sport to be inherently good, democratically governed and,
314 thus, it is allowed to remain a uniquely autonomous, self-governing, self-regulating
315 institution.^{10,11,75} Behaviours are allowed in sport which are illegal in any other setting (ie,
316 homophobic behaviour, violence, gender segregation, trans exclusion).⁷⁶

317

318 Potential sidebar link:

319 Webinars with UN agencies and academics on sport industry response to homophobia and other harmful
320 behaviours: <https://www.sporhumanrights.org/events/sporting-chance-forum-2021/>

321

322 National governments typically delegate their child protection and human rights obligations
323 to national sport governing bodies, which then delegate this responsibilities to regional
324 governing bodies (eg, unions, leagues, associations).^{10,76} These responsibilities are then
325 delegated again down to the volunteer workforce which the industry depends on to deliver
326 sport to children in the community and at schools (eg, supplementary figure 1).^{10,14,77} A lack
327 of regulatory clarity, accountability, and independent oversight is a key factor in all harmful
328 behaviours.^{4,14,25} Regional sport governing bodies are increasingly aware of child
329 safeguarding, but have few staff and little regulatory expertise.^{12,14,25} Critically, they have few
330 levers of control to ensure compliance with laws and policies; they rely on untested
331 accreditation courses which coaches view to be “box-ticking” exercises.^{11,14,25}

332

333 It is critical to underscore that millions of volunteers work tirelessly to deliver positive sport
334 experiences to children. The problem is that these dedicated individuals are asked to fulfil an
335 ever-growing list of duties beyond sport delivery, which is itself a massive undertaking.^{10,76,77}

These duties include promoting healthy eating, social mobility, preventing radicalisation, and most recently, COVID-19 safety.^{14,19,77} Importantly, these volunteers lack the capacity,^{4,76,77} resources,^{10,27,78} skills,^{1,14,25} interest,^{11,12,74} and independence^{2,16,79} necessary for child protection work. Furthermore, action on discrimination is a low priority unless there are financial incentives.^{77,78,80} This points to a unique institutional factor which underpins homophobic behaviours.

Unlike racism or even sexism, there is little government funding to support action on homophobia or the needs of LGBTQ youth in sport settings.^{27,78,81} This is illustrated by the current multi-year national sport strategies of England, USA, and Australia (see supplementary panel 2).^{82–84} The documents detail funding to encourage participation by a diverse range of marginalised youth populations (eg, low-income, disabled, Indigenous) and programs to prevent various forms of discrimination. Remarkably absent from the English and Australian strategies is any mention of LGBTQ people or homophobia. Even more illustrative, the 2020 American strategy provides research data on the low rates of sport participation by LGBTQ youth and uniquely high rates of discrimination, yet sport policy makers have not included them in their comprehensive list of priority populations.^{82–84}

Individual and interpersonal factors

Female sport

Female athletes are less likely than males to use homophobic language or express homophobic attitudes, yet LGBTQ females report feeling tolerated, rather than accepted.^{64,85}

Girls as young as ten-years-old perceive rules of “compulsory heterosexuality” in female sport, particularly in countries where female team sport is marginalised, such as in Turkey, Nicaragua, or China.^{52,86,87} In rural South Africa, LGBQ females were overtly excluded from traditional female sports, such as netball (eg, no one would pass the ball).⁸⁸ LGBQ females describe pressure to remain in ‘glass closets’ and abide by ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ rules because their visibility could reinforce negative stereotypes and tarnish the reputation of their teams, schools, or sport.^{46,64,89} Indeed, university-aged female athletes are significantly more likely than male athletes to believe that having an openly LGBQ teammate would damage team or school relationships with donors, sponsors, or would hurt recruitment of players.⁹⁰ This may explain why LGBQ females who come out to their teammates are significantly more likely to report homophobic victimisation, including bullying and slurs, than those who remain in the closet.³³ Robertson and colleagues⁹¹ found sports organisations similarly demonise openly LGBQ athletes because of a perception that their visibility is detrimental to efforts to grow female sports. One cricket administrator explained that “it’s a case of ‘I don’t want my daughter to be gay, so I don’t want her to be in an environment where there’s a risk that she might be gay’”.⁹¹

Social Identity Theory (SIT; see Figure 3) has proven useful in understanding these issues. It posits that individuals gain self-esteem through belonging to groups with high social status.⁹² This leads them to align their individual identities with groups in which they belong (eg, ethnicity, sex) or want to belong (eg, sport team). According to SIT, individuals conform to descriptive norms (perceptions of what group members do) and injunctive norms (perceptions of what group members should do) to demonstrate to themselves and others that they belong to a desired group and not to other groups which may have a lower status (eg, lesbians in sport).^{92,93}

Support for the use of SIT to inform preventative intervention design comes from Krane and colleagues^{85,92} who found female athletes are aware of their marginal status, relative to males, and seek to improve this status by distancing themselves from lesbian stereotypes. Female athletes may believe that conforming to feminine norms will make their athleticism more acceptable.^{64,85,94} Krane and colleagues found homophobic and heteronormative language (eg, talking loudly about boyfriends) and social bullying has a range of functions, including policing gender-norm conformity of teammates and rejecting LGBQ teammates who are viewed to be a reputational risk.^{64,85} This is further shown by research which found the use of homophobic language by university-aged female athletes is associated with a desire to exclude lesbians from their sport, whereas no relationship was found between this behaviour by males and a desire to exclude gay people.⁴⁰

Male sport

Unlike females, the majority of LGBQ males feel unwelcome and unsafe in sport and fear rejection.^{29,43,47} Their fears are supported by research which finds male athletes are more likely than non-athletes to express homophobic attitudes²⁷ and up to third (25-35%) say they would reject or be uncomfortable with a gay teammate.^{34,36,95} Sexual objectification is a key concern.^{95,96} Some media commentators suggest data showing the majority of athletes have neutral/accepting attitudes means that male sport is welcoming and inclusive for gay people.⁹⁷ This perspective fails to appreciate that sport teams spend many hours together, cohesion is key, and that athletes who claim to have positive attitudes still regularly engage in harmful and exclusionary homophobic behaviours.^{34,35}

Intervention designers need to consider that male athletes and coaches do not view their use of slurs (eg, fag) as “homophobic” behaviour unless it is directed toward a gay person with hateful intent.^{34,35,89} This is likely why campaigns asking athletes to stop ‘homophobic’ behaviours, without specific examples, are ineffective.³⁴ Problematically, teenagers understand it would be harmful for a gay person to hear slurs or derogatory jokes but they believe this “banter” is harmless because their teammates are heterosexuals.^{35,50,98} Even athletes who have close gay friends do not consider that one of their teammates could be hiding his sexuality.^{27,98,99} This demonstrates the strength of heterosexuality norms underpinning homophobic behaviours in male sport.

Homophobic behaviours have three main functions which need to be considered: projecting an athlete identity, facilitating bonding, and establishing dominance. Social Identity Theory is again useful in understanding the identity projection function.⁹³ Hall and LaFrance⁹³ found this identity is constructed by athletes from stereotypes about gay males (weak, unathletic), male athletes (homophobic, sexist playboys), descriptive norms (homophobic language is used constantly), and injunctive norms (male athletes must be heterosexual to be accepted).^{34,93} Consistent with this perspective, athletes may have trouble stopping homophobic language because it is a central component of bonding processes.^{54,100} Bailey and colleagues¹⁰¹ recently found American high-school teams use homophobic language “as a sort of litmus test to validate within-group closeness” and one teenager said he “evaluated the closeness of the relationship (with coaches) by how comfortably the coach and he incorporated homophobic language into their conversations”. Relatedly, athletes mock homosexuals (grabbing crotches) to indicate that they are actually heterosexual and that their teammates are safe from sexual objectification.^{35,50}

436 Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) may be useful to inform interventions targeting the social
437 processes through which athletes learn behaviours.¹⁰² Figure 3 was created for this paper to
438 illustrate some of these processes. According to SCT, humans learn behaviours and norms
439 through observation of those with high status (ie, coaches, captains). Behaviours are likely to
440 be adopted if there are social rewards. This theory is supported by evidence that the highest
441 status athletes are often proficient at homophobic banter.^{50,100} It gains additional support from
442 research which finds the perceived approval of coaches of homophobic behaviours
443 (injunctive norms) and the exposure of athletes to homophobic banter (descriptive norms) is a
444 strong predictor that male athletes will engage in both homophobic and generalised bullying,
445 hazing, and violent sexual acts such as mocking a rape while suggesting a boy is deserving
446 because he is gay.^{7,14,37} These violent and aggressive forms of behaviour are typically used
447 by male athletes to establish dominance and exert power over others through undermining
448 their masculine identity.^{14,50,103}
449

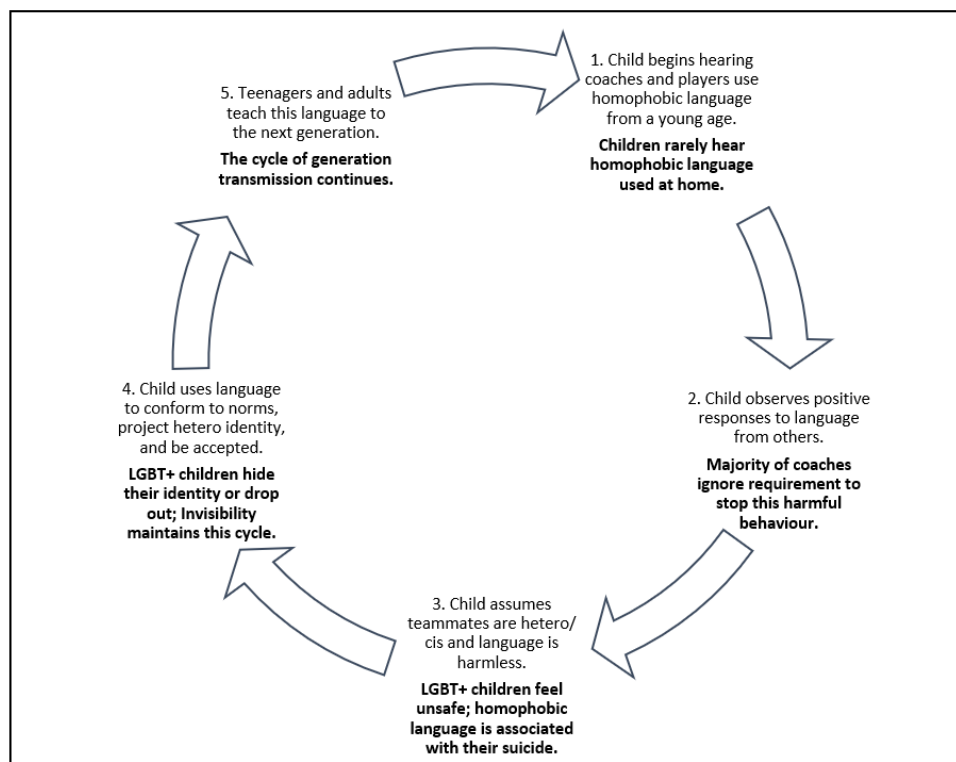


Figure 3: LGBT+ exclusion in sport cycle (LGBT+ ESC)

CURRENT INTERVENTION APPROACHES

The sport industry's scientists agree that pervasive use of homophobic behaviour in sport is a systemic and normative problem. In contrast, the industry frames these behaviours as rare and driven by the negative attitudes of individual "bad apples" who need individualised education.^{4,14,15} This framing is reflected by the industry's policies which are designed to stop incidents of overt discriminatory behaviours. They are not designed to stop day-to-day, harmful, normative behaviours. Consistent with this approach, UN agencies^{2,3} found a pervasive and false belief amongst coaches that a formal complaint is required before they are legally required to take action to stop harmful behaviours.

Applying a complaint-based approach to practice would mean a child needs to formally complain about the regular homophobic (or sexist, racist) behaviour used by teammates, coaches, and teachers.¹⁰⁴ Under existing (opaque) procedures, if the complaint is accepted then a private investigation or hearing would typically determine if a behaviour was motivated by hate or a desire to discriminate against an identifiable group.^{76,104} Complaints are rarely successful because hateful intent is rarely the motivation.^{76,104} The deficiencies of this approach are well-known in the industry and explained by the leader of an Australian sport agency responsible for child safety who said, “things have to be pretty serious for someone to report a discrimination issue. Much goes unreported. People do not want to be seen as a complainer [sic] for fear of being ostracized or making the situation worse”.⁷⁶

Sport industry apathy around homophobic behaviours is further illustrated by the total lack of intervention development. Instead, a range of ad-hoc and unproven approaches are used. Passive education is the most common.^{105,106} Dozens of LGBT inclusion manuals have been created, but they are rarely used by coaches or athletes.^{14,15,27} Problematically, most manuals do not explain that homophobic behaviours are illegal, harmful, and action is mandatory.^{14,25} Instead, action is positively framed as an optional diversity activity that will deliver economic benefits to sport teams.^{27,78} This approach is reflected in the rainbow-themed social media posts of sport teams that contain “positive and warm, fuzzy statements about diversity” yet often do not mention the LGBT community or the harm caused by homophobia (see Figure 4).^{78,107} The commercial motivations for these activities are further observed in the rainbow-themed games (eg, Rainbow Laces) and rainbow-themed merchandise sold by professional sports teams in most western countries.^{106,108} It is noteworthy that National Hockey League teams have hosted annual pride games since 2014 yet the North American league has never had an openly gay player and homophobic behaviours remain common in hockey.^{38,109–111}

Sport management researchers have published dozens of critical papers on their industry’s rainbow-themed LGBT activities.¹¹² They have concluded that these activities are primarily marketing initiatives which deliver little benefit to LGBT people.^{107,113,114} Instead, the rainbow-themed activities have hindered efforts to address homophobia by creating a “fantasy of inclusion” that the sport industry is taking meaningful action on homophobia, whereas in reality, little is being done beyond “happy talk”.^{15,78,107}

Potential sidebar links:

Timeline of sport industry responses to homophobia: <https://outonthefields.com/sport-promises/>

Video: Why homophobia in sports campaigns fail: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lrp8nBw5xI>

Webinars with UN agencies on sport industry response to homophobia and other harmful behaviours:

<https://www.sporhumanrights.org/events/sporting-chance-forum-2021/>

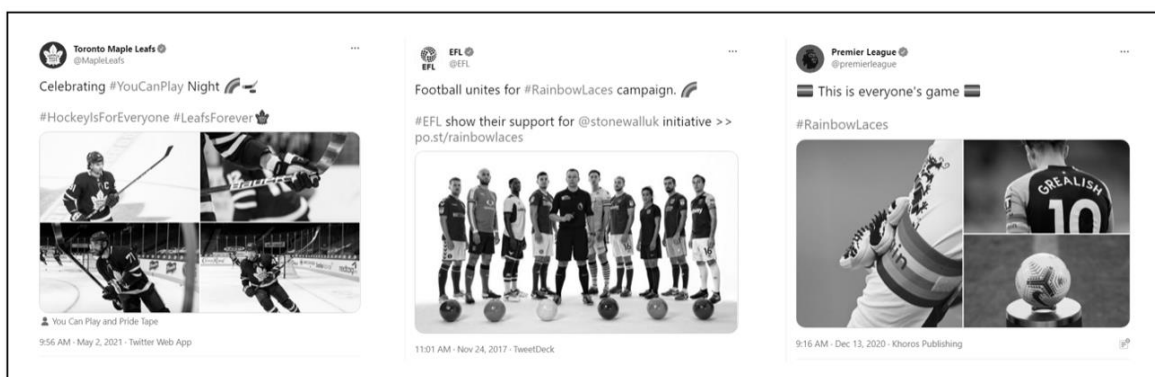


Figure 4: Examples of marketing activities by professional sport leagues and teams

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The repeated failures by sport leaders and policy makers to protect children from harm has led to a growing consensus amongst researchers that the existing systems of self-regulation must be replaced with strong, independent, external regulation with a focus on prevention.^{1,10,25} Concurrent with this work, health researchers need to help drive the development of evidence-based policies and interventions to shift the unique interpersonal factors supporting homophobic behaviours. The health sector should consider collaboration with sport management researchers; they are increasingly concerned about homophobia and other harmful behaviours in sport settings.^{4,27,115} Potential approaches are outlined below.

1. Delegate child safety responsibilities to local governments

World Health Organisation guidance says preventing harm to children requires strong leadership from local governments and comprehensive local and national prevention strategies which involve multiple sectors working together in the community.²³ Proximity of regulators to locations where harm occurs is critical for early detection and prevention.^{14,25} This guidance stands in sharp contrast to how the sport industry approaches child protection. It resists involvement by other sectors, and despite repeated commitments since the mid-1990's to introduce comprehensive strategies, it continues to take a reactive approach (eg, creating centralised complaint lines which are useless to stop day-to-day, normative, homophobic behaviours).^{4,11,75}

Inquiries in Europe and Australia have concluded that local governments should be given greater responsibilities for child protection in sport settings with strong oversight from other levels of government and funding to hire child safety officers. These officers would then work closely with the volunteers and teachers who deliver sport in their community.^{19,25} Unlike sport governing bodies, local governments have deep regulatory expertise and direct levers of control over sport clubs through their management of sport facilities, funding, and strong community connections (eg, sponsors, local media).^{19,77,78} Importantly, many local governments are already actively engaged in efforts to drive inclusion in local sport.^{77,78} Australia is in the process of implementing this approach¹¹⁶ while the Netherlands is further ahead and provides a compelling case study. After a 2017 Dutch inquiry found systemic failures by the sport industry to prevent harm the national government offered responsibilities for child protection to municipalities.¹⁹ Nearly all municipalities expressed an interest and within a year, more than half were actively developing local regulatory approaches.¹⁹

2. Develop evidence-based policies and programmes

Researchers seeking to help develop evidence-based policies and preventative programmes need to carefully consider implementation. The resource-poor, voluntary nature of youth sport has made implementation challenging, even on priority issues such as concussions.¹¹⁷ The most sustainable approaches are pragmatic, co-developed with sport providers, integrate into current systems, and externally managed/monitored.^{118,119}

555 Policies need to be designed to stop the day-to-day homophobic behaviours which coaches,
556 teachers, and athletes consider harmless. Multi-component educational strategies will need to
557 support policy implementation.^{7,10,104} This education could focus on the serious harm caused
558 by homophobic victimisation and the legal duty of coaches and teachers to prevent this
559 harm.^{10,76} Case studies of criminal cases and lawsuits against sport organisations may be
560 useful.^{109,110} Also important will be identifying effective methods to deliver education to
561 time-poor volunteers who rarely read manuals or ‘handbooks’.^{14,77}

562

563 Inspiration for programmes to reduce the homophobic behaviours of young people could
564 come from the prejudice reduction literature, though recent reviews have found most
565 educational interventions (eg, diversity training) have little impact on behaviours.^{22,120} More
566 effective approaches to change normative behaviours can be found in reviews of school anti-
567 bullying interventions.^{121,122} Another source of inspiration could be reviews of gender-norm
568 transformative interventions which have successfully shifted normative behaviours in sport
569 and other youth settings (eg, gender-based violence).^{10,123}

570

571 The reviews of school bullying and gender-norm interventions have found engaging
572 respected young people (eg, team captains) in the delivery of education is a highly effective
573 way to shift normative behaviours and attitudes.^{123–125} Involving young people in group
574 activities designed to change their perceptions of norms is similarly effective, such as through
575 correcting misperceptions that everyone likes homophobic language.^{123–125} These findings
576 may help to explain why adult recreational sport teams in Australia which have hosted
577 rainbow-themed pride games use less homophobic language than other teams. They used a
578 scaled-down version of the games hosted by professional teams.¹²⁶ Other research has found
579 that LGBTQ female athletes feel more welcome on teams when there are open conversations

about sexuality and restrictive gender norms.^{65,94} One college athlete suggested these conversations reduce pressure to conform to norms because “I think just to acknowledge that those issues are real and every single kid in that locker room whether they are gay or straight is going to deal with them”.⁶⁵ Both approaches are worth further investigation.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The AMSSM says health practitioners who work in sport settings (ie, schools) have a professional duty to ensure these settings are free of homophobic behaviours because “the creation of a supportive environment that is welcoming to sexual minorities is key to the health of (all) athletes and their teams”.⁷⁰ Health practitioners should be particularly aware of the issues detailed in this paper if they are caring for young people who refuse to engage in sport or attend PE classes (see Table 1). Research by Callwood and Smith is useful to understand the long-term trauma that can be caused by homophobia.⁶⁰ Guidance from the AMSSM and IOC could inform clinical care.^{7,8,70}

Potential sidebar link:

AMSSM position statement on mental health issues and psychological factors in athletes: Detection, management, effect on performance, and prevention: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/JSM.0000000000000817>

605 **Key messages**

- 606 • Promoting youth sport participation is high on global health agendas, however, the
607 health sector has paid little attention to the serious harm that can be caused from
608 abuse, harassment, and discrimination
- 609 • The IOC has found these remain widespread problems in sport settings and the sport
610 industry has made little progress with implementing comprehensive prevention
611 programmes
- 612 • The health sector needs to help lead efforts to develop prevention strategies
- 613 • This work could begin with a focus on the homophobic behaviours which remain
614 pervasive in sport and have a negative impact on all young people, regardless of
615 sexuality, gender, or gender identity
- 616 • Importantly, homophobic sport cultures are, themselves, an important risk factor for
617 sexual abuse, gender-based violence, bullying, and hazing
- 618 • Existing systems of sport industry self-regulation are ineffective to stop both
619 homophobic and other types of harmful behaviours
- 620 • Strong, independent, external oversight is needed by local and regional government
621 agencies responsible for child welfare
- 622 • The health sector also needs to support the development of policies and education
623 programs which are effective in changing deeply embedded norms that enable
624 homophobic behaviours to remain common in male and female sport settings

625

626

Table 1: Clinical considerations

| Presentation | Considerations |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Low rates of sport participation and physical activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homophobic abuse is often directed toward young people in sport settings who do not conform to traditional gender norms • These experiences can have a strong negative impact on their mental health, cause long-term trauma, and deter sport engagement • Research suggests gay and bisexual boys are particularly impacted (see Figure 1) • If prior experiences of homophobia or exclusion from school PE classes or other sport settings is found, young people may benefit from engaging with community sport providers that proactively foster an inclusive environment • Local LGBTQ community organisations may be helpful in identifying these providers, such as Pride Sports (Europe), Proud2Play (Australia), The Waterboy (NZ) or the local chapter of the Federation of Gay Games |
| Avoidance of school PE classes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PE classes are the highest risk sport setting for homophobic physical, psychological, and sexual abuse to occur • Most PE teachers and coaches do not try to create an inclusive setting • Students who fear discrimination often develop elaborate avoidance strategies (eg, fake medical notes) • Memories of homophobic abuse in PE classes can be “traumatic and long-lasting” and can have a negative impact on long-term physical activity • Teachers may not understand the serious health implications from non-intervention or how to create an inclusive classroom • Most school districts now provide inclusive teaching guidelines • Changing rooms are particularly problematic and LGBT youth may feel safer if private changing options are provided |
| Sudden change to sport activities in early adolescence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sudden change in activities could be an indicator of identity formation challenges or experiences of bullying/abuse in sport • Gender norms become salient as young people enter adolescence • Girls report being teased as lesbian for playing traditional male sports and boys teased as gay for playing most non-football/contact sports • LGBQ girls may gravitate toward traditional male sports because they fear discrimination or an internalised expectation that they need to play these sports • LGBQ boys may avoid sport entirely because of discrimination or internalised stereotypes that gay males are inherently unathletic |

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CHAPTER 7

Chapter 7 – Submitted paper – Effectiveness of an educational intervention targeting homophobic language by young male athletes

This chapter contains the main intervention study of the thesis (submitted to the British Journal of Sports Medicine). The study evaluated the effectiveness of a short discussion-based educational intervention delivered by professional rugby players to teenage rugby union teams. Professional athletes are used widely by sport organisations to deliver educational messages about LGBTQ+ issues in sport. The Six Steps process recommended building off existing intervention methods that are already accepted by end users because it can improve the effectiveness of implementation (Michie et al., 2014; Whitley et al., 2019; Wight et al., 2016).

Intervention approach

There has been a lack of evidence-based, ground-up, intervention development in sport settings to address homophobia. Thus, it is unclear why sport organisations widely use professional athletes to deliver pro-LGBTQ messages. This practice may be used because of evidence showing product endorsements by professional athletes can influence consumer behaviours (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Chung et al., 2013; Lee & Koo, 2015). There is also evidence of the potential benefits from other research. This was found by Hoffman and Tan (2015) who examined research across diverse disciplines (sociology, psychology, medicine, neuroscience) and found strong support for using celebrities, including athletes, to deliver behavioural change interventions because there are “clear and deeply rooted biological, psychological and social processes that explain how celebrities influence people’s health behaviors.” They recommended public health practitioners “collaborate with well-meaning celebrities, leveraging their influence” (p. 72).

The use of athletes to change the homophobic behaviour of adolescent males gains additional support from research conducted in sport settings. For example, one study found endorsement by a respected athlete exerts a strong effect on the behaviour intentions of fans to vote in favour of same-sex marriage in a plebiscite (Harrison & Michelson, 2016). In addition, Steinfeldt and colleagues (2012) have found the perceived endorsement of homophobic bullying by a respected older male (e.g., admired athlete) was the strongest predictor that teenage male American football players would self-report recently engaging in homophobic bullying at school. They suggested that respected athletes should play a central role in interventions designed to stop homophobic behaviours in sport. Their suggestion is supported by other research which has found the most successful athlete in a sport setting can exert a strong influence on the norms and behaviours of others. This is because they are admired role models and others closely watch and seek to adopt their behaviours (Kavussanu & Al-Yaaribi, 2021; Spaaij et al., 2018). Additionally, athletic performance has been found to be a key factor in social status in sport, which is a key factor in behavioural influence over others (Kavussanu & Al-Yaaribi, 2021).

Evidence supporting the use of professional athletes

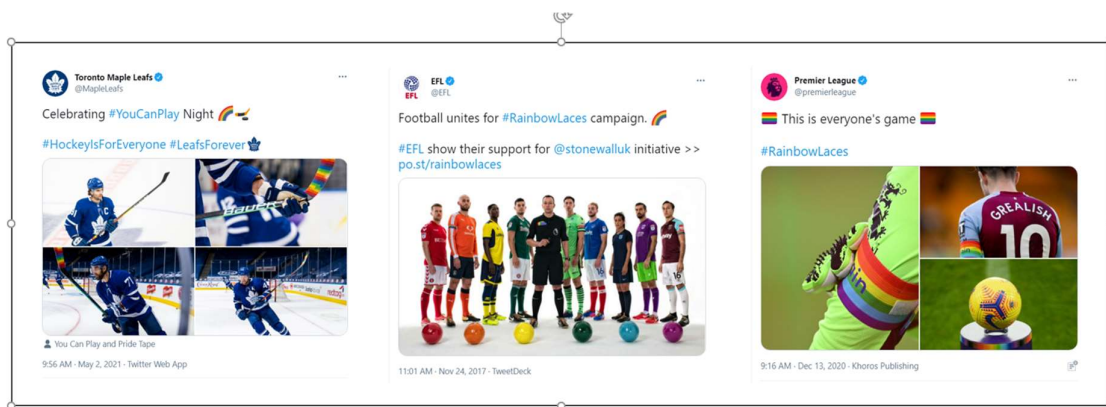
A typical approach used to deliver interventions to reduce homophobic behaviour in sport settings involves professional athletes recording videos or appearing in photos in which they share pro-LGBTQ messages. For example, since 2009, Australian Rugby governing bodies have posted social media content annually which has featured members of the Australian Wallabies (national team) who verbally or visually convey messages such as those shown below (Figure 4).

Figure 5. Anti-homophobia campaign by the Australian Wallabies



Other sport governing bodies, leagues, and teams, such as The National Hockey League (North America) and the European Football and Premier Leagues (Figure 5) have been using this intervention approach for at least the last decade (Denison & Toole, 2020).

Figure 6. Examples of sport team social media posts



In addition to above, athletes deliver education about LGBTQ+ issues during visits to sport clubs and or during assemblies of students at schools (Athlete Ally, 2019; The Waterboy, 2020). This approach of in-person deliver was the approach that was used as the basis for the intervention that was evaluated by the study in this chapter.

Theoretical framework – Social Cognitive Theory

The intervention that was evaluated in this chapter was co-designed with industry and this process was guided by Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Additionally, it was informed by approaches used in trials of normative interventions delivered to adolescents in sport and other settings which have proven to be effective in changing behaviours (D. T. Miller & Prentice, 2016; E. Miller et al., 2016; Stewart et al., 2021).

Drawing on SCT (Bandura, 1991, 1999, 2004), I hypothesised that the strong, public disapproval of homophobic language by high profile and respected rugby players would have a strong influence on the injunctive norms at the rugby teams which they visited. This change would occur through challenging and shift the personal attitudes of adolescent rugby players that homophobic language is harmless and acceptable. I expected that a group discussion would create an opportunity to correct misperceptions that this language is supported and endorsed by others (injunctive norms). Through changing individual attitudes and injunctive norms, I further hypothesised that there would be enough individuals on a team who would stop using homophobic language immediately after the intervention that this would reduce the influence of the descriptive norms and strengthen the proscriptive injunctive norms that are associated with this behaviour. Through changing norms, if the intervention was delivered in tandem with other interventions (e.g., coach training, monitoring, sanctions, effective policies) then at follow-up I would find that there had been a reduction in the frequency and prevalence that players used homophobic language and a shift to the norms associated with this behaviour. Figure 6 below identifies the factors which the intervention sought to change.

Figure 7. Factors targeted by the intervention (as indicated by red arrows)

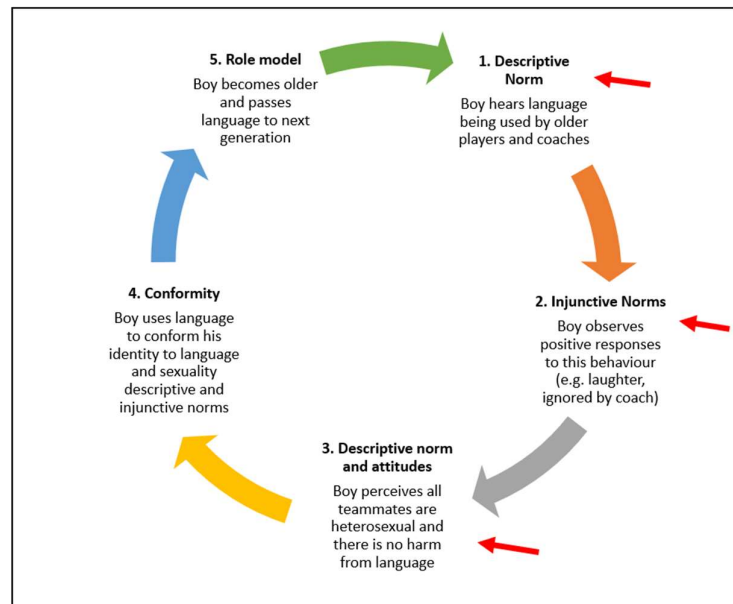


Table 7. Summary of evidence considered at each step of intervention development

| Step | Evidence and theory considered and assumptions |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. Define and understand the problem</p> <p>- How is the problem socially and spatially distributed?</p> <p>- What are the primary factors supporting the problem and how are they related and connected?</p> <p>- Who will benefit from an intervention targeting the factors contributing to the problem?</p> <p>- What are the current interventions used to address this problem? What is their effect?</p> | <p>Problem: Homophobic language in sport creates an unwelcoming and unfriendly environment. The use of this language is also associated with and a key contributor to a broad range of health and social problems.</p> <p>Intervention target/Modifiable factor: Reducing the frequency of homophobic behaviour in sport will improve sport environments for all and mitigate its contribution to a range of health and social problems.</p> <p>Key drivers: At a societal level, homophobic language is driven by gender norms and stereotypes about gay people. At the institutional level it is driven by apathy and denial by sport leaders. At the interpersonal and individual level, it is primarily driven by descriptive norms (use of language by teammates and coaches, heterosexuality norms in sport), injunctive norms (language is used to build social cohesion and communicate safety and group membership), and individual attitudes that this language is harmless (players believe their teammates are heterosexual, they are unaware of harm).</p> <p><i>Factors supporting this problem</i></p> <p>Although those in the sport sector assume homophobic attitudes are the primary driver, this does not appear to be the case.</p> <p>Research conducted on three continents finds athletes with positive attitudes are just as likely as those with negative attitudes to use homophobic language.</p> <p>A key factor in homophobic being used regularly is the lack of attention to addressing this problem by the adults who oversee and manage youth sport. Youth coaches and PE teachers use this language themselves and view it to be normal.</p> <p>Government policy and the leaders of sport governing bodies also largely ignore this problem and the harm caused to young people.</p> <p>Unlike problems such as school bullying, there has been no ground-up, evidence-based intervention development because of the lack of financial support for this problem from governments and industry.</p> <p>Efforts to address homophobic attitudes and behaviours in sport are small scale, ad hoc and often focused on one off events and “activations” (e.g., Rainbow Laces games), passive information resources (e.g., coach handbooks), or asking professional athletes to record videos containing non-specific, general messages of support about ‘celebrating’ the LGBTQ community and ‘inclusion.’</p> <p>There is also a strong focus on general awareness raising (e.g. providing information on the difference between sexuality and gender). Homophobic language is rarely mentioned when interventions about LGBTQ issues in sport are delivered.</p> |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>2. Clarify which causal or contextual factors that influence the problem are malleable and a change would have a biggest impact on the problem</p> <p>Why are these factors the best intervention targets?</p> <p>What systems and structures will impact the intervention effect?</p> | <p>Homophobic language appears to be driven by an interaction of descriptive and injunctive norms with individual attitudes of athletes that homophobic language is harmless because everyone in sport is heterosexual.</p> <p>Boys begin using this language regularly from a young age (pre-puberty) and it appears to be socially learned, thus, social cognitive theory may be a framework that can be used understand this behaviour, how it is learned, why it is used, and identify intervention targets.</p> <p><i>Barriers to implementation</i></p> <p>Developing sustainable interventions to address health and social issues in sport has been a challenge for any issue, including high priority problems such as concussions which receive funding and attention from governments and sport leaders.</p> <p>This is because youth sport is typically chaotic, loosely organised, volunteer driven, and poorly resourced. These factors must be considered during implementation.</p> <p>Research consistently finds institutional support, and the support of respected individuals in sport environments, is a “do or die” factor in diversity related initiatives.</p> |
| <p>3. Identify how to bring about change to the behaviour: the change mechanism</p> | <p>This chapter</p> |
| <p>4. Identify how to deliver the change mechanisms</p> | <p>This chapter</p> |
| <p>5. Test and refine on small scale</p> <p>6. Collect sufficient evidence to determine if a more rigorous evaluation or larger-scale implementation is justified</p> | <p>This chapter</p> |

Effectiveness of an educational intervention targeting homophobic language by young male athletes: a cluster randomised controlled trial

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ABSTRACT

Background: Homophobic language is common in male sport and associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes for athletes. Evidence-based interventions are needed to reduce such language and foster safer sport settings.

Purpose: Evaluate the effectiveness of a short, discussion-based educational intervention delivered by professional rugby union players to young rugby players.

Study design: Two-arm, cluster randomised controlled trial.

Methods: Thirteen youth rugby teams from nine clubs (N = 167, ages 16 – 20, M 17.9) were randomised into treatment or wait-list control groups. Professional rugby players delivered a social-cognitive educational intervention to treatment teams. Frequency of homophobic language use (eg, fag) was measured two weeks pre and two weeks post intervention. Factors hypothesized to be associated homophobic language were also measured, including descriptive norms, prescriptive and proscriptive injunctive norms, and attitudes around the acceptability of this behaviour. The study was preregistered prior to analyses

<https://osf.io/c7tdm>.

Results: At baseline, 49.1% of participants self-reported using homophobic language in the past two weeks and 72.7% had heard teammates use this language. Significant relationships were found between this behaviour and all factors targeted by the intervention. However, generalised estimating equations found, relative to controls, the intervention did not significantly change the homophobic language used by athletes or alter the associated norms and attitudes.

Conclusion: Using professional rugby union players to deliver a short educational intervention to reduce homophobic language usage was not effective. Other approaches may be needed, such as peer-to-peer education and monitoring of coaches to ensure they are enforcing existing anti-discrimination policies.

INTRODUCTION

Scientific reviews by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)^{1,2} and American Medical Society for Sport Medicine³ have concluded that male athletes of all sexualities are regularly targeted with homophobic slurs and insults (eg, fag). This language is typically used towards athletes who are not conforming to traditional male gender norms (eg emotional restraint, aggression, heterosexuality).⁴ There is growing evidence in the health literature that the use of homophobic language by coaches and peers to extract athlete conformity to these restrictive norms is associated with negative health and social outcomes, including violence against women.^{3,5} In addition, this language creates a homophobic sport culture in which sexual abuse may go unreported because victims fear being stigmatized as gay.^{6,7}

Homophobic victimisation is also a risk factor for depression and suicidality in all young males,⁸ but it is particularly harmful to gay and bisexual youth. United Nations Agencies have issued a joint statement in which they called for urgent action to protect this population from discriminatory behaviours.⁹ Gay and bisexual athletes remain at high risk² (relative to others) of experiencing psychological, physical, and sexual abuse in sport settings. This is illustrated by international research (six countries; N = 1173; ages 15 to 21) which reported more than half (52%) of gay and bisexual boys had experienced homophobic victimisation in sport (eg slurs, bullying, assaults).¹⁰ Concerningly, young sport participants who “came out” to teammates as gay or bisexual were the most likely to report victimization.¹⁰ It is therefore unsurprising that a British Parliamentary Inquiry found fear of discrimination deters these youth from participation in sport.¹¹ This conclusion is consistent with population data showing gay and bisexual youth play team sports at half the rate of their heterosexual peers (33% vs. 68%).¹²

The need for effective interventions to stop homophobic language in male sport settings has been repeatedly identified,^{1,13} yet systematic reviews have found no published trials of interventions designed to address this problem.^{14–16} This gap reflects a long-documented lack of funding from sport policy makers for programs to address sexuality-based discrimination in sport.^{13,17,18} Similarly, within the sport sector there is a general lack of awareness of the serious health and social implications and legal requirements to stop homophobic language.^{17–19} Furthermore, sport leaders may be reluctant to take action because they fear a backlash from athletes or parents.^{17,18} However, some research suggests apathy may, in part, be due to uncertainty around how to address this problem.¹⁷ For example, a 2018 study²⁰ found leaders wanted access to evidence-based anti-homophobia programs before they took action. A New Zealand Rugby executive told researchers: “I don’t want to roll out meaningless (educational) videos ... it’s not about PR, it’s about doing the right thing and actually raising a level of societal change”.²⁰

The present study sought to provide much-needed evidence on interventions that could be used to reduce homophobic language in male sport settings. A cluster randomised controlled trial (RCT) was used to test the effectiveness of a short (30 minute) educational intervention addressing homophobic language and associated factors. It was delivered by professional rugby union players to adolescent rugby union players in Australia (N = 167; ages 16 to 20 years). One-off educational interventions are widely used by sports organisations on LGBT issues.^{17,18} Professional athletes are often asked to deliver educational content through videos, blogs, or in-person talks.^{17,21} The benefits of both approaches are unclear due to a lack of prior evaluation.

METHODS

Study design and participants

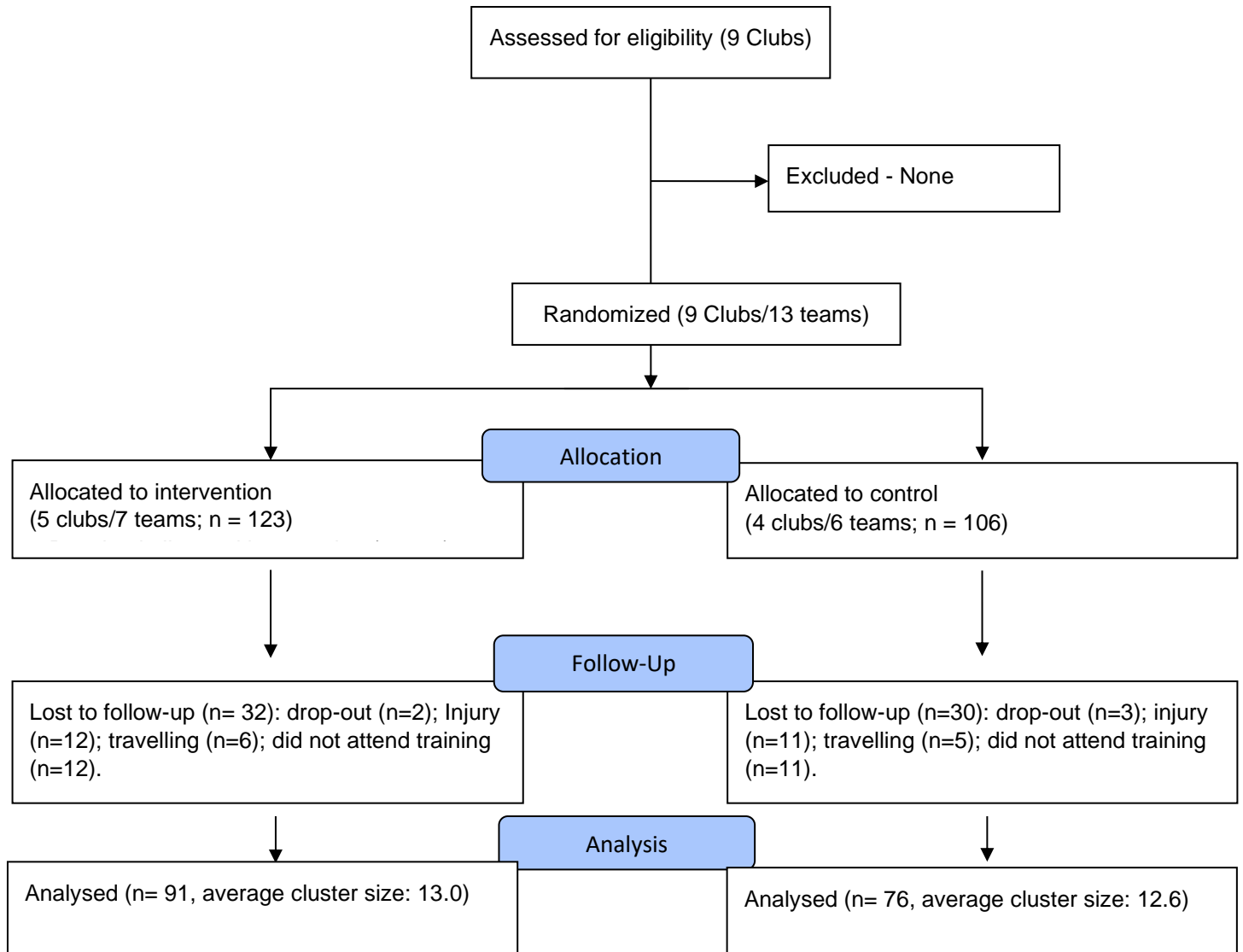
Rugby Union's governing body in the Australian state of Victoria helped to secure participation by all rugby union clubs it oversees with male "Under 18" (ages 16 - 18) and "Colts" (ages 18 – 20 years) teams. Securing participation by the total available population was done to reduce the possibility of selection bias, which is a common problem with field trials (ie, clubs self-selecting out of the study).¹⁵

Five of the participating clubs had one eligible team, and four clubs had two eligible teams. Randomisation using computer numbers generation, by the first two authors, was by club rather than team. Thus, clubs with two teams had both teams allocated to either the control or the treatment. This was done to ensure unintended exposure of a control team to the treatment (contamination) via an intervention team at the same club could not occur.

Randomisation was also stratified by the size of club ("single team"/"two team") to ensure similar numbers of single and two-team clubs were allocated to each arm of the trial.²²

Baseline data (T1) was collected two weeks pre and follow-up data (T2) was collected two weeks post intervention delivery to the treatment teams, with the RCT running over three months of the rugby season (June – August, 2018). Data was collected using a short (10-minute) paper and pen survey at club grounds prior to team training sessions. Researchers visited clubs up to three times over a one-week period to collect T2 data (eg, Tuesday and Thursday practice, and Saturday game). The analyses plan and hypotheses were prospectively registered prior to the entry of data (<https://osf.io/c7tdm>). Data is available upon request for secondary analyses.

Figure 1 Study flow diagram



Public and end-user involvement

A 30-minute discussion-based intervention was developed through the collaborative effort of coaches (including the fifth author), amateur and professional athletes (including members of the LGBT rugby community), governing body leaders, and academics (including the study authors). The collaborative intervention development approach, whereby end-users work alongside academics, is thought to improve real-world effectiveness, acceptability, sustainability, and scalability.^{23,24} Additionally, there was institutional support from World Rugby and Australian rugby governing bodies, which had signed public commitments to eradicate homophobia through implementing a range of interventions.^{20,25} The intervention evaluated for this study was designed to complement a stand-alone 2014 Australian policy that explicitly prohibits casual homophobic language.²⁶

Intervention Delivery

Six professional rugby union players from the Melbourne Rebels (Rebels), including the team's captain, delivered the intervention to teams and their coaches in clubhouses prior to a normal weekly practice session. The Rebels compete in the international Super Rugby competition. Delivery in-person, prior to normal practice, was seen as sustainable because it caused little disruption and required few resources.

Intervention content

Rugby's leaders believed the homophobic language used by their athletes was habitual, supported by unchallenged social norms, and a lack of awareness that this behaviour is harmful. Their perspective is supported by recent research.^{4,27} The use of professional athletes to deliver the education was based on social cognitive theory (SCT), a social learning framework often used in coaching.²⁸ SCT posits that behaviours are learned through observation of others, particularly those with higher social status such as professional athletes (role models).²⁸ Behaviours are more likely to be adopted (or stopped) if they align with individual attitudes (eg, wrong to cause harm) and there are observed and desired benefits/costs (eg, approval from others). Indeed, the homophobic behaviour of teenage athletes is strongly influenced by the perceived endorsement of respected men.²⁹

The intervention content was refined through practice sessions with the Rebels. The final approach was similar to the short, one-off diversity seminars which are often delivered by guest speakers in sport or school settings.¹⁵ The script (supplementary material) has been marked to describe how each element was theorised to change individual attitudes and norms. In summary, the session began with a general discussion about diversity being a core value in rugby and securing agreement from players about the benefits of having diversity on a team. The discussion then turned to questions about why some types of diversity are valued and others are not, and why players thought there were few openly gay players in rugby. The Rebels then shifted the discussion to how homophobic language makes gay people feel unwelcome, and shared how they personally felt when they learned that this language was harmful, even when used as part of humour. The Rebels supported this with statistics about the high rates of suicide and self-harm amongst gay and bisexual youth and explained why homophobic language contributes to this problem.

The Rebels then asked players to indicate by a show of hands if they would support a teammate struggling with his sexuality and if they would like homophobic language to stop. The Rebels closed by demonstrating simple, non-confrontational ways to react when others use this language (ie, don't laugh, give a disapproving look).

Outcomes

The primary outcome was frequency of self-reported homophobic language used by participants. The study also examined whether the intervention altered descriptive norms, and prescriptive (supportive) and proscriptive (disapproving) injunctive norms theorised to support this language, as well as individual attitudes towards the acceptability of this behaviour. The hypotheses were pre-registered (<https://osf.io/c7tdm>)

Measures

The Homophobic Content Agent Target (HCAT) measurement approach³⁰ was used to measure both participant self-reported homophobic language, and descriptive norms (ie, the extent to which participants perceived their teammates used homophobic language). HCAT is widely used in school research and does not ascribe homophobic intent to language. This is important because male athletes may not recognise their use of words like “fag” as being “homophobic” unless maliciously directed towards someone who is openly gay.^{4,27} The stem asked “some people use words such as fag, poof. In the past two weeks how often have you (or have your teammates) used words like these, for any reason?” Response options include: never (0), 1-2 times (1), 3-4 times (2), 5-6 times (3), or 7+ times (4). Proscriptive injunctive norms were measured using the Team Norms measurement approach.^{27,31}

Participants were asked “what percentage of your teammates do you think would be critical of you (think or act negatively) if you” and then two scenarios were provided “made a joke about gay people” and “called an opponent a ‘fag’ in a game.” (0=0% - 10=100%). The two proscriptive items were averaged to form a composite scale ($r = 0.78$). Prescriptive injunctive norms were measured by asking participants to indicate what percentage of their teammates would agree “it is okay to make jokes about gay people, if no gay people can hear the jokes” (0=0% - 10=100%).²⁷ Participant attitudes towards the acceptability of homophobic language were measured through asking their agreement with the same statement used in the prescriptive norm measure using a six-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 6=strongly agree).

Pre-registered exploratory variable

Homophobic attitudes were explored using the three-item Attitudes Toward Gay Men (ATG) scale³² (“sex between two men is just plain wrong,” “I think male homosexuals are disgusting,” and “homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men” [reverse scored]). Response options ranged from 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree. The Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.58$) was acceptable for exploratory analyses.

Fidelity with intervention script

Debriefs with the Rebels were recorded immediately post-intervention to assess whether the script was followed and to gather information about the perceived responses of participants.

Statistical analyses

Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to examine relationships between factors targeted by the intervention and language use at baseline. Generalised estimating equations (GEEs) investigated whether the intervention had an effect on homophobic language use, and associated factors. The GEEs accounted for clustering of individual participants within teams. The analyses adjusted for size of club (1 = single team; 2= multiple team) because it was used as a balancing variable in the stratified randomisation.³³ GEEs usually use a Huber-White sandwich estimator that requires a large number of clustering units (eg, $n \sim 50$) to generate accurate estimates of standard errors.^{34,35} Given we had only 13 teams, we used a 1-step jack-knife estimator to avoid this potential limitation.^{36–38} We calculated Cohen's d standardised effect size measures using techniques appropriate for trials utilising a two independent groups, pre/post-test design.³⁹

RESULTS

Table 1 provides demographic details. Follow-up surveys were completed by 73.9% ($n = 91$) in treatment and 71.7% ($n = 76$) in control conditions. Figure 2 provides reasons for drop-out.

Table 1 Baseline demographic characteristics

| | <i>Control (n = 76)</i> | <i>Intervention (n = 91)</i> |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Age, M (SD) | 18.0 (1.3) | 17.7 (1.2) |
| Ethnicity, n (%) | | |
| Pasifika | 34 (44.7) | 46 (50.6) |
| Anglo-European | 36 (47.4) | 34 (37.4) |
| Other | 5 (6.6) | 10 (11.0) |
| Missing | 1 (1.3) | 1 (1.1) |
| Sexuality, n (%) | | |
| Heterosexual | 72 (94.7) | 81 (89) |
| Gay | 1 (1.3) | NA |
| Bisexual | NA | 1 (1.1) |
| Not listed | 1 (1.3) | 2 (2.2) |
| Missing | 2 (2.6) | 7 (7.7) |

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 1 displays the results of the Pearson's correlation coefficients at baseline. Significant relationships were found between language used by participants and their attitudes about the acceptability of this behaviour, as well as descriptive and the prescriptive (approval by others) injunctive norms. No relationship was found with proscriptive (disapproval) injunctive norms.

Table 2 *Pearson's correlation coefficients at baseline*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| 1. Used language | | | | | |
| 2. Acceptability of language | .36*** | | | | |
| 3. Descriptive norms ^a | .68*** | .30*** | | | |
| 4. Proscriptive inj. norms ^b | -.09 | -.06 | -.05 | | |
| 5. Prescriptive. inj. norms ^c | .18* | .26** | .19* | .15 | |
| <i>Exploratory</i> | | | | | |
| 6. Homophobic attitudes | .13 | .23** | .10 | -.28*** | .02 |

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. ^a Perception that teammates used language,
^b Proscriptive injunctive norms (others disapprove of language) ^b Prescriptive injunctive norms (others approve of language).

Table 2 reports mean scores for all variables and statistics on language use. Across both conditions, at baseline, nearly half ($n = 80$; 49.1%) of participants self-reported using homophobic slurs and more than a quarter (28.3%) self-reported using this language three or more times in the previous two weeks. In addition, at baseline, most ($n = 117$; 72.7%) participants reported their teammates had used slurs in the previous two weeks, this behaviour was reported on every team, and 43.5% of athletes reported this language had been used three or more times.

| Table 3 Descriptive statistics: Means (SD) for all measures | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| | <i>Control (N = 76)</i> | | <i>Intervention (N = 91)</i> | |
| | <i>T1</i> | <i>T2</i> | <i>T1</i> | <i>T2</i> |
| Used language ^a | 0.84 (1.26) | 1.17 (1.19) | 1.09 (1.21) | 1.28 (1.33) |
| <i>N / % who used homophobic language at least once</i> | <i>32 / 42.7</i> | <i>44 / 58.7</i> | <i>47 / 55.3</i> | <i>52 / 61.2</i> |
| Acceptability of language ^b | 2.23 (1.46) | 2.48 (1.34) | 2.06 (1.42) | 2.49 (1.36) |
| <i>Norm measures</i> | | | | |
| Descriptive norms ^a | 1.39 (1.29) | 1.62 (1.28) | 1.57 (1.29) | 1.75 (1.29) |
| <i>N / % who perceived teammates used homophobic language</i> | <i>51 / 68.9</i> | <i>56 / 75.7</i> | <i>65 / 77.4</i> | <i>69 / 82.1</i> |
| Proscriptive injunctive norms ^c (disapproval of language) | 4.18 (3.14) | 4.50 (2.97) | 3.43 (2.56) | 4.28 (2.93) |
| Prescriptive injunctive norms ^c (approval of language) | 2.70 (3.12) | 2.85 (2.84) | 2.31 (2.81) | 2.95 (2.63) |
| <i>Exploratory</i> | | | | |
| Homophobic attitudes ^b | 3.16 (1.34) | 3.04 (1.24) | 3.09 (1.36) | 3.01 (1.29) |

Notes. Scale items were measured using 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Intervention effects

Generalised estimating equations investigated whether the intervention had an effect on participant language use, norms, and perceived acceptability at T2. Standardised effect size measures indicated that the intervention had no significant effect on homophobic language use by the rugby players ($d = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.21, 0.29]), descriptive norms ($d = 0.12$, 95% CI [-0.16, 0.40]), proscriptive ($d = -0.01$, 95% CI [-0.31, 0.29]) and prescriptive ($d = 0.17$, 95% CI [-0.18, 0.52]) injunctive norms, or perceived acceptability ($d = 0.09$, 95% CI [-0.09, 0.28]).

Table 4 Generalised estimating equation results – effect of intervention on T2 variables

| | Homophobic lang. use <i>N</i> = 160 / <i>N</i> teams = 13 | | | Acceptability of lang. <i>N</i> = 155 / <i>N</i> teams = 13 | | | Descriptive norms <i>N</i> = 158 / <i>N</i> teams = 13 | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| | <i>Est</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>Est</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>Est</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | <i>p</i> |
| <i>Intervention condition</i> | 0.06 | -0.26 – 0.37 | .722 | 0.12 | -0.12 – 0.37 | 0.315 | 0.16 | -0.20 – 0.51 | 0.388 |
| <i>Time 1 score</i> | 0.34 | 0.14 – 0.55 | <0.001 | 0.23 | 0.15 – 0.30 | <0.001 | 0.27 | 0.17 – 0.37 | <0.001 |
| <i>Club size</i> | 0.06 | -0.22 – 0.33 | 0.682 | 0.01 | -0.23 – 0.24 | 0.98 | 0.33 | 0.02 – 0.67 | 0.063 |
| | Proscriptive injunctive norms <i>N</i> = 154 / <i>N</i> teams = 13 | | | Prescriptive injunctive norms <i>N</i> = 130 / <i>N</i> teams = 11 ^a | | | Exploratory Homophobic attitudes <i>N</i> = 152 / <i>N</i> teams = 13 | | |
| | <i>Est</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>Est</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>Est</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | <i>p</i> |
| <i>Intervention condition</i> | -0.02 | -.90 – 0.85 | 0.957 | 0.45 | -0.50 – 1.40 | 0.355 | -0.04 | -.066 – 0.58 | 0.908 |
| <i>Time 1 score</i> | 0.38 | 0.21 – 0.56 | <0.001 | 0.19 | 0.03 – 0.36 | 0.024 | 0.67 | 0.40 – 0.95 | <0.001 |
| <i>Team size</i> | -0.10 | -1.01 – 0.82 | 0.837 | 0.62 | -0.26 – 1.50 | 0.167 | -0.18 | -0.89 – 0.52 | 0.607 |

Note: ^a survey misprint omitted question from one treatment club (two teams) at T1

Fidelity

A review of debrief notes suggested the Rebels completely followed the intervention script in four out of seven sessions. In these four sessions, the Rebels reported engagement and discussion with participants. In the other sessions, there was little interaction or engagement and the content was delivered more like a lecture, than a discussion.

Exploratory analyses

Exploratory per-protocol analyses found excluding teams where the intervention was not delivered as a discussion did not improve the intervention effect on language ($d = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.27]), or other measures (see supplementary material). Exploratory analyses further found no significant effect from the intervention on homophobic attitudes ($d = -0.04$, 95% CI [-0.52, 0.46]). In addition, pre-existing homophobic attitudes of participants did not moderate the effect of the intervention (condition*attitudes) on their use of homophobic language ($b = -0.11$, $se = 0.10$, $p = 0.263$).

DISCUSSION

This study evaluated the effect of a theoretically informed intervention designed to reduce the usage of homophobic language by young male athletes. We found no significant effect from the intervention on this behaviour, associated norms, or player attitudes about the acceptability of using homophobic language. We also found no change to the homophobic attitudes of some participants, though these attitudes were unrelated to their use of homophobic language. The frequent use of homophobic language by athletes in this study, and the near total invisibility of gay and bisexual players ($n = 2$), underscores the urgent need for interventions to stop this behaviour in sport.

Implications

Sport organisations often use professional athletes to deliver education about LGBT issues. The lack of effect from the Rebel's intervention has substantial implications for efforts to prevent harm from homophobic behaviours. These implications become clearer when you consider our findings are consistent with the conclusions of a 2021 meta-analysis of over 400 prejudice reduction trials. The authors found little benefit from diversity training seminars delivered in workplaces and schools.¹⁵ Reviews by the IOC have similarly concluded that changing normative prejudice-related behaviours will require both strong institutional support and multiple types of interventions delivered in tandem over time.^{1,2}

It is noteworthy, however, that the Rebel's intervention was supported by rugby leaders and implemented with other interventions, such as training materials for coaches to help them understand their responsibility to stop discriminatory behaviours. Yet, if coaches were actively enforcing anti-discrimination policies, we would have expected to find few rugby players using homophobic language and evidence of strong proscriptive injunctive norms (perceived disapproval by coaches and teammates). Instead, at baseline we found nearly half of the athletes self-reported they had recently used homophobic slurs, most players reported teammates had used this language, and few strongly believed others disapproved of this behaviour. Importantly, this language was used by multiple players on every team.

Any failure by coaches to stop homophobic behaviours would be consistent with recent studies in school, community, and university settings.^{40–42} Researchers found coaches and gym teachers used homophobic language, themselves, and viewed this behaviour as 'boys being boys'.^{43,44} This is problematic because these adults are legally required to protect children from this harmful behaviour.^{19,45,46}

Moreover, coaches set the standards on a team. If a coach is not actively supporting efforts to stop homophobic language it seems unlikely that this normative behaviour could be changed by a one-off educational intervention delivered by outsiders.¹⁵

Recommendations

The American Medical Society for Sport Medicine (AMSSM) says clinicians working in sport settings (ie, schools) have a professional responsibility to ensure young people are protected from homophobic language because the “the creation of a supportive environment that is welcoming to sexual minorities is key to the health of athletes and their teams”.³ The AMSSM has recommended the use of educational interventions, however, in this study we found no immediate benefit from a one-off educational seminar delivered by professional athletes. Evidence from schools suggests that using respected peers (ie, captains) to deliver education may be a more effective way to shift these normative behaviours.⁴⁷ In addition, coaches need effective training, compliance monitoring, and sanctions to ensure they are stopping behaviours which are harmful to children. Strong support for change is also needed from sport leaders, though this was not lacking for the Rebels intervention. Our findings, therefore, appear to add to growing evidence of a disconnect between the safety (eg, concussion prevention) and diversity agendas (eg, anti-racism, gender equity) of sport leaders and the day-to-day practices of the mostly volunteer workforce which delivers sport.^{48,49} Advancing important child safeguarding, health, and diversity agendas will require dedicated research focused on identifying effective ways to close the gap between policy and practice.^{19,49,50}

Limitations

Further research, ideally using larger samples, would be needed to determine if our findings can be generalised to other types of sports, locations, or age/population groups. Although the frequency of language used by our participants was consistent with observational research,¹⁷ athletes may not have accurately self-reported their behaviour. The lack of long-term follow-up is another limitation. Some research suggests that the norms may require time to change.

CONCLUSION

The frequent use of homophobic language in male team sport is detrimental to the wellbeing of all athletes, particularly to gay or bisexual young people. This behaviour is also a risk factor for sexual violence and abuse. Finding ways to stop homophobic language in sport needs to be a child safeguarding priority. Our findings add to growing evidence that one-off educational interventions are insufficient to change normative behaviours. Instead, comprehensive, multi-component intervention strategies are needed.

What are the new findings?

- Educational interventions have often been recommended to stop homophobic behaviour in sport settings.
- A carefully designed educational program delivered by professional rugby players did not reduce the frequency of homophobic language used by teenage male athletes or shift factors associated with their behaviour.
- Efforts to change this behaviour will need to go beyond short, one-off educational programs and potentially include training and monitoring of coaches to ensure they intervene to stop harmful behaviours.

How might it impact on clinical practice in the future?

Homophobic language in sport is detrimental to the wellbeing of young athletes, regardless of sexuality, and this behaviour appears to be a key factor in the avoidance of sport activities by gay and bisexual boys. Indeed, openly gay and bisexual athletes were nearly invisible in this study. The American Medical Society for Sport Medicine (AMSSM) says clinicians working in schools and other sport settings have a professional responsibility to ensure athletes are protected from these behaviours. The AMSSM has suggested educating athletes and sport participants (eg, PE students) about the harm caused by homophobic language. This study evaluated an education program delivered to athletes by respected professional athletes. We found this did not reduce the frequency of homophobic language. These results are consistent with the conclusions of systematic reviews of prejudice-reduction interventions. They have found limited benefit from diversity-training seminars delivered by outsiders. Education delivered by respected peers (eg, captains) may be a more effective approach, however, this would need to be publicly supported by coaches.

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CHAPTER 8

Chapter 8 – Supplementary analyses – Investigating language use by coaches

This chapter reports the results of unplanned supplementary analyses of the data from both the Rebels intervention study (last chapter) and the cross-sectional study which investigated the relationships between norms, attitudes, and the homophobic language used by rugby and ice hockey players (Chapter 5). Given the primary objectives of this thesis were to understand ‘why’ homophobic language is used by athletes, and ‘what’ interventions can be used to change this behaviour, the supplementary analyses in this chapter examined the potential role of coach behaviour in the use of homophobic language by the athletes.

Prior to this thesis, just one paper had examined the influence of coaches on homophobic behaviours by athletes. Steinfeldt and colleagues (2012) found the perceived endorsement of homophobic behaviours by coaches (or another respected male) was strongly associated with teenage athlete homophobic bullying. This research is just one of many pieces of evidence that underscored the importance of the commitments made by Rugby Australia to develop coach-specific interventions, including new training programs and new systems of oversight and behaviour monitoring. The development and evaluation of the Rebel’s intervention was based on the assumption that these commitments had been fulfilled and the interventions had been implemented. Yet, subsequent peer-reviewed research has found this not to be the case. This is illustrated by the lack of any mention of the harm caused by homophobic language in Rugby Australia’s most recent 152-page coach training manuals.

Analysing data collected on coach behaviour

Although this thesis focused on identifying educational interventions that could be delivered to athletes, we decided to include questions about the homophobic language that athletes recently used with their coaches or the behaviours of their coaches, as reported by the athletes. The data collected from these questions was not pre-registered to be analysed as part of the intervention study because there was no reason to believe that the behaviours of coaches might be problematic.

The coaches were supportive of our research, they provided us with full access to their players, and generally seemed appreciative of the support being provided from the Rebels and Rugby Victoria. Indeed, most coaches sat in the room when the Rebels delivered their intervention. If anything, we were concerned that coaches might bias the results through becoming more proactive than normal in stopping homophobic language. Our fear appears to be unfounded. As detailed in the last chapter, we found no evidence to suggest that the coaches were making any effort to stop this behaviour. This underscores the need for the supplementary analyses in this chapter.

Methods

Measures

The Homophobic Content Agent Target (HCAT) measurement approach²⁸ was used to measure homophobic language used by participants (self-reported) with their teammates and with their coaches. The stem asked “some people use words such as fag, poof. In the past two weeks how often have you (or teammates; coaches) used words like these, for any reason?” Response options include: never (0), 1-2 times (1), 3-4 times (2), 5-6 times (3), or 7+ times (4).

Analyses

Cross tabulations first investigated the total number of participants that self-reported they had: 1. Used homophobic language with their teammates, 2. Used homophobic language with their coach(es), 3. Heard their teammates use homophobic language, 4. Heard their coach(es) use homophobic language in the two weeks prior to completing the survey.

Cross tabulations then investigated the number of teams in each of the studies where at least 2 players self-reported these behaviours. Following this, Spearman's correlation coefficients were calculated to investigate the bivariate relationships between the four language variables.

Results – Homophobic language use by coaches

Chapter 5 Study – Rugby and Hockey Players

The sample comprised of all six 'Under 18' rugby union teams ($n = 97$) in the state of South Australia (age range 16 -18 years; mean age: 17.01 years, $SD = 0.73$), and all eight semi-professional teams ($n = 146$) that compete nationally in the Australian Ice Hockey League (age range 16 - 31 years; mean age: 25.31, $SD = 5.25$).

Athlete's use of homophobic language with teammates

At least two players on every team in the study (100%) self-reported that they had used homophobic language in the previous two weeks (Table 1). Similarly, at least two players on every rugby and hockey team reported their teammates had used this language.

Perceived coach use of homophobic language

In rugby, at least two players on four of the six rugby team said that they had used homophobic language with their coach(es) in the previous two weeks, and at least two players on five of the six rugby teams reported this language had been used by their coach(es).

In hockey, at least two players on six out of the eight hockey teams reported they had used homophobic language with their coach(es), and at least two players on seven of the eight teams reported this language had been used by their coach(es).

Across the two sports, at least two players on 92.8% of the rugby and ice hockey teams reported they had either used homophobic language with their coach(es), that their coach(es) had used this language, or reported both.

Table 8. Homophobic language use by athletes and coaches (rugby and ice hockey)

| | Rugby N = 97 | Ice Hockey N = 146 | Combined N =243 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Used language w/Teammates | | | |
| <i>Nplayers / Percent overall</i> | 49 / 51.6% | 76 / 55.1% | 125 /53.6% |
| <i>Nteams / Percent of teams^a</i> | 6 / 100% | 8 / 100% | 14 / 100% |
| <i>% or teams where players used language 3+ times</i> | 83% | 100% | 93% |
| Used language w/Coach | | | |
| <i>Nplayers / Percent overall</i> | 20 / 21.1% | 21 / 15.3% | 41 / 17.7% |
| <i>Nteams / Percent of teams^a</i> | 4 / 67% | 6 / 75% | 10 / 62% |
| Heard Teammates | | | |
| <i>Nplayers / Percent overall</i> | 71 / 74.7% | 90 / 65.2% | 161 / 69.1% |
| <i>Nteams / Percent of teams^a</i> | 6 / 100% | 8 / 100% | 14 / 100% |
| Heard Coach | | | |
| <i>Nplayers / % players overall</i> | 23 / 24.2% | 34 / 24.8% | 57 / 24.6% |
| <i>Nteams / Percent of teams^a</i> | 5 / 83% | 7 / 88% | 12 / 86% |

Notes. ^aTeams with at least 2 players reporting language.

Relationships between athlete and coach behaviour

All language variables were significantly related to each other. The recent use of homophobic language by teammates (descriptive norms) had the strongest relationship with the self-reported language use by athletes. Similar strength, medium-strong relationships were found between the use of language by coaches and the self-reported use of this language by the players.

Table 9. Relationships between athlete and coach behaviours (rugby and ice hockey)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. Used language | | .76*** | .38*** | .40*** |
| 2. Teammates used language | .61*** | | .46*** | .36*** |
| 3. Coach used language | .42*** | .41*** | | .68*** |
| 4. Used language with coach | .48*** | .39*** | .57*** | |

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. Rugby is below the line, ice hockey is above.

Intervention study (Chapter 6)

The sample comprised of all seven “Under 18” rugby union teams ($n = 86$) in the state of Victoria (age range 16 -18 years; mean age: 16.86 years, $SD = 0.67$), and all six “Colts” teams ($n = 81$) that compete in the state (age range 18 – 20 years; mean age: 18.96 years, $SD = 1.30$)

Athlete's use of homophobic language

At both time points (before and after the Rebels intervention) at least two players on every rugby team (100%) self-reported they had used homophobic language in the previous two weeks with their teammates or this behaviour was used by their teammates.

Perceived coach use of homophobic language

In the intervention condition (teams which received the Rebel's intervention), at baseline at least two players on six of the seven teams reported that they had used homophobic language with their coach(es) and that they had heard this language being used by their coach(es). At follow-up, **at least two players on every team (100%) that received the intervention from the Rebels reported that they had used homophobic language with their coach(es) and reported their coach had used homophobic language in the previous two weeks.** In the control condition the number of teams with at least two players that reported they had used this language with a coach decreased from 5 to 4 (out of 6), while the number of teams with at least two players who heard coaches use this language increased from 3 to 4.

Table 10. Homophobic language use by players and coaches (Rebels study)

| | Control <i>Nplayers = 76, Nteams = 6</i> | | Intervention <i>Nplayers = 91, Nteams = 7</i> | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| | <i>T1</i> | <i>T2</i> | <i>T1</i> | <i>T2</i> |
| Used language w/Teammates | | | | |
| <i>Nplayers / Percent overall</i> | 32 / 42.7% | 44 / 58.7% | 47 / 55.3% | 52 / 61.2% |
| <i>Nteams / Percent of teams^a</i> | 6 / 100% | 6 / 100% | 7 / 100% | 6 / 100% |
| <i>% of teams where players used language 3+ times</i> | 83% | 100% | 86% | 86% |
| Used language w/Coach | | | | |
| <i>Nplayers / Percent overall</i> | 16 / 21.3% | 24 / 32.0% | 28 / 31.8% | 34 / 40.5% |
| <i>Nteams / Percent of teams^a</i> | 5 / 84% | 4 / 67% | 6 / 86% | 7 / 100% |
| Heard Teammates | | | | |
| <i>Nplayers / Percent overall</i> | 51 / 68.9% | 56 / 75.7% | 65 / 77.4% | 69 / 82.1% |
| <i>Nteams / Percent of teams^a</i> | 6 / 100% | 6 / 100% | 7 / 100% | 7 / 100% |
| Heard Coach | | | | |
| <i>Nplayers / Percent overall</i> | 21 / 28.0% | 29 / 38.2% | 33 / 37.5% | 36 / 40.9% |
| <i>Nteams / Percent of teams^a</i> | 3 / 50% | 4 / 67% | 6 / 86% | 7 / 100% |

Notes. ^a Teams where at least 2 players reported language self-reported, used by teammates, used by coaches, used with coaches.

Relationships between athlete and coach behaviour

As expected, bivariate relationships were found between all language variables, but this was only found to be the case with variables at the same time point. Across all language variables, the associations between behaviours at T1 and T2 had weakened or were non-existent. For example, surprisingly, there was no predictive relationship found athlete's reporting that their coach had used homophobic language at T1 and the athlete using this language, themselves, at T2 (a month later).

Table 11. Relationships between athlete and coach behaviours (Rebels study)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1. Used lang. (T1) | -- | | | | | | |
| 2. Used lang. (T2) | .26*** | -- | | | | | |
| 3. Player used w/ coach (T1) | .62*** | .20* | -- | | | | |
| 4. Player used w/ coach (T2) | .21** | .59*** | .37*** | -- | | | |
| 5. Teammates used lang. (T1) | .68*** | .22** | .51*** | .19* | -- | | |
| 6. Teammates used lang. (T2) | .16* | .72*** | .12 | .42*** | .26*** | -- | |
| 7. Coach used lang. (T1) | .54*** | .18* | .74*** | .28*** | .61*** | .16* | -- |
| 8. Coach used lang. (T2) | .13 | .53*** | .30*** | .81*** | .17 | .42*** | .23** |

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The analyses in this chapter sought to better understand the extent that athletes perceive their coaches use homophobic language in two sports: rugby union and ice hockey. Consistent with an extensive body of qualitative research conducted in Australia (see chapter 3), the statistical data reported in this chapter confirms that coaches are frequently using illegal homophobic language in children's sport settings. It is particularly concerning that players on 100% of the teams that received the Rebel's intervention reported their coach(es) had used homophobic language in the two weeks following the intervention being delivered. This likely explains why the intervention was ineffective: players experience a strong pressure in team sport to conform to the behaviours of their coaches (McCloughan et al., 2015; E. Miller et al., 2016).

It is also noteworthy that there were no significant differences in the frequency of homophobic language used by players and coaches between rugby and ice hockey. This finding was unexpected, given rugby had publicly committed to "eradicate" this behaviour, whereas ice hockey governing bodies have not. This adds to the existing evidence that the 2014 commitments were not kept. This, itself, helps to explain why the Rebel's intervention failed. Fletcher and Colleagues (2013), the IOC (Ljungqvist et al., 2007; Mountjoy et al., 2016; Reardon et al., 2019), and the Australian Human Rights Commission (2015) have told the Australian sport industry that educational interventions delivered to athletes will not be effective unless delivered in tandem with the broad range of other types of interventions. This is an important consideration for other researchers contemplating similar types of intervention research. It would be better to first focus on finding interventions which effectively alter the apathy (behaviours) of government and sport leaders, then coaches, and once this is done it would be good to again try to change the homophobic behaviours of athletes.

CHAPTER 9

Chapter 9 – Summary of key findings and contributions

This thesis responded to the urgent need for research into the drivers of homophobic language in sport and research focused on finding effective methods to stop this behaviour. Importantly, it tested a recommendation, often made by academics, to use educational interventions to change the homophobic behaviours of athletes.

The need for the research conducted for this PhD is illustrated by the frequent use of homophobic language by the athletes and coaches in the studies conducted and the near total invisibility of gay and bisexual athletes. Out of the 410 rugby and ice hockey players that participated in the studies in Chapters 5 and 7, just 1.2% ($n = 5$) self-identified as gay or bisexual on the anonymous surveys. It is statistically impossible that there were not more gay or bisexual players on these teams, given population data suggests up to 15% of high school students now identify as non-heterosexual (Underwood et al., 2020). Based on this data, up to 60 boys and young men may have been on the teams that participated in these studies and were, therefore, being regularly exposed to behaviours that significantly increased their risk of depression, anxiety, and suicide.

The sport industry's peak body, the IOC, has accepted the evidence of harm from homophobic behaviours in sport for over a decade, yet its efforts to share this information has had little impact on the day-to-day behaviours in sport (see Chapter 3). Australia's sport leaders have failed to stop these behaviours and comply with Australian human rights and child protection laws. Finally, the Australian Government has failed to fulfil its international legal obligations to ensure children are safe in sport settings. Taken together, the collective apathy around homophobic behaviours in sport seems to illustrate the "ignorance, denial and resistance among sports leaders" that the IOC has concluded to be the primary barrier to "risk mitigation and prevention" (Mountjoy et al., 2016, p. 1124).

At the start of this project it seemed that apathy was beginning to shift. The leaders of Australia's five largest sports appeared on national television in 2014 and committed their organisations to becoming "world leaders" and pledged to work together to "eradicate" homophobic language and all other forms of homophobia (Bingham Cup Sydney 2014 et al., 2014). This PhD project sought to help the sport leaders to identify effective educational interventions which they could use in tandem with the other interventions to fulfil their commitments. Moreover, it responded to a long-standing gap in the academic literature. Researchers have often suggested the use of educational interventions to change homophobic language in sport, yet this had never been tested. The primary research questions for this project, therefore, were:

1. What factors underpin homophobic language use (e.g., fag, poof) by adolescent male athletes?
2. What types of educational intervention could be used to stop or reduce the frequency of this language in sport environments?

A pragmatic research approach was used to answer my research questions; this is a common approach in social psychology and the applied behavioural sciences. I approached the project as though I was developing an entirely new intervention, using the "Six Steps for Quality Intervention Development" (Six Steps) (Wight et al., 2016) to guide my research process. The five papers and the supplementary study (Chapter 7) contained in this manuscript contain the evidence that is required to complete the first five steps of the Six Steps process. The next two sections summarise my findings, before I outline the key contributions made by this project. In the next chapter provide my overall conclusions and recommendations for future research and practice.

1. What factors underpin homophobic language use in male sport?

My reviews of the literature found a vast body of research on the drivers of homophobic language in sport settings, primarily using observational, ethnographic, or qualitative methods. These methods are useful to gain a rich understanding of a behaviour, but they do not provide the statistical data needed when developing an intervention. Thus, I conducted two studies to generate this data.

The first study (Chapter 4) analysed the survey responses of lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) youth (N = 1173; 15-21 years) from six countries. It investigated whether participants who came out to their teammates or coaches were more likely than those who remained in the closet to report that they had been the target of homophobic behaviour. If those who remained in the closet were found to be the target of homophobic behaviour, this would suggest that this behaviour could be explained by norm theory (this behaviour is normal, therefore, everyone is the target of this behaviour regardless of their sexuality). If, on the other hand, it was found that only those who came out as a gay or bisexual experienced homophobic behaviour, then this would suggest that this behaviour is being used to express homophobia because this behaviour was directed toward those who are open about gay or bisexual. This finding would support stigma theory, a framework widely used to study prejudice.

The results of the first study were mixed. Evidence supporting the norm hypothesis came from finding close to half the sample (41.6%) reporting they had been the target of homophobic behaviour despite remaining in the closet. However, evidence supporting the stigma/prejudice hypothesis came from the finding that both males and females who came out to others were significantly more likely than those who remained in the closet to report victimisation. This suggested that homophobic attitudes may also be driving this problem. The second study sought to unpack these mixed findings; it investigated the relationships

between measures of descriptive and injunctive norms, homophobic attitudes, and the use of homophobic language (e.g., fag) by teenage male rugby union players (n = 97; ages 16 -18) and young adult ice hockey players (n = 146; ages 16 – 30) in Australia. The study found no relationship between homophobic attitudes and the use of homophobic language by participants. In contrast, norm measures had a strong, positive relationship with this behaviour. In multivariate analyses, norms uniquely accounted for almost one-half of the variance in language use. Based on this finding, which was consistent with the conclusions of a large body of qualitative and observational research, it is reasonable to conclude that norms are the primary driver of homophobic language in youth sport and need to be the focus of any intervention designed to change this behaviour.

According to SIT (Social Identity Theory) and SCT (Social Cognitive Theory) which are widely-used theories developed to explain normative behaviours (Amiot et al., 2017; Bandura, 1999; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004), homophobic language is being used by athletes because they are conforming to and, often, unconsciously mimicking the behaviour of others around them (descriptive norms) and because they feel the need to use this language to be accepted by others (injunctive norms). SCT was found to be particularly useful to inform intervention development for this project because it can be used to understand how behaviours are transmitted between group members and how norms are maintained in sport (e.g. over time). In addition, SCT has often been used to identify the individual factors as well as the social processes (interpersonal factors) that need to be disrupted by an intervention (Bandura, 1999). SIT is similarly useful, but it is more limited in focus and typically used to understand and shift the individual factors which lead people to adopt normative behaviours (Bandura, 1999; Hall & La France, 2012).

2. What types of educational intervention approaches could be used?

After I confirmed that norms were the primary driver, I sought to identify whether any educational intervention approaches were being used in sport settings which could potentially alter these norms. My focus on interventions already in use was informed by the Six Steps process, which recommends using or modifying an existing intervention used in a social setting rather than trying to introduce an entirely new intervention (Wight et al., 2016). Building off of an existing approach may reduce the risk of implementation problems, such as rejection by end users (Wight et al., 2016).

I found nearly all interventions had been created and/or were managed by a small number of LGBTQ+ organisations run primarily by volunteers and with limited budgets (Jeanes et al., 2019; Magrath & Stott, 2019). Unfortunately, few of their interventions were being delivered in youth settings. Finally, and problematically, nearly all interventions were based on the assumption that homophobic behaviours are driven by homophobic attitudes, rather than by norms. Below is a summary of the three most common interventions:

Intervention approach 1. Passive information resources

Significant volunteer time and charitable resources have gone into creating dozens of detailed (i.e., 92 page) LGBTQ+ inclusion handbooks, guides, tip sheets, or online training courses for coaches, with just a few created for athletes (Denison et al., 2021). These resources typically contained an extensive array of recommendations around how to create an inclusive sport environment for gender diverse people and sexual minorities. Moreover, the unique forms and drivers of discrimination experienced by gender-diverse and LGB people has generally been confounded. The total lack of intervention research, prior to this project, meant that the recommendations in these resources had never been tested and, thus, it was unclear if they were effective or could potentially make problems worse. Finally,

I found these passive information resources were not widely used by coaches, teachers, or by the teenage male athletes who were the focus of this project (Brackenridge et al., 2008; Phipps, 2020). Based on all of above, this intervention method was deemed to be unsuitable for evaluation.

Intervention approach 2. Pride Games

Rainbow-themed pride games began being held in 2001 by American professional baseball teams that were struggling financially and need to attract new fans (Morgano, 2012). Over the last two-decades, these games have exploded in popularity and they are now held by professional teams throughout the world. The focus of these events continues to be on marketing and ticket sales; however, they often include some form of social marketing education. I examined the messaging used in this education and found homophobic behaviours are rarely mentioned (Denison & Toole, 2020). In fact, teams often omit any mention of LGBTQ+ people and instead use broad, non-specific language about “celebrating diversity and inclusion” or “everyone’s welcome” (Parry et al., 2021). I found no evidence or theory supporting this type of messaging or this social marketing approach to change the behaviours of male athletes, thus, this intervention approach was deemed unsuitable for evaluation. However, it is important to highlight that community sport clubs have started hosting similar rainbow-themed events in recent years (after this thesis began). Unlike the professional-level games, there is now some evidence supporting this approach as a way to shift homophobic language in sport (Denison & Toole, 2020; Jeanes et al., 2020).

Amateur and semi-professional sport teams which host these games were found to use up to 50% less homophobic language as teams which have never hosted a pride game, but pre/post measures were not collected. The value of this approach needs to be confirmed using an RCT similar to the approach used to evaluate the Rebels intervention.

Intervention approach 3. Education delivered by professional athletes

The final intervention approach which I found was being used widely in sport involved the use of professional athletes to deliver educational messages about homophobia and LGBTQ+ issues. The athletes did this through videos, or to a lesser degree, through hosting talks at sports clubs and schools (Athlete Ally, 2019; The Waterboy, 2020). Rugby union has used this approach more than any other sport in Australia, dating back to 2009 (Towle, 2009). I found numerous marketing studies supporting the use of professional athletes to influence the behaviour of young people (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Chung et al., 2013; Harrison & Michelson, 2016; Hoffman & Tan, 2015; Lee & Koo, 2015; Steinfeldt et al., 2012). Indeed, researchers have found the perceived endorsement by coaches and other respected older men (e.g. professional athletes) exerts a strong influence on the homophobic behaviours of teenage male athletes (Steinfeldt et al., 2012). Given the evidence above, and the wide use of this intervention approach, I concluded that this approach might be an effective way to shift norms and began working with rugby governing bodies to refine their approaches and conduct an evaluation.

Drawing on SCT, it was hypothesised that the strong disapproval of homophobic language by the Melbourne Rebels players would strengthen existing proscriptive (disapproving) injunctive norms at the teams that they visited and weaken the prescriptive (approving) injunctive norms. The second hypothesis was that the information the Rebels provided about the serious harm caused by homophobic language would change individual perceptions that homophobic language is harmless, which would have an immediate impact on descriptive norms. Unfortunately, none of the hypothesis were supported. Despite the careful planning, and theoretical foundations, the intervention had no short-term effect on the use of homophobic language by athletes, the norms that supported their behaviour, or their individual attitudes about the acceptability of this behaviour. Importantly there was no

evidence of strong proscriptive injunctive norms (disapproval from others). This suggested efforts by coaches to stop this behaviour have been ineffective. This was supported by post-hoc analyses which found players on 100% of the teams which received the intervention reported their coach(es) had used homophobic language in the two weeks before and after the Rebels had delivered the intervention at their club. This suggest that coaches were both undermining the Rebels intervention and failing to stop the illegal and harmful language being used by the children and young adults they were supervising.

Major contributions of this thesis

This project made a range of contributions to scientific understanding of homophobic language use in sport and the solutions needed to stop this behaviour. These include the first, published review of quantitative evidence and review of research on the negative health and social outcomes associated with this behaviour (Paper 1). Another contribution was the international statistical evidence that young people continue to experience alarming rates of homophobic victimisation in sport settings (Paper 2). The findings of these two papers will be useful to those seeking to challenge a narrative promoted by a small group of scholars that sport is now a “welcoming” and “safe” place for gay people (Anderson et al., 2016). Another contribution of this thesis was the introduction and application of new theories (SIT and SCT) which can be used to by others in the future seeking to understand how to stop homophobic language being used by athletes. Nearly all prior research had studied this behaviour using Hegemonic Masculinity Theory (Steinfeldt et al., 2016). Finally, the thesis provided additional evidence, consistent with the work of Fletcher and colleagues (2013) and the conclusions of the IOC (Mountjoy et al., 2016) that one-off interventions are insufficient to stop homophobic behaviours in sport; comprehensive intervention strategies are needed. In addition to the contributions listed above, the thesis made four major contributions.

1. Strong evidence of failures by sport leaders and regulators to protect children from harm

The literature reviews written for this project provide strong evidence that harmful homophobic behaviours are pervasive in every sport, from rugby to volleyball to tennis, and in every sport setting, including schools, community clubs, and professional teams. The reviews further found that the frequent use of homophobic language in sport is associated with a broad range of negative outcomes, including suicide, child sexual abuse, and violence against women.

The visual timeline (Chapter 3) of research conducted in Australia will be useful to those seeking to identify gaps in the literature; it shows the problems have been extensively documented and there is a need for solution-focused research.

Additionally, this timeline and the one created to show the regulatory actions taken by the Australian Government (Table 1) is useful to illustrate the failures by the sport industry and government to fulfil their legal duties to protect children from harm and take action if evidence is provided of illegal behaviours occurring in sport. This may be useful to LGBTQ+ community leaders and/or their lawyers in seeking to secure meaningful action on this problem from the Australian Government.

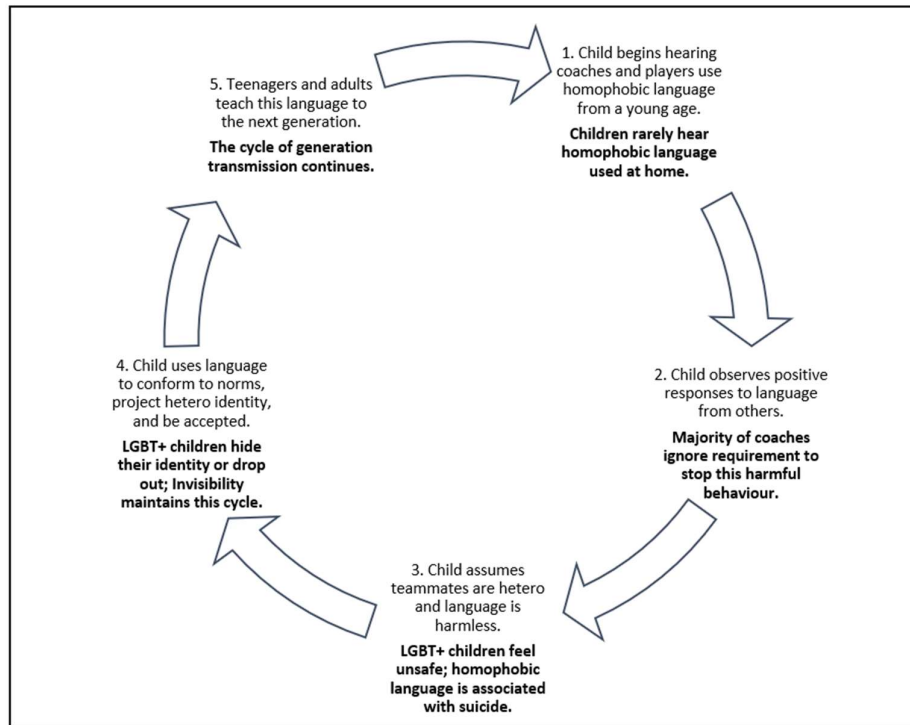
2. Statistically validated and evidence-based causation model

The research for this thesis went beyond statistically confirming the role of norms in the use of homophobic language in sport. The thesis also advanced scholarly understanding of the various types of norms that influence this behaviour (i.e. descriptive, proscriptive injunctive, prescriptive etc.).

Furthermore, the thesis unpacked the social processes which support these norms to remain entrenched in sport. This contribution emerged through asking different questions than previous researchers who have been primarily interested in collecting data on homophobic language in sport to support theories on masculinity. In contrast, this project sought to study sport, to change behaviours in sport. It sought to understand how athletes learn to use homophobic language, why they use it, how they use it, and who most strongly influences this behaviour. This novel approach was guided by the Six Steps for Quality Intervention Development methodology (Wight et al., 2016).

Another positive outcome from using Six Steps has been the creation of the LGBTQ+ Exclusion in sport cycle (LGBTQ+ ESC). Wight et al. recommended creating a visual model to understand how key factors are interacting and influencing a behaviour. This model was created to illustrate how the norms which support homophobic language in sport are transmitted from one generation to the next and to illustrate the various social and individual processes which influence boys to start adopting this behaviour. Each of the points in the cycle is an intervention point which will need to be considered during future intervention design (e.g. reaction of coaches, lack of awareness of harm).

Figure 8. LGBTQ+ Exclusion in sport cycle



3. First RCT of an anti-homophobia intervention in sport

This manuscript contains the first RCT of an intervention designed to reduce the frequency of homophobic behaviours in sport. This is a considerable contribution when you consider that a recent review (Paluck et al., 2021) found just one other RCT conducted in sport to evaluate a prejudice reduction intervention (anti-racism). More broadly, this review found few RCTs of prejudice reduction intervention have been conducted in any real-world setting (less than 10%), with most conducted in labs or other controlled settings.

4. Advancing understanding of the role of coaches in language

Prior research has found the behaviour of coaches to be associated with the homophobic bullying behaviour by teenage male athletes, but the relationship between coach behaviour and homophobic language had not yet been confirmed (Steinfeldt et al., 2012). This thesis made a novel contribution through providing evidence that the use of homophobic language by coaches is associated with the use of homophobic language by athletes. These findings were incorporated into the LGBTQ++ ESC model and shown through the central role that coaches play at almost all points of the cycle.

Evidence of the influence of coaches on the language used by athletes provides further validation of the usefulness of Social Cognitive Theory to study this behaviour. According to SCT, players learn anti-social behaviours from respected others (e.g., coaches) through observation and they adopt behaviours to gain social rewards (Bandura, 1999). The behaviour of coaches and the pressure to gain approval from them is of particular concern to athletes during later adolescence (E. Miller et al., 2016). At this age there is an opportunity for players to be selected for the development squads of professional teams (E. Miller et al., 2016). A coach could, for example, remove a promising player from the field if he observes that selectors (scouts) have arrived to watch a game. This would be a worry to the best athletes on a team (e.g. captains) who would feel a strong pressure to conform to the behaviour of their coach. Incidentally, the best players, themselves, exert a strong influence over the behaviours of others in sport and harnessing this influence may be an avenue worth exploring during future intervention studies (Kavussanu & Al-Yaaribi, 2021).

CHAPTER 10

Chapter 10 – Conclusions and recommendations

Many in the LGBTQ+ community were optimistic that it was a turning point when the leaders of Australia's largest sports appeared on national television together in 2014 and signed the commitment to become world leaders and "eradicate" homophobia. This optimism is demonstrated by the \$60,000+ in donations which the LGBTQ+ community contributed to this research project. Eight years later, this optimism has turned to cynicism and disappointment.

Storr (2021) recently assessed the progress made by the sport leaders since the 2014 and concluded that: "we are left with empty promises and a commitment which is not enacted and followed through." Parry and colleagues (2021) similarly found a "disjuncture between the words adopted by Australian Sport Organisations concerning statements of inclusion in the media and a failure to support these statements with tangible action" (p. 18). Shaw (2019) described the LGBTQ+ community as being demoralised, a sentiment illustrated by the comments of Ian Roberts, Australia's first openly gay athlete, to The Guardian in 2020 (Kemp, 2020):

"I'm getting very frustrated by the lack of action on this issue and all the empty promises ... I can't tell you how many sport CEOs and board members have told me they think ending homophobia in sport is important and they want to help.

In 2014, all the CEOs of Australia's major sports signed a formal commitment to eliminate homophobia. They received a lot of great media attention but they clearly have not followed through on their commitments. I'm not sure how to drive this issue forward.

We need to find a way to get the guys who lead sport in Australia and around the world to care about this problem. Perhaps it would help if the government and major sponsors put pressure on the governing bodies and leagues. We can't keep ignoring this problem and hoping it will be fixed by time (web story)."

As Ian Roberts concluded, the path forward is unclear for the LGBTQ+ community. It seems their various advocacy efforts over the last two decades have had little impact on the day-to-day behaviours of athletes, coaches, and PE teachers. These efforts included the high-profile advocacy campaign that led to the commitment by the sport leaders. It was supported by powerful Australians, including respective Labor and Liberal Prime Ministers Julia Gillard and Malcolm Turnbull and Anthony Albanese, who is the current Prime Minister. Other support came from high profile professional athletes, including the former captains of three national teams. Importantly, the major sponsors of sport, Australia's largest corporations, provided funding for this campaign. It is remarkable that all of this was not enough to drive meaningful action by Australia's sport leaders and their organisations.

Potential reasons for failure of academic responses

Academics have similarly had little success in driving change. Shaw (2019) recently concluded that, "sport's inherent homophobia has been extensively problematised in the academic literature, seemingly with little impact." However, academics have gone beyond documenting the problem, they have also repeatedly provided the sport industry with intensive support to help it comply with the law. This PhD project, which provided three years of intensive support to rugby governing bodies and clubs, is the third example.

The first example was Fair Go, Sport! in 2010 (see Chapter 1). It was similarly funded by the Australian Government and involved academics and government officials providing field hockey governing bodies and clubs with intensive support over 16 months. At the end of the project, hockey leaders admitted that they had been unsuccessful in stopping homophobic language being used by athletes and coaches, yet have done little since to stop this illegal behaviour. The second project involved an academic and two government sport agency psychologists. They provided intensive support to volleyball governing bodies after a child nearly died from suicide following homophobic bullying. The academic and government officials helped volleyball leaders (at no charge) to develop education programs for both athletes and coaches that were then delivered for just a few years and only in one state (Queensland).

Table 12. Outcomes form intensive support provided to the sport industry

Bold highlights common approaches and outcomes

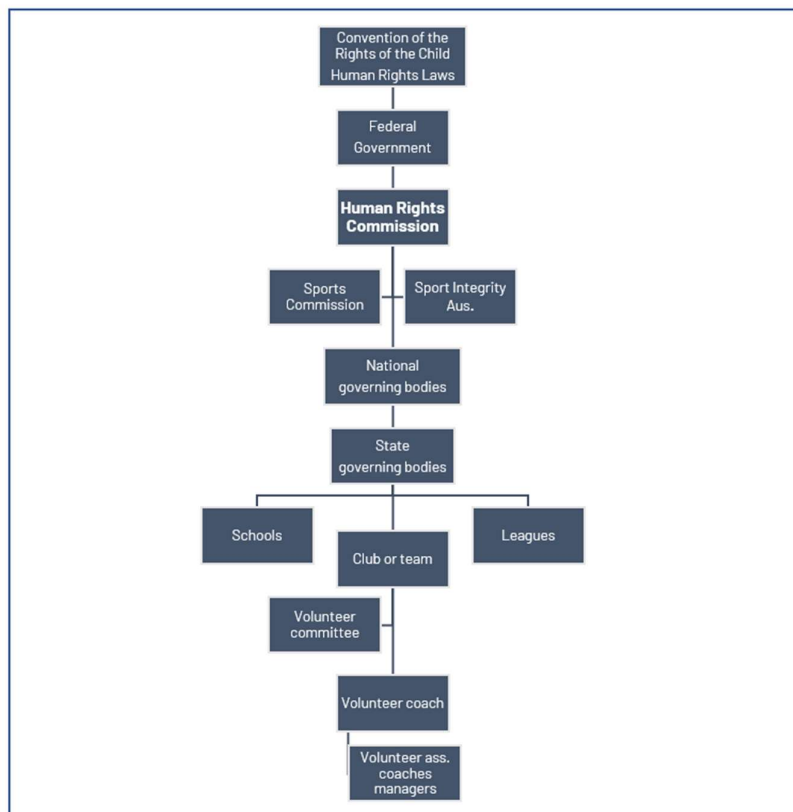
| | QLD Volleyball | VIC Hockey | VIC Rugby |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Public commitments by national governing (gov.) leaders to take action on homophobia in sport | | X | X |
| Public commitments by state gov. leaders to take action on homophobia in sport | X | X | X |
| Intensive support provided by academics | X | X | X |
| \$200,000+ in Australian Government funding | | X | X |
| Staff support from Australian Government | X | X | |
| In-kind-staff-time from state gov. body | X | X | X |
| Intervention development | | | |
| Co-development with Australian Gov. officials | | X | |
| Co-development with State Government officials | | X | |
| Involvement by Human Rights agencies (state/national) | | X | |
| Co-development with state gov. body | X | X | X |
| Co-development with community sport leaders | | X | X |
| Co-development with coaches | X | X | X |
| Co-development with athletes | | X | X |
| Focused on stopping homophobic behaviours | X | | X |
| Focused on promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion | | X | |
| Outcome | | | |
| Limited engagement from community club leaders | | X | X |
| Intervention used when receiving support | X | X | X |
| Intervention used for a short-term after support ended | X | X | |
| Resistance/negativity from athletes (child or adult) | | | |
| Resistance/negativity from parents (child or adult) | | | |
| Resistance/negativity from coaches | X | X | X |
| No evidence of change to homophobic behaviours | X | X | X |

It is informative that the three projects detailed above worked with very different sports, with different histories, structures, and cultures yet the outcomes were identical (these are illustrated by Table 11). Despite the strong, initial support from state governing body leaders in field hockey, volleyball, and rugby, these leaders did little to stop illegal homophobic behaviours after the support from academics ended. In each case, these governing body leaders seemed to hit a ‘brick wall’ (Spaaij et al., 2018, 2019) of institutional and structural barriers.

Structural and institutional factors contributing to the failure of Australian Government responses

The Australian Government has taken a hands-off approach with regulating sport, and has largely delegated its human rights and child protection responsibilities to national governing bodies. There seems to be little acceptance amongst Government officials that these bodies have few levers of control over the behaviours of athletes, coaches, teachers, or the volunteers who manage the delivery of sport in the community (Kerr et al., 2020). As illustrated by the figure below (Figure 1 from Chapter 1), national governing bodies are far removed from day-to-day delivery (Jeanes et al., 2018; Kerr et al., 2020). Their primary role is to set policies and run national teams (May, 2021), which is why national governing bodies delegate their child protection and human rights obligations to their state governing bodies.

Structure of regulatory oversight of sport in Australia (from Chapter 1).



At the state level, governing bodies similarly have little involvement in the day-to-day delivery of sport and few levers of control or influence beyond mandating coaches and volunteers take “tick the box” accreditation courses (Spaaij et al., 2018; Storr, Jeanes, et al., 2020). Moreover, state sport leaders are reluctant to put too much pressure on their shrinking pool of volunteers because they rely on this unpaid workforce to run their sport clubs, deliver their sport, and collect their membership dues (Fletcher, 2013). This points to perhaps the largest barrier to meaningful action on homophobic behaviours, and all other harmful behaviours in children’s sport: a lack of resources and funding. Most state governing bodies are run by a small pool of overworked staff with narrow skillsets (Brackenridge et al., 2008; Hartmann-Tews, 2021; Jeanes et al., 2018; Storr, Jeanes, et al., 2020). These staff lack the expertise and time to find solutions to deeply rooted, systemic problems such as homophobic, racist, and sexist behaviours (Farquharson et al., 2019; Jeanes et al., 2018; Spaaij et al., 2018).

Independent government inquiries, such as the Royal Commission on Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017), have consistently found the lack of resources in community sport and reliance on volunteers is the primary risk factor for child sexual abuse. The Royal Commission (2017) further found there is literally no government agency or organisation proactively watching over the behaviour of these volunteers who deliver sport to millions of children every week. Moreover, the Royal Commission (2017) and academic research (Kerr et al., 2020) has found a serious conflict of interest is created by asking governing bodies to regulate their own sport because the survival of the regulator (governing bodies) is heavily dependent on the free labour and cooperation of the regulated (Government of Victoria, 2013; Independent Review of Sexual Abuse in Scottish Football, 2021; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017).

Multiple reports and inquiries have outlined the problems above, yet, as illustrated by Table 13 (below), the Australian Government has typically only taken action on evidence of harm to children when it faces a reputational threat. This situation is not unique to Australia. Researchers have reported a similar situation in Canada, where efforts to protect children from harm are “characterized by recurring cycles of crisis” generally in response to media stories about a child being mistreated, which generates short-term public attention, a half-baked and reactive policy response from governments or the sport industry, and then “sluggish implementation, and active resistance, with very little observable change” (Kerr et al., 2020, p. 3). New approaches are needed to fix these problems. As Fletcher (2013) concluded in their evaluation of the Government-funded Fair Go, Sport!, creating meaningful change will require deep and authentic engagement from the Australian Government, long-term funding, and multiple interventions delivered in tandem together. Until the Australian and state governments start to prioritise protecting children from harm in sport and fix the structural and institutional problems which put them at risk, there is likely to be limited benefit from delivering one-off educational interventions such as the one evaluated for this PhD project.

Table 13. Outcomes of Australian Government regulatory responses

Punitive Action 1

| Date | Type | Description | Outcomes |
|------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2000 | Punitive: Compliance direction | The Government sent the sport industry a detailed document which outlined the evidence of the industry's non-compliance with human rights laws by allowing homophobic behaviours to continue. The industry was warned of legal consequences. The document provided examples of behaviours which are illegal and must be stopped, including day-to-day normative homophobic jokes and banter. The Government provided a list of actions which it expected the industry to undertake to ensure compliance with human rights laws (Australian Sports Commission, 2000). | As detailed in Chapter 1, researchers found governing bodies and teams were aware of the guidelines but they were deliberately being ignored. A 2009 Aus. Gov. national inquiry found the harm caused to children and need for action on homophobic behaviour had been "largely neglected" by the industry and Government (see Table 5) |
| 2001 | Capability support | The Government financially supported Play by the Rules, an online hub of resources and short-courses created to help coaches, PE teachers, and sport leaders comply with the basic requirements of human rights and children protection laws. Some materials focus on promoting LGBTQ+ inclusive sport settings, including the need to stop homophobic language. | As detailed in the paper in Chapter 3, coaches rarely use passive educational resources on any topic, including concussion management. They are volunteers, with full-time jobs, and don't have time for online courses. |
| 2010 | Capability support | After a national inquiry found homophobic behaviours remained common in sport, and were harming children, the Government provided \$200,000 (adjusted for inflation) to academics and asked them to work with officials from national and state human rights agencies. Together the academics and government officials provided intensive support over 16-months to the sport industry. The objective of the "Fair Go, Sport!" project was to find scalable interventions that could be used to increase "awareness" of sexuality issues and "promote safe and inclusive environments." The academics and officials provided this support to one sport, field hockey. This sport was chosen because of prior engagement by the sport's leaders in supporting LGBTQ+ issues (Fletcher, 2013). | Ad detailed in Chapter 1, the Fair Go, Sport! project increased general awareness of LGBTQ+ issues but had no effect on day-to-day homophobic behaviours by athletes and coaches. Fletcher (2013) concluded that changing these behaviours would require much longer than 16-months, a significant investment from Government, and multiple types of interventions delivered in tandem and over time. |
| 2014 | Capability support | Following the near suicide death of a child who had been the victim of homophobic bullying at a volleyball tournament, Australian and state government officials, and an academic, provided intensive support to volleyball's governing body in Queensland. They helped develop athlete and coach training programs designed to stop homophobic behaviours (Mattey et al., 2014). | According to the academics involved, the volleyball governing bodies did not deliver the coach program after the pilot trial, and did not develop a replacement program (see Chapter 1). The athlete program was only delivered to elite players, only for a few years, and only in one state. No replacement coach or athlete education programs have been developed or delivered. |

Punitive Action 2

| | | | |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2014 | Punitive: Enforceable undertaking | In response to strong evidence of continued harm to children, and non-compliance with human rights and child protection laws, lawyers from LGBTQ+ and human rights organisations began working with Australian Government agencies, and the five largest sport governing bodies, to co-develop the Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework. The leaders of the five sports were then asked to appear on national television together and they jointly signed a commitment to "eradicate" homophobia and adopt all elements of the Framework. This committed their organisations to develop and implement a broad range of interventions, including fit-for-purpose policies, education programs for coaches and athletes, monitoring and reporting systems to detect non-compliance, and effective sanctions for violations. | Multiple, peer-reviewed, academic papers have concluded that the sport leaders did not fulfil their commitments. For example, Storr (2021) recently assessed the progress and concluded that: "we are left with empty promises and a commitment which is not enacted and followed through." Parry and colleagues (2021) similarly found a "disjuncture between the words adopted by Australian Sport Organisations concerning statements of inclusion in the media and a failure to support these statements with tangible action" (p. 18). |
| 2014 | Monitoring | As part of the action taken above (Anti-Homophobia Framework), the Australian Government provided funding to support the first large-scale international study on homophobic behaviours in sport. The Out on the Fields study collected quantitative data from Australia and five other countries. The Australian data was compared to other countries (no difference found). The Government said it would use the data as a baseline and would conduct the study again in 2019 (this was not done). The study provided strong, statistical evidence that illegal homophobic behaviours are common in all sport settings and they are harmful to children. This research is explained in greater detail in Chapters 3 & 4. | The Australian Government did not fund the follow-up program, but may have not felt it was needed given the lack of progress and effort (above) and the findings of this PhD project, which were shared with senior human rights and sport officials. |
| 2016 | Voluntary performance indicators Capability support | After evidence began to emerge that the five sport leaders had not fulfilled the commitments made in 2014, LGBTQ+ community leaders, lawyers, and the media began applying pressure on the Australian Government to take action. The LGBTQ+ leaders worked with Government agencies to co-create two new regulatory tools: 1. Pride in Sport Index (performance indicator) is an annual benchmarking and performance indicator tool which sports can volunteer to use to objectively track their progress in complying with human rights and child protection laws. The Index is open to all sports. The results are not individually reported; 2. Pride in Sport (capability support) is an industry organisation with many of the same functions as Play by the Rules (above). It is run out of the largest LGBTQ+ health organisation and has a specific focus on helping Australian sports to become LGBTQ+ inclusive and stop homophobic behaviours. | Peer-reviewed studies have found no evidence of change to harmful behaviours in sport from the Index. A key factor is the voluntary nature of participation, the individual scores of sports are not publicly reported, and there are no consequences for poor performance. The impact of Pride in Sport (organisation) has similarly been limited, in part due to the lack of funding and there has been a high turnover of leadership, with 4 managers in 5 years. (Denison et al., 2021; Jeanes et al., 2019; Parry et al., 2021; Storr, 2021; Storr et al., 2021). |

Recommendations

In a thesis-by-publication it is common for the recommendations from each paper to be collated into a table in the final chapter. The table below are the primary recommendations. However, I have decided to highlight one of these recommendations as the most important. This is because of the potential for it to be used to overcome the resistance and apathy from coaches and volunteers in sport settings.

The recommendation was previously provided to the Australian Government in 2017 by the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Commissioners concluded that systems of oversight and monitoring in sport need to be external to sport and close to the community settings where problems are occurring. They recommended local governments should be given responsibility for child safety in sport and funding to hire ‘child safety’ officers. These officers would then provide hands-on, day-to-day support to the overworked volunteers who deliver sport in their community. This would help them to prioritise child safety, including taking firm action to stop homophobic. The child safety officers could become a valued mentor, an extra set of hands, but also someone who can help their local sport industry understand their legal obligations and monitor compliance. This model has proven to be effective in Europe, in large part because local governments have deep regulatory expertise and many levers of regulatory control over sport through their funding of local sport clubs (Stevens & Vertommen, 2020). Moreover, local governments are increasingly engaged in promoting diversity work in local sport because they want to ensure marginalised groups, such as LGBTQ+ children, are able to gain the benefits of participation (Storr, Jeanes, et al., 2020).

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| Chapter 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research is needed to investigate the drivers and identifying effective methods to overcome resistance by government policy makers and sport managers to engage in LGBTQ+ sport diversity. It is important to understand the role of scholars in this process and how they can support and collaborate with sport managers who are legitimately unsure of how to navigate the complexity of LGBTQ+ diversity or how to overcome resistance and become much-needed champions within their sector. It could be useful to start by building on the work of Storr et al. (2018) who examined the actions that followed public commitments of sport leaders to address homophobia in Australia. It is important to understand the specific barriers to meaningful action.• Further research is needed to identify practical, pragmatic, and scalable solutions to stop the discrimination and exclusion of LGBTQ+ people in sport. This thesis focused on homophobic language, but there is a need to identify interventions that can be used to address other behaviours.• A multitude of printed and online educational resources (handbooks, manuals) have been created on LGBTQ+ inclusion issues yet there is no evidence that they are used or valued by sport managers. It would be prudent to conduct rigorous evaluations of existing materials before additional charitable or public funds are used to develop additional training resources. Many of the educational resources are based on assumptions of the underlying factors supporting discrimination and exclusion (e.g., prejudice).• Research is also needed to understand the nuances and intersections (where appropriate) in the forms of discrimination between different sexualities and gender identities. Broad-brush, approaches have proven ineffective in driving diversity changes in other settings and may confound and ignore the unique challenges, needs, and factors underpinning discrimination, stigma, and exclusion of the subgroups of the LGBTQ+ community.• There is growing body of evidence that suggests LGBTQ+ diversity may have direct benefits to the overall success of sport teams and improve the experiences of everyone in sport settings. Much of this evidence comes from research conducted in American university sport settings. Expanding this research and generating evidence from a wider range of sport settings could be a useful approach to help overcome any perceptions of sport managers that there is little commercial benefit to act on the discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people. |
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| Chapter 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport administrators, clubs and coaches need to put in place effective, validated policies and procedures for sanctioning homophobic language and behaviour. • There is a need to psychometrically develop and test measures of homophobic discrimination experienced by LGBQ athletes in sport settings. • Large-scale, longitudinal studies using representative samples and multi-dimensional scales are needed to confirm the discrimination that LGBQ young people experience in sport and better understand how it impacts their health and wellbeing. • Funding from sports and governments is needed to conducted rigorous research on the experiences of LGBQ youth in sport. • Public health officials seeking to increase rates of sport participation by LGBQ youth should examine the lack of regulations and policies which protect them from discrimination. The existence of these policies is an important intervention to enhance their health and well-being. |
| Chapter 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent evidence shows male athletes do not consider words like “fag” to be “homophobic” behaviour unless these words are used with the explicit intent of expressing prejudice and directed toward a gay person. Intervention approaches used by sport organisations should avoid using terms such as “ending homophobia in sport” and instead focus on correcting misperceptions that the language is harmless. • Interventions used in sport settings need to focus on changing the norms that support homophobic language. Intervention developers may want to explore approaches shown to change norms and discriminatory language in school settings. The intervention approaches identified the most influential (popular) students at a school (using social network analyses) and then trained these “social referent” students to actively challenge the discriminatory language being used by their peers. This type of intervention would likely be amenable to sport given the most influential individuals (i.e. captains, highest scorers) can be quickly identified and researchers have found these individuals already play a central role in regulating the behaviour of others. |

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|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chapter 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) may be useful to those seeking to disrupt the social learning processes through which this language is transferred from one generation to the next. • New systems of oversight and regulation are needed to ensure children are protected from harmful discrimination and abuse in sport. A Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse in Australia found many examples of abuse being ignored in sport. It concluded that systems of oversight and monitoring need to be external to sport but also close to the community settings where problems are occurring. It recommended local governments should be given responsibility for child safety in sport and funding to hire child safety officers (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). • The voluntary nature of community sport needs to be considered by those developing early detection, harm mitigation, and prevention interventions. This is because sport environments are typically chaotic, loosely organised, volunteer driven, and poorly resourced. The most sustainable and successful interventions are pragmatic, focused (e.g. on one form of homophobia), integrate with current systems, and self-funded. It is also important for any intervention to require little support from busy volunteers who view public health initiatives as a distraction from winning games. • Those seeking inspiration for preventative interventions to address homophobic behaviours should look beyond the prejudice reduction literature. A recent review found few interventions change normative behaviours. A more useful source of evidence may be systematic reviews of school bullying programmes or gender-norm transformative interventions. Gender norms play a central role in homophobia in sport. • Recent reviews of prejudice, school bullying, and gender norm interventions all found that the most effective interventions to address normative behaviours are led by respected peers (e.g., team captains) or admired adults (e.g., coaches, professional athletes) and they empower young people to lead culture change. Using peer-led education, rather than it being delivered by professional athletes, should be considered during future intervention design. • Caution should be taking before encouraging LGBTQ youth to play a sport in scholarship or practices. It is necessary to consider ways to mitigate potential harm from victimisation or stigma. It may be helpful to suggest parents and others first engage with local community sport providers to identify ones which are proactive in creating an inclusive and safe sport environment. |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| | |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chapter 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts to change homophobic behaviours in sport need to go beyond short, one-off educational programs delivered to athletes through in-person sessions or other mediums, such as social media. This approach appears to be ineffective as a stand-alone intervention given the lack of reinforcement of rules that ban homophobic language. Multifaceted interventions, including effective and enforced policies and monitoring of compliance by coaches are needed. • There is growing evidence of a disconnect between the diversity and safety agendas (e.g., concussions) of sport governing bodies and the actual day-to-day delivery of youth sport in schools and community settings. These agendas do not seem to be supported in grassroots sport setting. Identifying ways to close this gap will be key to advancing these agendas. |
| Chapter 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research is needed to identify the most effective forms of coach training and monitoring that can be used to ensure they comply with child protection and anti-discrimination laws. |
| Additional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholars should ensure the LGBTQ+ leaders, and others who were involved in efforts to create the Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework for Australian Sport and/or who helped to secure the commitments from the sport leaders are informed of the findings of this and other similar research that has found the sport governing bodies have not kept their commitments. Scholars could also play an important role, as they have in the past, in facilitating meetings between these various parties at their universities, perhaps through seminars focused on finding solutions. • Extending the recommendation above, scholars studying child safety issues in sport are currently working in silos. For example, those who study systemic racism do not seem to be collaborating with those who study homophobia and sexism. Similarly, those who study systemic discrimination are not collaborating with those who study child abuse. There is a need for a forum to be created to encourage collaboration. This could be through an international online conference or some other medium. |

Conclusion

This thesis has made a number of important contributions to research on homophobic language in sport settings. It has provided the first quantitative evidence that norms are the primary driver of this behaviour and that coaches exert a strong influence on the homophobic language used by athletes. It applied and validated a new theoretical framework, Social Cognitive Theory, to understand this behaviour. It generated the LGBTQ++ESC model which can now be used in future intervention design to understand the many social processes supporting this behaviour. In addition, the thesis contains the first trial of an intervention approach widely used in sport to reduce the frequency of homophobic language. However, perhaps the most important contribution to research and practice will be the detailed evidence that LGBTQ children are being harmed, this has been reported to governments since 1997, and little has been done by anyone in government or the sport industry to stop this harm. Instead of firm action on the discrimination they experience in sport, the identities of LGBTQ+ people have been inexplicably omitted by governments from their national sport participation strategies.

There is no ambiguity in child protection laws. Every adult who is directly or indirectly responsible for the safety of children (e.g. coach, sport governing bodies, sport policy makers) must immediately intervene to protect children if there is any evidence they are being harmed (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). Equally, there is no ambiguity that the systemic, normative use of homophobic language in sport is illegal. The “Australian Guidelines to address homophobia and sexuality discrimination in sport” which the Australian Sports Commission (2000) sent to the sport governing bodies two-decades ago says “sexuality discrimination is also against the law, those who allow such discrimination to occur can be vulnerable to legal claims from those who’ve been hurt as a result (p. 3).”

In 2015, the UN Agencies released a joint statement which made the legal obligations to take action on homophobic behaviours even clearer: “failure to uphold the human rights of LGBTI people and protect them against abuses such as violence and discriminatory laws and practices, constitute serious violations of international human rights law and have a far-reaching impact on society” (United Nations Human Rights Commission, 2015).

It is unclear why child protection and anti-discrimination laws can be ignored by sport policy makers, governing bodies, coaches, PE teachers, and others in sport without consequence. This is not a uniquely Australian problem nor is it limited to homophobic behaviours, with evidence that all harmful behaviours (racism, sexism, sexual abuse) are being ignored in sport settings in New Zealand, Canada, the UK, and throughout the EU (Kerr et al., 2020; Mergaert et al., 2016; Phipps, 2020). Finding solutions to this global problem needs to be the focus of all future research investigating ways to end homophobia in sport.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Survey



Australian Government



Explanatory Statement: Sport Inclusion Project – PROGRAM SURVEY

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Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether to participate in this research. If you would like further information, please ask the researchers conducting this survey or contact the researchers above. You may want to keep this document.

We are conducting this research to better understand team and club culture in community rugby. Responses will be used to develop new programs, which clubs can use to increase participation and create a culture where everyone feels welcome. Your answers will help with this and it is greatly appreciated.

What does the research involve?

We will ask you some multiple choice questions about different topics, including club and team culture and how different kinds of people and behaviour are viewed. This survey should take around 10-15 minutes. **Your responses will be completely anonymous. We will not ask for your name.** Your responses will not be seen by anyone from your team, club, or by officials from Rugby. Your responses will only be seen by researchers from Monash University and will be combined with the responses from others. **Participation is voluntary.** There are no consequences if you choose not to participate or answer some questions. Simply skip questions or hand the survey back blank.

Risks/Benefits

You will be helping rugby increase participation and grow. We will conduct this survey twice during the 2018 season. If you agree to participate in both surveys, you will have a chance of winning a \$100 Visa card per team. Some questions contain words taken from newspapers that you may find offensive, but should cause you no more discomfort than could be caused by reading a newspaper.

Use and storage of Data

All data collected in the study will be kept completely confidential. We will not be collecting any personal information. It will not be possible to withdraw from this research once surveys are collected; we won't be able to identify your responses. You do not have to answer any questions. All of the data will be collated, statistically analysed, and may be shared in many ways including at research conferences, journal articles, a thesis, and industry resources. The raw data will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations. Completed surveys will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked office, and then entered into a statistical system for analysis. The raw digital data will be stored in a password protected file. Only the researchers will have access. The surveys and digital files will be permanently deleted at the completion of this research. If you would like to be notified when the results are released, please contact the researchers.

Complaints or Concerns

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research, please contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics on 9905 2052 or by email muhrec@monash.edu.

YOUR ANSWERS ARE ANONYMOUS & CONFIDENTIAL: PLEASE DO NOT TALK WITH OTHERS

Age Home Postcode Country of birth
Birth City/Town

1. Ethnicity White Euro ☐ Maori ☐ Samoan ☐ Fijian ☐ Tongan ☐ Other:

2. Orientation Straight ☐ Gay ☐ Bisexual ☐ Unsure ☐ Not listed ☐

3. Years playing rugby 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ + ☐

4. Years at this club 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ + ☐

5. Normal position Forward? ☐ Back? ☐

6. Brother or sister play? Y ☐ N ☐

7. Did you attend the diversity training by the Rebels? Y ☐ N ☐

8. What was it about (main subject)?

How many of your close friends are....

Religious minorities (e.g. Muslim) 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ + ☐

Gay (males) 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ + ☐

Ethnic minorities (e.g. Samoan, Chinese) 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ + ☐

How would you describe yourself? Choose a number between the words. (e.g. athlete? Choose 6)

Not Religious 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ Very Religious

Non-athlete 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ Athlete

How much do you agree with the statements below?

| | Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Diversity makes teams strong (players from all backgrounds) | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| Homosexual players would <u>feel</u> welcome on our team | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| Ethnic minorities (e.g. Samoan, Tongan, African) would <u>feel</u> welcome on our team | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| In the past month, diversity has become <u>more</u> important to everyone on our team (more than before) | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| Rugby would be <u>more fun</u> without jokes about gay people | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| Rugby would be <u>more fun</u> without jokes about race/ethnicity | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| I am confident I <u>would</u> stop others bullying a gay teammate | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| I think the training by the Rebels on diversity is important | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| My teammates think the Rebels training is important | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| I support education programs to make rugby more welcoming | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |
| Even if we get <u>less</u> , more should be <u>spent</u> on women's rugby | 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> | |

What percentage of your teammates would be critical of you (think/act negatively) if you....

| | 0 | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100 |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Arrived at a game late | 0 <input type="radio"/> | 1 <input type="radio"/> | 2 <input type="radio"/> | 3 <input type="radio"/> | 4 <input type="radio"/> | 5 <input type="radio"/> | 6 <input type="radio"/> | 7 <input type="radio"/> | 8 <input type="radio"/> | 9 <input type="radio"/> | 10 <input type="radio"/> |
| Did not eat well before a game | 0 <input type="radio"/> | 1 <input type="radio"/> | 2 <input type="radio"/> | 3 <input type="radio"/> | 4 <input type="radio"/> | 5 <input type="radio"/> | 6 <input type="radio"/> | 7 <input type="radio"/> | 8 <input type="radio"/> | 9 <input type="radio"/> | 10 <input type="radio"/> |
| Lost concentration during a game | 0 <input type="radio"/> | 1 <input type="radio"/> | 2 <input type="radio"/> | 3 <input type="radio"/> | 4 <input type="radio"/> | 5 <input type="radio"/> | 6 <input type="radio"/> | 7 <input type="radio"/> | 8 <input type="radio"/> | 9 <input type="radio"/> | 10 <input type="radio"/> |
| Insulted the captain with a joke | 0 <input type="radio"/> | 1 <input type="radio"/> | 2 <input type="radio"/> | 3 <input type="radio"/> | 4 <input type="radio"/> | 5 <input type="radio"/> | 6 <input type="radio"/> | 7 <input type="radio"/> | 8 <input type="radio"/> | 9 <input type="radio"/> | 10 <input type="radio"/> |

How confident are you... that you can do each of these things today?

| | No Confidence | | | | | | | | | | Very Confident | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Arrive at games on time | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Focus 100% during games | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Eat properly before games | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |

When you think of gay men, as a group, what words describe your feelings? (pick a point between words)

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| Respect | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Disapprove |
| Negative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Positive |
| Friendly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Hostile |
| Trusting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Suspicious |
| Dislike | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Admire |

How much do you agree with the statements below?

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | Strongly Agree | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|---|---|----------------|--|--|--|--|
| Sex between two men is just plain wrong | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | |
| I think male homosexuals are disgusting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | |
| Homosexuality is a <i>natural</i> expression of sexuality in men | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | |
| I would <u>not be</u> comfortable if a teammate was homosexual | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | |
| It's okay to make jokes about gay people if they can't hear | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | |
| It's okay to make jokes about people's race if they can't hear | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | |
| Jokes/banter about <u>all</u> people is <u>normal</u> on my team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | |

Please be honest it is very important.In the past 2 weeks... How often have the people below used words like fag, homo, poof? (any reason)

| | Never | 1-2 times | 3-4 times | 5-6 times | 7+ times |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Friends (not involved in rugby) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Teammates in rugby | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Players from other clubs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Coaches/officials | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Family members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

In the past 2 weeks... How often have you used words like fag, homo, poof, with these people? (any reason)

| | Never | 1-2 times | 3-4 times | 5-6 times | 7+ times |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Friends (not involved in rugby) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Teammates in rugby | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Players from other clubs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Coaches/officials | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Family members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

What percentage of your teammates would be critical of you (think or act negatively) if you....

| | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Made a joke about gay people | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Called an opponent a 'fag' in a game | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Did not talk with a teammate because people thought he was gay | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

How confident are you that you can (today)....

| | No Confidence | Very Confident |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| React negatively (e.g. dirty look) if a teammate used negative language <u>about gay people</u> such as fag, poof | 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | |
| Show a teammate that you don't think jokes about gay people are funny (e.g. by not laughing) | 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | |
| Tell a teammate that negative language about gay people is not okay with you | 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | |

In the past 2 weeks.... How often have you used words about the race/ethnicity about OTHER PEOPLE's race/ethnicity, with the people below? Not words about your own race. Words like abbo, monkey, chink, FOB.

| | Never | 1-2 times | 3-4 times | 5-6 times | 7+ times |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Friends (not involved in rugby) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Teammates in rugby | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Players from other clubs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Coaches/officials | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Family members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Beyond the last two weeks... In the past year while involved in Rugby, have you....

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| Heard negative or disrespectful words, even if unintended, about race/ethnicity? (e.g. coconut, monkey, chink, FOB) | Y | N |
| Heard <i>negative</i> or disrespectful words (even if unintended) about gay people like fag or poof | Y | N |
| Been called negative or disrespectful racial/ethnic words by players from <u>other</u> races/ethnicities (even if unintended)? | Y | N |
| Been called negative or disrespectful words like fag, poof by other players | Y | N |

What percentage of your teammates do you think would agree:

| | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| It's okay to make jokes about gay people if they can't hear the jokes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| It's okay to make jokes about other people's race if they can't hear the jokes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| It's okay to make jokes about women if they can't hear the jokes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

What percentage of your teammates would be critical of you if you....

| | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Made a joke about race or ethnicity | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Called an opponent a racial name in a game such as 'monkey, abbo' | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Did not talk with a teammate because of his race or ethnicity | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

How confident are you that you can

| | No Confidence | | | | | | | | | | Very Confident | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| React negatively (e.g. dirty look) if a teammate used negative language <u>about race/ethnicity</u> . | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Show a teammate that you don't think jokes about race or ethnicity are funny (e.g. by not laughing) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tell a teammate that negative language about race or ethnicity is not okay with you | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |

How influential (important) to your team's culture are the people below?

| | No Influence | | | | | | | | | | Very Influential | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Head Coach | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Assistant Coaches | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Most talented player | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Captain | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |

What was the training by the Rebels about? The Rebels talked to our team about....

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| The need to grow rugby | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| The benefits of diversity on a team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| The harm caused by negative language about gay people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| The harm caused by negative language about race/ethnicity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |

How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| The Rebels training made me think about language differently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| The Rebels training was a waste of time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| The Rebels training changed the way I think about the language used about gay people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| The Rebels training made me care more about gay people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| Using words like 'poof' and 'fag' in rugby is wrong | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| I did not learn anything new from the Rebels training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| The Rebels training changed the way I think about the language used about race and ethnicity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| The Rebels training made me care more about other races | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |
| I would recommend the Rebels training to others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | |

We are interested in any other thoughts you have to share:

Appendix 2 – Review of research on behaviours

Objective of Systematic Review

The review aimed to answer the following questions

1. To what extent do LGB people experience prejudice and discrimination in sport?
2. What is the strength of the empirical evidence of prejudice and discrimination toward sexual minorities in sport?
3. Are there gaps in the evidence, such as in relation to sub-sets of the LGB population?

Search method

Searches were conducted using EBSCO (incl. SPORTDiscus), ProQuest, and Web of Science databases. Searches were also conducted using Google Scholar and Google, with the first 20 pages of results from each search engine reviewed. No time limit was used.

Research repositories managed by governments were also searched (e.g. Australian Clearinghouse for Sport, Canadian Sport Information Resource Centre) along with the resource sections of large sport-related LGBTQ+ organisations (e.g. Federation of Gay Games, Stonewall, Fare Network). Key researchers in the field were also sent the final inclusion list and asked to identify studies missed.

The search subject terms used are a combination of the following: (attitudes OR beliefs OR stereotype* OR hostility OR comfort OR antigay OR homophob* OR discrimination OR abuse OR stigma OR prejudice OR homonegati* OR heterosex*) AND (gay OR lesbian OR bisexual OR LGB* OR "sexual minority") AND (sport* OR athlet* OR "Physical Education" OR Gym OR "physical exercise") AND (survey OR research OR study OR statistics OR investigation OR examination).

Types of studies included

- A. Research conducted in English

B. Studies which contain empirical measures of prejudice and discrimination toward or experienced by sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual) in sport.

Main outcome(s)

A. Empirical measurements of prejudicial attitudes against LGB people in sport contexts.

B. Empirical measurements of discriminatory behaviour against LGB people in sport contexts.

Data extraction (selection and coding)

PRISMA guidelines were used to guide selection and extraction. Records identified via database searches or other sources were first subjected to title and abstract screening by one reviewer. Full text articles were then screened by a second two reviewers (author of this thesis and a research assistant). All discrepancies were resolved by discussion.

Data was extracted from all included studies using a standardised template by the author of this thesis, then checked for accuracy through random selection by the second reviewer. Extracted information included: author(s), year of publication, journal name, publication title, type of publication (e.g. peer reviewed journal article, book, government report), country/region, sample size and characteristics (e.g. age, gender/sex, sexuality), sport(s) examined (e.g. rugby, soccer), study design, measures used (including information about validation), definitions and measures used for prejudice and discrimination, prevalence statistics (e.g. percentages, mean scores), and uncertainty information (e.g. 95% confidence intervals, standard errors).

Appendix 3 – Review of research on interventions

Objective of Systematic Review

The review aimed to answer the following questions

1. What methods are currently being used in western countries to address homophobic behaviour in team sport settings?
2. What is the impact or effect of current methods?
3. Are there gaps in the evidence?

Search method

Searches were conducted using EBSCO (incl. SPORTDiscus), ProQuest, and Web of Science databases. Searches will also be conducted using Google Scholar and Google, with the first 20 pages of results from each search engine reviewed. No time limit was used. Research repositories managed by governments were also searched (e.g. Australian Clearinghouse for Sport, Canadian Sport Information Resource Centre) along with the resource sections of large sport-related LGBTQ+ organisations (e.g. Federation of Gay Games, Stonewall, Fare Network).

The search subject terms used are a combination of the following: (antigay OR homophob* OR discrimination OR abuse OR stigma OR prejudice OR homonegati* OR heterosex*) AND (gay OR lesbian OR bisexual OR LGB* OR "sexual minority") AND (sport* OR athlet* OR "Physical Education" OR Gym OR "physical exercise") AND (educat* OR intervention OR training OR course).

Key researchers in the field were also contacted, as well as key advocacy organisations and government agencies, and asked if they were aware of any research or studies. This list included various Victorian government agencies, Sport Australia, ViaSport (Canada), Sport England, Pride Sport (UK), Pride Cup, Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport, You Can Play, and Athlete Ally.

Types of studies and evidence included

A. Research conducted in English

B. Published studies which empirically measures changes to homophobic behaviours in sport from the intervention.

Main outcome(s)

A. Empirical measurements of change to discriminatory behaviour against LGB people in sport contexts.

Data extraction (selection and coding)

PRISMA guidelines were used to guide selection and extraction. Records identified via database searches or other sources were subjected to title and abstract screening by the author of this thesis. No studies were found, thus there was no need for data extraction.

Appendix 4 – Intervention script

| Section | Purpose | Content |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Introduction | Introduce topic of diversity and how it relates to growing the sport, identify leaders in the group | <p>- Share that you are there to ask for their help to make the game even better</p> <p>- Grow participation, make all feel welcome</p> <p>Share that you are there to <u>ask for their help to make the game even better</u>, grow participation, make all feel welcome</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does everyone want to grow the sport? • Do you want everyone to feel welcome to play the game? |
| Section 1 | Establish the value of diversity in rugby to team performance/cohesion. Demonstrate acceptable forms of banter through traditional rugby stereotypes (back line players are fast and stylish; forwards are slow and like to eat) | <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are people from? (Samoa, NZ, Aus) • Who is the fastest in the room? • Who is the joker? • Who is the best prop? • What would happen if everyone was a prop? Wing? Good team? • Why is diversity better? • How does it help? <p>Critical: Make point that <u>a good</u> team is diverse. Strong evidence that diverse teams are better.</p> |
| Section 2 | Introduce how homophobic language use, or any discriminatory banter, is counterproductive to diversity. Educate about the harm. Role model disapproval. Highlight misperception that everyone approves of | <p>- Share personal stories about how language made you feel unwelcome and how you used the language yourself; express regret</p> <p>- Highlight how racist language is not as common anymore but homophobic is (potential questions: has anyone experienced racist language? How did it feel)</p> <p>- Talk about homophobic being harmful (5x higher suicide)</p> |

| | | |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | language to shift norms. | <p>- Ask if anyone would want to harm their teammate?</p> <p>Critical: How many of you would support a mate if he was struggling and thinking of leaving team or hurting himself? (raise hands)</p> |
| Conclusion | Teach new ways to react negatively to language used by others, build confidence to react negatively in future | <p>- The easiest thing you can do is stop language is not react</p> <p>- If you hear something, don't laugh, give a frown</p> <p>- If you feel confident you can say something</p> <p>- Demonstrate how to do this</p> <p>Let's make rugby the best sport.</p> |

Appendix 5 - Per-Protocol Analysis Results – Intervention

Generalised estimating equation results - effect of intervention on T2 dependent variables

Per-Protocol – excluded data from teams where discussion did not occur as planned

| Homophobic lang. use <i>N</i> = 128 / <i>N</i> teams = 10 | | | | Acceptability of lang. <i>N</i> = 127 / <i>N</i> teams =10 | | | Descriptive norms <i>N</i> = 127 / <i>N</i> teams = 10 | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| | <i>Est</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>Est</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>Est</i> | <i>95% CI</i> | <i>p</i> |
| <i>Intervention condition</i> | 0.05 | -0.24 – 0.33 | .749 | 0.17 | -0.04 – 0.38 | 0.117 | 0.19 | -0.19 – 0.56 | 0.331 |
| <i>Time 1 score</i> | 0.37 | 0.17– 0.56 | <0.001 | 0.21 | -0.12 – 0.29 | <0.001 | 0.29 | 0.20 – 0.37 | <0.001 |
| <i>Club size</i> | 0.17 | -0.10 – 0.44 | 0.214 | 0.05 | -0.18 - 0.28 | 0.677 | 0.33 | -0.16 – 0.82 | 0.183 |
| <i>Cohens d</i> | 0.04 | -.20 - .27 | | 0.13 | -0.03 – 0.29 | | 0.15 | -0.15 – 0.44 | |
| Proscriptive injunctive norms <i>N</i> = 125 / <i>N</i> teams =10 | | | | Prescriptive injunctive norms <i>N</i> = 107 / <i>N</i> teams = 9 ^a | | | Exploratory Homophobic Attitudes <i>N</i> = 118 / <i>N</i> teams = 10 | | |
| <i>Intervention condition</i> | -0.03 | -.83 – 0.88 | 0.951 | 0.49 | -0.40 – 1.38 | 0.279 | -0.10 | -2.11 – 1.92 | 0.925 |
| <i>Time 1 score</i> | 0.34 | 0.14 – 0.53 | <0.001 | 0.20 | 0.03 - 0.37 | 0.024 | 0.66 | -1.60 – 2.91 | 0.568 |
| <i>Team size</i> | -0.27 | -1.50 - 0.96 | 0.671 | 0.56 | -0.12 – 1.23 | 0.108 | -0.09 | -1.96 - 1.78 | 0.924 |
| <i>Cohens d</i> | 0.01 | -0.29 – 0.30 | | 0.19 | -0.15 – 0.53 | | -0.08 | -1.67 – 1.52 | |

Note: ^asurvey misprint omitted question from one treatment club (two teams) at T1

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Key documents can also be found at: <https://outonthefields.com/evidence-timeline>

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