

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Faculty of Business, Law and Sport

**Changing times: discovering how openly lesbian athletes
navigate team sport**

Rachael Anna Bullingham

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2015

This thesis has been completed as a requirement for a postgraduate
research degree of the University of Winchester.

Access Agreement

I agree to supply a copy of my thesis to the University of Winchester Library and an e-copy to the Data Repository.

I agree that my thesis may be copied on demand by individuals or libraries.

Title: Changing times: Discovering how openly lesbian athletes navigate team sport

Author: Rachael Bullingham

Supervisors: Professor Eric Anderson, Dr. Stewart Cotterill, Elwyn Cox

Keywords: Sexuality, Homophobia, Homophobia, Sport, Lesbians

Copyright © R.Bullingham (2016) 'Changing times: discovering how openly lesbian athletes navigate team sport' , University of Winchester, PhD Thesis, pagination, ORCID 0000-00002-1940-3008.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement. Copies (by any process) either in full, or of extracts, may be made only in accordance with instructions given by the author. Details may be obtained from the RKE Centre, University of Winchester.

This page must form part of any such copies made. Further copies (by any process) of copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the permission (in writing) of the author.

No profit may be made from selling, copying or licensing the author's work without further agreement.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning.

I confirm that this thesis is entirely my own work.

Copyright in text of this thesis rests with the author. Copies (by any process) either in full, or of extracts, may be made **only** in accordance with instructions given by the author. Details may be obtained from the RKE Office. This page must form any part of any such copies made. Further copies (by any process) of copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the permission (in writing) of the author.

Where issues of Intellectual Property arise, these should be addressed in accordance with the University's Intellectual Property Policy and an appropriate comment defining ownership should be included immediately following the Declaration and Copyright statements listed above.

Acknowledgements

My family and friends have offered unrelenting support throughout the process of my PhD. I read a book before starting my PhD that suggested people would get bored of asking how the project was progressing, what stage you were at and when it would be finished. I have enjoyed an entirely different experience. My family and friends have never stopped asking, never stopped supporting - and on those days when everything seemed impossible, there they were with words of encouragement. Particular thanks must go to Rachael Waters, Lotty, Jennie and Ashley for their ability to keep me laughing and smiling throughout the process.

Numerous friends have assisted with proofreading my thesis and I cannot thank them enough for the time that they have sacrificed on my behalf. So thank you to Steph and David for helping me put those commas in the right places and for giving up so many hours of their time. Adam and Rory have helped me throughout the process with regular welfare checks, as well as reading through drafts at short notice; I hope that one day I can return the favour. Their brutal, occasionally funny comments, helped keep me on task and I have no doubt that they have helped me become a better writer.

This year at Worcester my colleagues have been exceptionally supportive when I have hidden away to write, supplying words of encouragement when I needed them most. I am exceptionally grateful for the time that they have afforded me this year.

Finally, and most importantly, are the two people who have been integral to me completing this PhD. Eric has been the most supportive supervisor anyone could ask for; he has always been at the end of the phone when I have needed guidance and his feedback has undoubtedly made me a better researcher. He has pushed me throughout the process and I have learnt more than I could ever imagine. I cannot thank him enough for the support, guidance and time that he has afforded me.

Lastly, I must thank my partner Josephine. She has been there on good days and bad days with her unrelenting support. From the day we started talking about the potential of me starting a PhD, to the day it was handed in, she has motivated and believed in me. She has not once complained about me working every weekend and

every holiday throughout the four years it took me to complete this. In short, I would not have achieved this without her and for that I am forever grateful. Thank you.

Abstract

Research on lesbian athletes' experiences is dated, with the majority being conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s. However, the 1980s represent a unique socio-cultural period, one Anderson (2009b) describes as homohysteria. Thus, as society has become more inclusive in previous generations, including within women's sport (Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013) and men's sport (Anderson 2000, 2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2009b, 2011a; Adams & Anderson 2011) there is a need to reconsider the relationship between homophobia and sport.

Semi-structured interviews from 31 lesbian athletes (from beginner to international standard players) were analysed using the coding procedures within Charmaz' approach to grounded theory (Charmaz 2006). Results were subsequently applied to the adapted model of homohysteria (Anderson 2009b; Worthen 2014). Memos were used throughout the coding procedure to aid reflexivity and to ensure that results were grounded in data.

Results show athletes competing in a positive environment, gaining support from teammates and coaches. Social situations were fully inclusive, including attending socials in LGBT friendly bars, demonstrating that fear surrounding the lesbian label has declined. Language has helped to develop this inclusive atmosphere; talking about sexuality has been shown to negate the environment of silence formerly experienced by lesbian athletes.

This change in environment has changed how athletes 'come out'. No longer do athletes need to prepare a statement; in fact coming out has become something of a non-event. Some athletes were even able to demonstrate an improvement in their professional lives, due to the diminished requirement to conceal their (homo)sexuality. However, some athletes still shunned the lesbian label, not through fear but by deeming it an unimportant facet of their individuality. Additionally, players' athletic capital had no effect on their acceptance within the team, with the exception of international athletes.

Participants faced very limited incidence of homophobia, but in those cases where homophobia was experienced, they would actively challenge the negative behaviour or language, as would their teammates. The supportive environment extended to providing advice and comfort to any athletes struggling with the process of coming out. In addition, participants in some cases became role models for their teammates.

While the majority of the results were positive, there remained room for improvement in certain areas. There is still clear evidence that the environment has not changed for all athletes and there remain some areas to be addressed by sporting administrations. Old stereotypes of the predatory lesbian or the affective nature of sport on sexuality were raised by participants but tended to refer to historic events (over 10 years old).

List of Contents

Part 1

Chapter 1:	Introduction	8
Chapter 2:	The History of Women's Sport	19
Chapter 3:	Sport as a Homophobic Institution	40
Chapter 4:	Overview of Gender and Sexuality Concepts	63
Chapter 5:	Changing Climates	79
Chapter 6:	Approaches of Grounded Theory	97
Chapter 7:	Methodological Literature	115
Chapter 8:	Methodology Framework	130

Part 2

Chapter 9:	Team Climates	140
Chapter 10:	Declining Homophobia	157
Chapter 11:	Coming out of the Glass Closet	176
Chapter 12:	Homophobia in Women's Sport	191
Chapter 13:	The Declining Effect of Trailblazers & Supporting Torchbearers	206
Chapter 14:	Room for Improvement	222
Chapter 15:	Discussion	232

List of References	255
---------------------------	-----

Appendix 1	Memos	271
Appendix 2	Interview schedule	281
Appendix 3	Coding example	283
Appendix 4	Ethical consent	315

Chapter 1: Introduction

Tennis champion Martina Navratilova was outed in 1982, when a newspaper article about her sexuality was published without her consent (Griffin 2014). As a result, Navratilova promptly lost considerable sponsorship income, and regularly endured homophobia whenever she stepped out on court (Hargreaves 2000; Forman & Plymire 2005; Griffin 2014). She became a cautionary tale for all gay and lesbian athletes - come out at your peril. Anderson (2009b: 7) describes this time period as 'homohysteric,' a cultural zeitgeist in which people expressed an overwhelming and irrational 'fear of being homosexualized' through the wrong 'doing' of gender. It was a time period epitomized by cultural antipathy toward homosexuality. This appeared to play out in the print media, when Navratilova and Evert's battles on the court were serialised in the media as beauty (Evert) versus the beast (Navratilova) (Griffin 2014). The muscularity that Navratilova demonstrated subjected her to even higher levels of homophobia, with her physique constantly portrayed as a symbol of her sexuality (Hargreaves 2000; Forman & Plymire 2005; Griffin 2014).

By contrast, when Amelie Mauresmo came out in 1999, her sponsors *Nike* actively encouraged her to present a muscular image, even designing revealing clothing with the specific aim of emphasising her physique (Forman & Plymire 2005). This was a period of contestation of homophobia. While the media's coverage of Mauresmo was homophobic (Hargreaves 2000), the reaction of the crowd at matches was mostly positive. Martina Hingis, at the time known as the golden girl of tennis, made disparaging comments about Mauresmo (Krane & Barber 2003). When the two met at the 1999 French Open, the crowd jeered Hingis for her homophobia and cheered for their national tennis superstar, Mauresmo (Krane & Barber 2003). Although this was a minor shift, it demonstrated a clear shift in acceptance of homosexuality since the exposé of Navratilova in the 1980s. In the 1980s, homosexuality was stigmatized; by the turn of the millennia, it was homophobia that was viewed negatively.

I was greatly affected by these examples; I was born the year Navratilova came out and left school the year following Mauresmo's coming out at the Australian Open. From a very early age, I was acutely aware of my own sexuality and that I was

different. I was lucky enough to attend one of the top public schools in the country, where regular participation was an expectation and sporting excellence was the norm. However, I also realised the necessity to present an overtly heterosexual image. Such a presentation is essential in a homohysterical environment. It is necessary to avoid any suspicion of homosexuality and this overtly heterosexual image is required within hostile environments (Cahn 1994b; Hargreaves 1994; Engh 2011). I even went to such an extent to publicly present as straight, by acknowledging the existence of a boyfriend. This was necessary, as I vividly recall, as comments would otherwise be made concerning individual's (homo)sexuality. Such comments were always negative.

I based my choice of university predominately on location; I thought being in London would enable me to finally express my sexuality. I assumed that there would be some LGBT advocates on a campus designated for sports scholars. However, I found the complete opposite to be true – I found studying sports within a sports-based environment to be overtly homophobic, even when homosexuality was becoming increasingly accepted by society (Lenskyj 2003). The hockey club of which I was a member throughout my degree was exceptionally hostile, to the extent that players did not acknowledge the existence of any lesbians on the team. This hostile environment deteriorated further when two female players were caught kissing while intoxicated at a Christmas social event. The backlash of this episode resulted in even higher levels of homophobia, with the members of the club insisting that a strict policy of silence was adhered to, in order to limit lesbian labelling and to ensure the effective policing of socio-sexual behaviour (Cahn 1994a). This resulted in the incident not being discussed openly; it was clear that any lesbian activity was not tolerated within the club.

The concept of divergent environments was developed by Griffin (1998), who noted three different levels of tolerance for lesbian athletes in her research on American collegiate athletes, namely *hostile*, *conditionally tolerant* and *open and inclusive*. This hostile environment continued until the end of my first year at university when the climate shifted to one of conditional tolerance, where lesbians are tolerated but not acknowledged (Griffin 1998). The conditionally tolerant environment has been

dubbed the 'glass closet' by Griffin (1998) or 'don't ask, don't tell' by Anderson (2002).

This attitudinal shift could be attributed to the increasing number of lesbians who played for the team after the team captain had come out. Anderson (2008) refers to this process as the top-down effect, where athletes are almost entirely influenced by the leaders, be it the coach or the captain. Additionally, the captain became a trailblazer, showing the 'window' to the other side for athletes like myself, who remained closeted (Fink *et al* 2012). Thus, the importance of trailblazers in research is salient; if the athlete is accepted, then there is a safe passage for others to follow out of the closet (Griffin 1998; Hargreaves 2000; Anderson 2002; Fink *et al* 2012). However, research has also shown that in environments where homophobia is present, it is more likely that an athlete will be accepted if they have high athletic capital and are therefore integral to the team's success (Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). This was something that I witnessed at university, where acceptance was significantly more likely if the athlete was a regular starter in the first team.

For me, the shift to an open and inclusive environment occurred when I joined a local rugby team while completing my undergraduate degree. It was the first time that I had seen and met lesbians who were open about their identity as well as heterosexual teammates who were accepting of their lesbian teammates. However, there was still a perceived need for my heterosexual teammates to demonstrate overtly heterosexual behaviour, particularly towards the club's men's team, when out socially. This maintenance of heteronormativity has been documented by Jackson (2006), where normative behaviour is displayed to ensure that women stay within gendered expectations. While I was witnessing this positive change, I was simultaneously completing my undergraduate degree dissertation on women's rugby. It was during this time that I became aware of the dearth of literature either monitoring or describing this change.

Having completed my undergraduate degree in London, I moved to Loughborough to complete an MSc in Sports Sociology. At Loughborough, my studies maintained a focus on women in sport, but moved away from issues of homosexual acceptance.

Having completed my dissertation based on a media analysis of Ellen MacArthur's world record sailing voyage, I moved onto teacher training in Gloucestershire, then subsequently started my career as a Physical Education teacher in a large comprehensive school.

Throughout my eight years of teaching, I witnessed pupils coming out and not facing any homophobia, coupled with more liberal attitudes from staff and pupils. Furthermore, students were becoming more tactile; boys regularly hugged and leant on each other, even kissing one another, as is outlined in the works of Anderson and McCormack (Anderson *et al* 2012; Anderson & McCormack 2015). Boys in my class were happy to flirt and be tactile with one another and bromances (Anderson 2014) were evident. This shift in behaviour in young men has been examined both in schools and within university settings, where men are seen to enjoy close and loving relationships with each other without facing suspicion of homosexuality (McCormack & Anderson 2010a, 2010b; Anderson 2011b; Anderson *et al* 2011).

Based on my experiences in the classroom, I began to analyse the potential reasons for this change. Mark McCormack's research (McCormack & Anderson 2010a, 2010b; McCormack 2012; McCormack 2014) on declining homophobia in schools confirmed what I was witnessing with the pupils I taught. However, it was not simply within schools that change was occurring; television programmes like *Bad Girls and Lip Service* were portraying lesbian role models and British soaps started to employ more gay and lesbian characters. Additionally, homosexual celebrities, both in England and in America, were becoming high profile and remain so today. These observations reignited my interest in homophobia in women's sport.

In 2011, I met Professor Eric Anderson; I explained the changes that I was witnessing within educational and sporting settings. He talked me through his findings on masculinity in sport and the changes he has researched in openly gay male athletes (Anderson 2002, 2005a, 2009b, 2011a). Professor Anderson confirmed that what I was witnessing in school was happening in male sporting culture too. I examined the literature surrounding women's sport and found that there was a clear shortage of research, with only a few articles published since the turn of the century, with these either restricted to American athletes (Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013)

or adopting a post-structuralist perspective (Caudwell 1999, 2006, 2007; Drury 2011; Roy 2013; Tredway 2014) - an approach that differs from my social constructivist position. This series of events culminated in my choice to craft a research proposal involving the experiences of 'out' British lesbian women in sport.

Researcher's journey

Throughout my journey through higher education, I have reflected upon and developed my researcher's position. In my undergraduate and postgraduate research projects, I developed an understanding of how ontology and epistemology affect the approach to a research project. While I have adopted an interpretivist approach to all my research dissertations, the research methods modules I undertook during my PhD helped me examine the researcher's position.

My sociological imagination has developed throughout the time I have been writing my thesis and my views on sport and society have correspondingly changed throughout the four years. My initial conversations with my supervisor Professor Eric Anderson about sport focused on my own emotions, unfounded ideas and opinions. However, during the first year of my PhD, I read *The Social Construction of Reality* by Berger and Luckmann (1966) and this started to challenge me as a sociologist. No longer were my arguments emotive, but grounded in research and theory. I was able to challenge myself and others around me through my social constructivist approach, coupled with a post-feminist approach. O'Neill (2015: 102) provides a definition of the post-feminist position:

Postfeminism is to be understood as a social and cultural landscape marked by a new kind of antifeminist sentiment quite different from earlier backlashes against the (real and apparent) gains made by feminism in the 1970s and 1980s.

This approach views feminism as outdated and recognises the significance of steps made to improve gender equality (O'Neill 2015).

Although Berger and Luckmann (1966: 77) were not referring specifically to sport, it helped me view sport as a social institution: 'Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product.' Additionally, as Deutsch (2007: 107) explains, 'gender is an ongoing emergent aspect of social interaction.' Combined with the notion that sport is a near-total institution (Anderson 2010), it became apparent to me that sport was socially constructed, with its norms reproduced by all stakeholders.

Berger and Luckmann helped to develop not only my sociological imagination but also proved particularly useful in completing research methods assignments. My second research methods module was a presentation on the underlying assumption of my research. The process of developing the presentation proved exceptionally helpful when considering my approach to this study. This systematic approach, highlighting my ontological and epistemological position, had a significant impact on this study. My ontological stance is that of constructivism, based on the assumption that individuals create multiple truths. My epistemological position is interpretivist, where reality is socially constructed. Having developed my ontological and epistemological position, I was then able to move on to my methodological approach and my choice of methodology.

A large proportion of recent research on lesbians in sport has adopted a post-structuralist approach (Caudwell 2006, 2007; Drury 2011; Roy 2013; Tredway 2014; Hardy 2015). But I have elected to employ an ontological and epistemological position using social constructivism. Hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005) has been superseded by inclusive masculinity theory, yet this has not extended to a theory of inclusive femininity (Anderson 2009b). Therefore, a grounded theory approach to coding was chosen which is useful for developing understanding when considering a social institution (Goulding 1999). Again my ontological and epistemological approaches were important here as I considered which of (at least) three grounded theories to utilise: Glaser & Strauss, Strauss & Corbin or Charmaz. The Charmaz approach is an interpretivist approach and therefore linked most effectively to my theoretical standpoint. Melton and Cunningham (2014a) have shown that it is possible to use grounded theory, even when already well advanced within the area of research, as open-minded and effective coding principles can be used to apply results

to a theoretical standpoint after all the analysis has taken place. Likewise, Wignall and McCormack (2015) have shown that an adapted form of the Charmaz approach can be useful where potential theoretical frameworks already exist. In this study Charmaz's grounded theory was used and the results were applied to the concept of homophobia following the coding procedure.

Researching homophobia in sport

Most research on the experiences of lesbians, particularly in team sports, was carried out during the homophobic epoch of the 1980s and 1990s. The consensus of opinion was that organized team sports existed as highly homophobic organisational cultures (Linskyj 1986; Cahn 1994a, 1994b, 1994c; Hargreaves 1994; Griffin 1998; Hekma 1998; Sykes 1998; Veri 1999). Since the 1990s, research has been conducted from a poststructuralist perspective focusing on particular sports (Caudwell 2006, 2007; Drury 2011; Roy 2013; Tredway 2014; Hardy 2015). There is a more limited body of research in the UK examining a wide range of sports, unlike studies in the USA which encompass a fuller range (Fink *et al* 2012; Melton & Cunningham 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Consequently, this study aims to bridge that gap by examining a range of team sports in the United Kingdom, to discover whether a homophobic environment is still evident.

At the end of the 1980s, cultural homophobia was significantly higher than today in both the UK and USA (Anderson 2009b; Keleher & Smith 2012; Clements & Field 2014). In England, the Thatcher government augmented this homophobic climate by imposing Section 28, which banned the promotion of a homosexual lifestyle within schools (Epstein & Johnson 1998). Furthermore, there were no gay or lesbian role models on television, while the only role models in sport had been ostracised, losing sponsorship and being subjected to homophobia (Hargreaves 2000; Forman & Plymire 2005; Griffin 2014).

Attitudinal survey data in both England and America shows a steady decline in homophobia since the mid-1990s, however (Anderson 2009b; Keleher & Smith 2012; Clements & Field 2014). Numerous factors are behind this, one of which is the internet. Additionally, census data shows an increasing disassociation from religion

within the United Kingdom (Lee 2012), which has been shown to be an important factor in the gradual acceptance of LGBT people (Adams & Anderson 2011).

Since starting my thesis, numerous positive changes have been witnessed within both sport and society, which have augmented the need to update research into homophobia in sport. In women's sport, a steady number of lesbian athletes have come out of the closet, including Casey Stoney of the England Ladies football team, and Kate Walsh (captain) and Helen Richardson of the Great Britain hockey team, who have married one another. In men's sport, Robbie Rogers has become the first openly gay footballer to play professional football in the US. The USA has also seen I don't the first openly gay player drafted into the NFL (Michael Sam) as well as an openly gay basketball player playing in the NBA (Jason Collins). Perhaps the biggest name to come out in England is the diver Tom Daley, who unlike previous British athletes, elected to come out early in his career. In addition, traditionally masculine sports have also witnessed athletes come out, including Keegan Hirst (Rugby League), Gareth Thomas (Rugby League and Rugby Union) and Sam Stanley (Rugby Union).

These athletes represent a continuous positive shift for gay and lesbian athletes competing in the upper echelons of their chosen sport. Their visibility and acceptance represents a significant change in sporting culture which requires follow up research. Homophobia in men's sport has been significantly researched since Anderson's (2002) initial study. His research sparked an interest in homophobia in sport which gradually spread to other areas of society (Anderson 2002, 2005a, 2009b, 2011a, 2014; Southall *et al* 2009; Adams *et al* 2010; McCormack & Anderson 2010a, 2010b; Adams 2011; Cashmore & Cleland 2011; Adams & Anderson 2011; Cleland 2013; Magrath *et al* 2013; Michael 2013; Jarvis, 2013; McCormack 2012, 2014; Kian *et al* 2015; Magrath 2015). By contrast, research on women in a range of sports has not captured the interest of researchers to the same extent since the turn of the century (Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013) with most studies taking a poststructuralist approach. While poststructuralist research adds to the debate on lesbian women in sport, they have tended been limited to a team or sport. Specific areas of sport and physical education, such as lesbian football teams (Sykes 1996, 2004, 2009; Caudwell 1999, 2006, 2007; Drury 2011), women's surfing (Roy 2013), lesbian coaches (Krane & Barber 2005; Norman 2008, 2012), lesbian sports spaces

(Ravel & Rail 2007) and lesbian physical education teachers (Edwards *et al* 2014) have been studied, but there have been no studies of women's sport from a wider perspective. This study seeks to examine a range of team sports and address this gap in research on lesbian athletes in the United Kingdom.

Research Aims

This research has a number of objectives relating to lesbian athletes competing within team sports. I learnt the importance of formulating specific research aims that guide the project and are examined and revisited throughout the study. As part of my induction process, scholars outside of my supervisory team checked the aims and sub-aims of the research to ensure that they met the robust standards required of a doctoral research project. This rigorous process proved exceptionally useful in developing aims that were both achievable yet also suitably complex for a PhD project.

The primary aim of the study was to examine the types of homophobia experienced by openly lesbian athletes while competing within team sports. Additionally, this study examines how athletes navigate homophobia and/or heteronormativity within their teams. These aims were developed through the current literature on lesbian participation in sport, from a variety of research standpoints (Griffin 1998; Caudwell 1999, 2003, 2006).

The sub-aims of this research related to a more detailed analysis of the behaviours faced by lesbian women. This research investigated whether lesbian women faced homophobia from within the team, within the club or outside of the sporting arena. An analysis of the type and extent of homophobic behaviours faced by these women was carried out, including whether homophobia was deemed acceptable within these teams. In addition, I looked at coping strategies used by women who did face homophobia whilst competing for their teams. Finally, this research examined potential cohort differences between the women interviewed.

My Research

In total, 31 interviews were conducted either by telephone or face-to-face, as per the participant preference. A wide range of athletes were included in the study, with a higher incidence of participants from the major team sports of football, rugby and hockey. Less well-known sports were also covered. This allowed rich qualitative data from a range of different sporting contexts. Data analysis was carried out using an interpretivist grounded theory approach, using initial, focused and theoretical coding procedures. Having coded all the data in this way, the findings were then applied to the concept of homophobia. Grounded theory techniques were used to test if the concept of homophobia can be effectively applied to women in sport. Wignall and McCormack (2015) have shown how using grounded theory in this way is useful as a means of testing out existing theoretical frameworks. Melton and Cunningham (2014a) have demonstrated that grounded theory techniques can still be used successfully even when the researcher has prior knowledge of the topic area, providing that the researcher uses appropriate reflexivity. In this study, memos were used throughout the coding process to ensure reflexivity and to ensure that the findings were grounded in data (see appendix 1).

The findings from this study show a distinct shift away from the negativity of the homophobic 1980s and 1990s (Griffin 1998). There were four major themes addressed within the research:

- 1) development of a welcoming and supportive climate
- 2) the decline of homophobic attitudes and behaviours
- 3) the development of torchbearers (second generation athletes who are out; and
- 4) changes in the coming out process.

Some negative aspects of lesbian experience in sport were also found, although these were restricted to experiences of elite athletes or related to stereotypes held by outsiders.

This research provides an alternative to the post-structural perspective that is currently prevalent in research on lesbian participation in sport, as well as applying the theory of homophobia to empirical data on women in sport. While Worthen's (2014) adaptation of Anderson's (2009b) concept of homophobia has been useful, it

represented a theoretical development not based on empirical data. This study differs from this in that it provides an insight into lesbian athletes' participation in sport using grounded theory as a method and homophobia as a theoretical framework.

Chapter 2: History of Women's Sport

Introduction

In order to understand the treatment of female athletes, it is essential to develop an understanding of the foundations of modern sport. Looking at the history of women's sport necessitates examining men's sport, as women's sport evolved from men's. Sport is used a vehicle for reinforcing the gender binary, enabling the privilege of men to be exemplified and reinforced by positive sporting performance (Travers 2006). A historical analysis provides an insight into the profit made by some men from sport and how and why women were excluded from the foundations of contemporary sport.

Modern sport evolved from English public schools and flourished during the Industrial Revolution, becoming a social institution created by and for men (White & Vagi 1990). Modern sport operated as a 'shop window,' displaying all the male characteristics valued by society. Sport became a cultural institution, enabling men to compete and challenge for top spot within sporting hierarchy, which served as a reflection of society, where women were ignored or seen as irrelevant (Connell 2005). Sport allowed men to reinforce patriarchal values in the face of rising pressure from the feminist movement, which was gaining momentum in the first wave of feminism - though Caudwell (2011) has suggested that thinking in terms of 'waves' is not always relevant for analysing feminism in sport, since there has been an emphasis on the segregation of men and women from the first inception of sport.

Sport legitimises traits such as strength, power and aggression in male participants (Blinde & Taub 1992a, 1992b; McDonagh & Pappano 2008). Violent behaviours deemed unacceptable in other facets of society are adjudged to be socially acceptable on a sporting field. The extent of this institutionalised violence is summarised by Connell (1995: 58): 'Competitive sport obliges professional players to treat their bodies as instruments, even as weapons.' Sport provides a platform to reproduce behaviours hitherto associated with orthodox masculinity; it is therefore no place for a woman.

Sport is an institution that has allowed men to develop their masculinity and to thrive over lesser men and women (Adams *et al* 2005; McDonagh & Pappano 2008). The gender hierarchy within society is demonstrated and reinforced through sporting achievement and participation. Travers (2006: 432) emphasises the significance of sport, describing it as a 'key social lesson,' an essential means by which boys prove their masculinity. Sport is used within society to demonstrate sexual difference and to impose male domination (Grindstaff & West 2011), thereby reinforcing the subordinate role of women.

Similar comparisons can be made with sport in the United Kingdom. Women competing in sport not only challenge gender norms but also threaten a social institution that reinforces orthodox masculinity and male superiority. Sport allows men to demonstrate characteristics that reinforce (orthodox) masculinity. However, these traits are not considered appropriate for women and do not serve to emphasise or reinforce their femininity. Krane (2001: 117) identified characteristics that it is deemed appropriate for women to possess, including 'being emotional, passive, dependent, maternal, compassionate and gentle.' These characteristics are sometimes demonstrated in sports with a high aesthetic appeal, for example gymnastics or ice skating. Yet there are few sporting activities that allow women to demonstrate these 'appropriate' characteristics; most sports involve demonstrations of competitiveness, strength, power and athleticism, which are not deemed acceptable for women (Lenskyj 1991). Therefore, sport serves to highlight the clear gender expectations for both women and men.

Since sport has been defined as 'the last bastion of male domination,' (Burton Nelson 1994: 6) women participating in sport are challenging tradition from the outset, as they are seen to be interlopers within the (male) sporting institution. Women are imposing themselves on male territory, resulting either in the devaluation and sexualisation of their sporting performances (Kauer & Krane 2006), or framed as a lesser version of the 'real thing' (Griffin 1998). As Burton Nelson (1994: 63) notes: 'We don't just say that football is for boys and cheerleading is for girls. We say that to play football is more valuable than cheerleading...or anything girls do - more important, more interesting, more newsworthy: better.' It is for these reasons that women's participation in sport challenges its very foundation. Women face

unwanted negative attention because they are confronting the gendered structure of society (Cahn 1994a). Despite Cahn (1994a) and Burton Nelson's (1994) research focusing on the USA, sponsorship deals and media coverage show a comparative situation exists in the United Kingdom. The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (2012), for example, found that media coverage for women in non-Olympic years is just 5%, with women receiving just 0.5% of corporate sponsorship versus the 61.1% received by men's sport. These statistics give the impression that the United Kingdom sees women's sport as less important and less interesting than men's sport. Therefore, sport becomes embroiled in a negative cycle where men's sport is funded and receives media coverage yet women's sport is inadequately funded and due to poor media coverage, cannot attract the necessary sponsorship to make up the shortfall.

From a young age, just as boys are encouraged into sport to develop masculinity, girls are discouraged from participation to avoid them behaving in unfeminine and therefore socially unacceptable ways. While boys' participation in sport affirms their masculinity and thereby their heterosexuality, women who excel at sport challenge concepts of femininity and a lesbian identity is assumed (Griffin 1998; Cox & Thompson 2001; Lenskyj 2003; Travers 2006; McDonagh & Pappano 2008). Burton Nelson (1994) explains that girls growing up in the USA receive a clear message that sports do not promote femininity and therefore playing sports opens you to accusations of being a tomboy, or worse, a lesbian. Therefore, by playing sport, particularly team sports, women cross gender boundaries; consequently, their heterosexuality is questioned and lesbianism may be assumed (Griffin 1998; Veri 1999; Cox & Thompson 2001; Lenskyj 2003). Travers (2006: 432) summarises this cultural assumption: 'For women, however, homophobia is a tool of sexism in restricting women's access to athlete development and participation in sport. Homophobia equates female athletic accomplishment with lesbianism.' This stereotype is accentuated by figures showing that lesbian women are over-represented in contact and traditionally masculine sports (Elling & Janssens 2009). Yet, as Elling and Janssen (2009: 82) point out: 'The data also shows that non-heterosexual women participate to a much larger extent in individual sport activities like fitness, swimming and (speed) cycling, similar to straight women.' So although lesbian participation shows an overrepresentation in team sports, this is only a

partial picture. Non-heterosexual women participate in a wide range of sports and recreational activities, including both individual and team sports, but this statistic is ignored in favour of propagating stereotypes. Stereotypes of male and female roles have been embedded within sport since its inception, as it was specifically designed by and for men. Therefore, women challenge traditional gender stereotypes by simply participating in sports at all.

Modern sport allows men the opportunity to demonstrate characteristics that reinforce their masculinity and heterosexuality and accordingly their power over women. By contrast; women who participate in competitive team sport challenge the gender norms augmented by their male counterparts. This gender hierarchy can be traced back to the origins of contemporary sport in the elite British educational system of the 1800s.

Public schools develop masculinity

English public schools developed and rationalised participation in numerous team sports. Initially sport was used as a form of social control, but was later used to develop moral integrity (Crosset 1990). Public schools nurtured and educated the leaders of the British Empire; old boys (ex-students) became doctors, lawyers, teachers, missionaries, military leaders and civil servants (Holt 1989; Brailsford 1997; Neddham 2004). The old boys used their positions of power and influence to spread the games that they had played at school, leading to modern sport spreading throughout the British Empire and thereafter to the rest of the world (Holt 1989). Sport was used as a vehicle to demonstrate appropriate moral integrity as well as to display masculine traits such as power, strength and speed. The old boys network spread this idealised form of masculinity throughout the British Empire via sport.

Initially schools were renowned for lacking discipline and boys regularly took part in field sports such as hunting, bird-shooting, nesting and poaching (Mangan & McKenzie 2000). Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby School from 1828-1842, was the most renowned proponent of rationalised team sport, as opposed to field sports (Neddham 2004). Field sports were perceived as dangerous, encouraging unruly behaviour; by contrast team sports were viewed as character building activities.

Arnold set out to create a generation of Christian gentlemen and also to limit the chasm between upper and middle classes (Mangan & McKenzie 2000; Neddham 2004). From the outset sport was used to develop and mould masculine characteristics and to this day is seen as a vehicle for creating 'rounded' individuals via its character building properties. Other headmasters began to follow suit; the headmaster at Marlborough School used sport as a form of social control to keep boys within the school grounds, instead of poaching beyond the school boundaries (Holt 1989). It was Arnold that started the trend of using sport to promote positive behaviour and as a means by which boys could develop their moral compass (Holt 1989). Boys were taught to believe that if they excelled in sport, they could become superior in all aspects of their lives. The morality Arnold sought to instil in his boys created a connection between sport and religion, known as 'Muscular Christianity.'

Team sports were used to develop attributes such as co-operation and team spirit (Holt 1989), as well as creating moral Christian men. Anderson (2009b) notes that it was this change that led to the restoration of concepts of manliness within Western cultures, where sport was used to develop the masculine ideal. Sport became more important than academic achievement, becoming the most important aspect of school and the boys within it (Holt 1989). Using sport as a method of social control alone decreased and sport became established as an important institution for young boys in its own right (Holt 1989). Nevertheless, sport remained a medium through which social control was exercised, a process which arguably still exists today. Sport developed through the public school system was then exported throughout the British Empire and the Western World by old boys in their chosen careers (Neddham 2004).

However, the existence of public schools was just one reason for the inception and expansion of sport - the Industrial Revolution's contribution to the spread of sport to the masses consolidated sport as a male enterprise.

Social change and the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution as social change was highly influential on the development of sport in Britain (Graydon 1983). The Industrial Revolution affected rural and urban

life with the introduction of technology. Agricultural power was transformed by abandoning local working class farm hands and introducing machinery, allowing for massively greater production. Communities moved from small rural villages to larger urban towns and cities due to this commercialisation of agriculture, since the only work available was within factories (Tranter 1998). This resulted in a significant movement of people from wide open spaces to congested towns and cities.

This migration of families led to significant social change. The agrarian way of life, including leisure pursuits, was no longer possible due to limited space in the towns and cities and society became more civilised (Hargreaves 1986). Factory work provided regular pay and controlled hours, unlike seasonal farm work, but as a result, mob games were no longer possible due to fewer open spaces. In fact, the importance of sport was not realised until the Industrial Revolution, since the folk games that preceded this revolution were of little cultural significance (Anderson 2010). Hargreaves (1986) highlights the changes in the management of workers' lives; public holidays were now limited and working hours were structured with timetabled start, finish and break times. There were seismic changes in society during this period; there was a shift from seasonal to regular working hours and changes in living arrangements, from occupying wide open spaces to existing in cramped urban conditions. This cultural shift caused a certain degree of civil unrest, with sport becoming an institution and means of organising social control in the cities as well as within the public school system.

Sport began to thrive throughout the Industrial Revolution for two main reasons: it was a means of both civilising the masses and masculinizing men. The Industrial Revolution had brought large numbers of people into small living spaces, which allied with easy access to alcohol, led to civil unrest and unruly behaviour. Much as sport was initially used in public schools, it was now viewed in urban society as a means of taming and civilising men, whilst allowing them to develop a collective purpose (Burstyn 1999). Factory owners provided sporting activities and facilities, along with other services such as schools and Sunday schools, thus enabling social control to continue beyond the factory walls (Hargreaves 1986). In this way, factory owners used sport to develop individuals physically, mentally and morally, much like the public school system had done with young upper class boys.

Factory work was undertaken exclusively by men, whilst women stayed at home as primary carers. Society was in a state of turmoil as suddenly the ideal, recognised notion of masculinity found itself undermined by effeminate men. Previously this would not have been viewed as a particular threat, but with the public trial and conviction of Oscar Wilde in 1895, homosexuality became a matter for public discussion. Holt (1989: 90) explains: 'At precisely the moment when the new norms of maleness were coming into force, the incarnation of the opposite of 'manliness' was defined in the form of homosexuality.' Sport became the institutional means of preventing homosexuality and of educating men in the art of socially acceptable masculine behaviours. Sport was used as a way of ensuring that young men were validated in their masculinity and as a means of developing young boys into the masculine ideal (Holt 1989). It is evident that society used sport to masculinise men; in stark contrast, women became idealised as housewives.

During the Industrial Revolution, the role of women in the workplace diminished the role of the housewife was born. This moulded social expectations of gender roles. Throughout this period, the role of women evolved into that of homemaker and nurturer of children, whereas men were seen as the primary provider (White & Vagi 1990; Brailsford 1991). Sport was even used as a means of underlining women's new found place in the home (Lowerson 1993), since women were not eligible to spectate at sporting events (Brailsford 1991). According to Hargreaves (1985), working class women very rarely participated in sport until the early 1900s. However, Guttmann (1991) notes regular bouts of pugilism being conducted in the early 1700s. Working class women predominately fought for the entertainment of upper class men (Guttmann 1991), thus reinforcing the class and gender inequalities within society. However, research on working class sport is limited, unlike the research on middle class women. Women in the middle classes were trailblazers, participating in sports such as croquet and tennis (Hargreaves 1985).

Yet women soon found that sporting participation led to a medical backlash; whereas men used sport to masculinise themselves, it was feared women would become de-sexed (Hargreaves 1985) through playing sports. Men were able to use their professional positions within society to create gender exclusion within sport,

particularly within the medical profession. In the nineteenth century, light exercise was encouraged to improve health and child-bearing capacity (Hargreaves 1994). Gymnastics was also a form of exercise deemed appropriate and necessary for women as physical preparation for motherhood (Park 2007). Indeed, gymnastics programmes for women in America and England can be traced back to the 1850s (Hargreaves 1994; Bandy 2005). Gymnastics was also deemed a sporting activity appropriate for women due to the aesthetic values associated with the sport.

Medical problems providing barriers to participation

Women's participation in sport during Victorian times was limited by both class and activity. From the 1880s, women could participate in sport so long as these sporting activities rendered them stationary, such as archery (Phillips & Phillips 1993). Any other form of physical activity meant a break from traditional notions of femininity (Burton Nelson 1994) and was therefore met with patriarchal opposition expressed in the guise of medical opinion. Claims that women's bodies were not able to cope with the physical demands of sport, as women were biologically inferior (Phillips & Phillips 1993) were vehemently argued by male doctors. Scientists presided over the theory that women were frail, while men were physiologically and mentally superior (Lenskyj 1990). In this way, the medical professions reinforced the inadequacy of women in terms of their ability to participate. This use of sport to develop a moral, idealised form of masculinity, spread by both the public schooling system and the Industrial Revolution, focused entirely on men in a way that saw women firmly reduced to an inferior social position.

Victorian society was apprehensive of the potentially physiological effects of sport on women. Participation in sport was associated with difficult childbirth or even sterility (Lenskyj 1986). In order to impede female participation in sports, doctors made some egregious claims: 'Cyclists saddles, for instance, were said to induce menstruation and cause contracted vaginas and collapsed uteri (Burton Nelson 1994: 16).' Cahn (1994a: 16) adds to this argument, claiming doctors listed a wide variety of ailments to dissuade women from participating, including 'uterine displacement, spinal shock, pelvic damage and hardened abdominal muscles' and even the potential of 'bicycle face' from hardened muscles. The medical profession endeavoured to sustain

gendered stereotypes by providing suspect medical advice in order to inhibit and discourage female participation. Significantly, the medical profession was entirely male and in this way, they were able to protect the male sporting arena from being infiltrated by women.

However, it was not just cycling that attracted medical attention; croquet was banned at independent girls' schools for fear that it led to laziness and physical deformity (Hargreaves 1994). Notions of female frailty and the perils of over-exertion were applied to curtail female participation (Lenskyj 1986; Burton Nelson 1994). Therefore, while sport was used to promote an idealised form of masculinity, the medical profession in particular ensured that sport was used to maintain women's place in the home, at a safe distance from the sports field.

From the outset sport was a distinctly masculine endeavour and female participants were at risk of developing masculine traits (Lenskyj 1990). Hargreaves (1985) noted that sport was clearly seen as a way to debauch women, as their participation would cause them to be 'de-sexed'. The side effects of sport varied from adverse facial expressions that were anti-feminine (Ferez 2012), to changes in personality (Lenskyj 1990). The frailty of women has long been used as an excuse for limiting participation and coupled with suspect Victorian medical advice, led to women being excluded from sporting activities from the outset. Some activities were seen as acceptable as they conformed to certain aesthetic principles or involved little strenuous movement, but women faced adversity in establishing any form of competitive sport, particularly team sports.

Middle-class women did succeed in establishing team sports in the early 19th century with hockey becoming particularly popular. However, male doctors again railed against female sporting participation, claiming that women were not of a suitable disposition to compete in team sports (Lowerson 1993). By 1921, English doctors had given approval to certain team sports for women, with the notable exception of football, so long as women agreed to 'medical examination before participating and the avoidance of excessive exertion (Lenskyj 1990: 58).' Again, control was imposed on women by men to ensure that they did not threaten the male sporting domain. This was achieved by limiting women's physical exertion. While women did start to

challenge the male domination of sport, they were confronted by the sporting institution itself, as well as other social bodies such as the medical profession. As was the case with their male counterparts, sport developed for women within the public school system, where the middle and upper classes were educated.

Physical Education in Girls' Schools

Physical Education (PE) for girls evolved in public schools in Britain during the late 1800s (Hargreaves 1994). Teachers such as Miss Lawrence at Roedean in 1885 and Miss Beale at Cheltenham Ladies College in 1891 were pioneers in Physical Education and they started to see the health benefits that PE could offer girls (Holt 1989; Hargreaves 1994). However, public schools were a middle class enterprise and as such, inaccessible to the working classes. In the state sector, PE for both boys and girls became a subject in its own right in 1933. Prior to that, all students were either taught military drill or subsequently Swedish gymnastics.

In public schools, girls were initially encouraged into activities such as Swedish gymnastics, as competitive games were seen as a masculine enterprise (Hargreaves 1994). Swedish gymnastics, meanwhile, had aesthetic attributes, which were deemed socially acceptable for women to practise. Additionally, activities such as running and swimming were also encouraged (Holt 1989) and by the late 1800s girls were engaging in sports such as lacrosse and hockey (Hargreaves 1994). These sports were allowed as they posed no challenge to traditional masculine sports such as rugby and football, thereby reinforcing the gender segregation of sports. However, similar to male pursuits, team sports and games were used as a means of encouraging the development of hitherto male characteristics such as sportsmanship and physicality (Hargreaves 1994). But unlike male sport, women's sport failed to make the transition from school to adult life (Lowerson 1993). Male public schools managed to transfer these skills through the old boys' network, where ex pupils used their positions within society to carry on those very sporting traditions that produced idealised images of men. Conversely, women left school with no position of authority in society, therefore the old girls network was not effective in the same way. Even today, the public school old boys network provides a system of advice, support and even sports clubs for their alumni.

By the late 1800s, schools such as Roedean and Wycombe Abbey were promoting team games, using similar competitive pathways as the boys with inter house and interschool matches (Hargreaves 1994). Since Roedean School based its sports programme on the model used by independent boys' schools in the Victorian era, the amount of exercise required was substantial, with girls expected to participate for two to three hours a day depending on the season (Holt 1989). The participation of girls in team games was justified as leading to the development of physical and moral character via Physical Education (Hargreaves 1994). However, girls' participation was only tolerated because it did not encroach upon the male sporting arena - girls and boys were taught in separate schools (Hargreaves 1994) and girls played different sports such as lacrosse and hockey, not played at boys' schools. Independently funded schools provided women with an opportunity to play sport and undertake physical activity, which had previously been denied. Women's participation was becoming more accepted under certain conditions, namely that the sport played did not lead them to develop masculine traits.

Women's challenge to participation on the Olympic stage

In the ancient Greek Olympics, women who attempted to view the sporting spectacle were subject to the death penalty (Boutilier & SanGiovanni 1983; Griffin 1998). Whereas in rationalised sport the traditional role of women is one of spectator, whereas men are viewed as athletes (Pronger 1990). The founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, made his stance very clear – women were spectators not performers (Hargreaves 1994). In 1896, Pierre de Coubertin used the Olympics to revive masculinity and to instil in men the values that he saw in team games such as rugby (Kidd 1990). Women were clearly not involved in his revival of the games. The world's biggest stage for sporting competition was denied to women until the early 1900s.

Women contested female appropriate activities simultaneously to the men's events, but significantly these took place outside of the Olympic arena (Hargreaves 1994). Not until 1924 were women permitted to with equal status to men (Hargreaves 1994). Such exclusion led to women starting their own equivalent Olympics; in 1921

women formed the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale, which ran Women's Olympic games in the 1920s up until 1934, even beyond women's inclusion in the main Olympics (Ferez 2012). Women's integration into the Olympics has been a lengthy process that started in the 1920s and is still on-going (Ferez 2012). The events of the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics during the women's 800m race devastated the progress made so far by women. Numerous participants collapsed, resulting in middle and long distance events being banned until 1960 (Phillips & Phillips 1993). These incidents seem strange, since women had been running the 800m since 1921 in an alternative competition run by the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale (FSFI), set up to allow women to compete in international competition (Hargreaves 1994), where female participation was tolerated so long as they were competing outside of the arena specifically designed for men.

There has been some suggestion of a conspiracy involving the International Olympic Committee (IOC) which saw the 800m excluded again until 1960 (Robinson 2012). Ferez (2012) notes why this limitation on women's participation may have taken place, stating that IOC members, coaches and journalists were shocked by appearance of breathless, perspiring female participants. These IOC members, coaches and journalists were again male, using positions of power to restrict the participation of women, to long-lasting effect. In the 1930s, even the 200m race was removed from the Olympics because it was considered too demanding and exhausting for women (Lenskyj 1986). This perception continued to such an extent that the women's marathon only appeared at the Olympics in 1984. Although women have been allowed inside the Olympic arena since 1924, the number of events open to women has consistently been less than those open to men. Boutilier and SanGiovanni (1983: 227) note the irony inherent within the Olympic motto (faster, higher, stronger) given women's exclusion from events such as the 20km walk, pole vault and triple jump:

Thus, if one takes the Olympic motto 'the fastest, the farthest and the highest' as one's goal, women have been categorically excluded from the events that would take them that far and that high.

Gradual progress has been seen in terms of female participation on the Olympic stage, but some distance events remain unavailable to women.

Although Boutilier and SanGiovanni's events have now been opened up to women (triple jump in 1996, pole vault and 20km walk both in 2000) women are still exempt from the longest walking event (50km) (Donnelly *et al* 2013), for no apparent reason. Donnelly *et al* (2013: 17) examine this inequality: 'For example, it is consistent for both women and men to run a marathon of over 40km, but deny women the opportunity to complete in the 50km race walk?' While others will reply that men cannot take part in synchronised swimming or rhythmic gymnastics, the fact remains that at London 2012 only 35.8% of events were gender equitable, with equity measured in terms of competitor numbers and equitable rules (Donnelly *et al* 2013). Whilst women's sports have made progress on the Olympic stage, statistics show that competition remains inequitable.

Having authorised women to compete, the IOC remained concerned that some women entering competitions were conceivably not feminine enough to participate. So although they now allowed women to take part, the IOC sought to restrict the *type* of woman taking part, to ensure the maintenance of femininity within competition. From 1968 until 2000, the IOC used sex testing to decide if women were eligible to participate (Sykes 2006). Outside of the Olympic arena, the initial tests carried out by sporting governing bodies were performed by gynaecologists. The test required women to undress and be inspected by male doctors who would then decide if they were feminine enough to take part (Burton Nelson 1994; Donnelly *et al* 2013). These 'peek and poke parades' were only abolished in 1968 following complaints from athletes (Donnelly *et al* 2013: 14). The IOC then exchanged the visual test for a chromosome test known as the 'Barr body test', which looks at the chromosomes of the athlete (Burton Nelson 1994). However, this test was also shrouded in controversy, as Donnelly *et al* explain (2013: 14): 'This test was widely discredited in the scientific community.' This test was removed in 2000, on condition of finding another method to test and control gender (Ferez 2012). These tests are regarded as both highly controversial and unethical, yet national and international sporting bodies still maintain the need for a test to ensure segregation of competition by sex (Ferez 2012). These tests include measuring the amount of testosterone in an athlete's blood. The subjectivity of this test is explained by Donnelly *et al* (2013: 15):

The test, which has no clear testosterone threshold or range, and has been criticized widely in both scientific and medical ethics literatures, may be triggered by an outstanding performance, and by a sports official and/or disgruntled athlete who was beaten declaring that a woman does not look 'feminine' enough.

Moreover, such an approach is overly simplistic, basing definitions of womanhood on a dualistic physiological approach - transgendered and inter-sexed individuals do not fit into such narrow concepts of biological sex. Whilst female Olympic participation was becoming increasingly more acceptable, with women entering more events and countries sending greater numbers of female athletes to the Games, it was not until the 1994 Olympics that the media took note of those countries who failed to send female competitors (mainly due to religious restrictions) (Heywood & Dworkin 2003). London 2012 was seen as the women's games, with more female athletes than ever before taking part and all competing countries sending female athletes¹ following significant campaigns by various organisations (Donnelly *et al* 2013). London 2012 was also the first games where women could compete in every sport; the final sport to relinquish the 'men only' label was boxing (Donnelly *et al* 2013). However, the number of weight divisions for women were fewer than men's meaning that the number of medals available to men still exceeded the number available to women. In total, men were able to compete for thirty medals more than women across all Olympic events at the London 2012 Olympics (Donnelly *et al* 2013). Although London 2012 was celebrated as being equal, Donnelly *et al* acknowledge that 'there is a way to go' in terms of Olympic equality (2013: 29). So while statistics show that progress has been made in terms of female participation in the Games, significant inequalities still exist for women on the Olympic stage.

Sports structures – national governing bodies

Women were slowly accepted into different sports at elite level throughout the twentieth century. The earliest sport to run elite competitions for women was tennis.

¹ Barbados and Nauru only sent male athletes but no country excluded women (Donnelly *et al* 2013)

Wimbledon held women's doubles competitions from 1913, though only playing the best of three sets and not the best of five like the men (Hargreaves 1994), a gender difference that still remains today. Additionally, while sports such as golf, ice-skating, badminton and punting were popularised by women in the early 1900s (Hargreaves 1994), hockey was the first team sport to draw in large numbers of women. Hockey was a sport that was unique, as it was developed in public schools for girls and therefore did not challenge existing gender norms created by sports developed in the boys' public school system, such as rugby and football. The All-England Women's Field Hockey association was established in 1895 and this led to the first published women's sports magazine in 1901 (Burton Nelson 1994). The magazine enabled female sport to be celebrated for the first time in print, displaying both a level of acceptance of women's sport and potentially also encouraging more women to participate. From the early 1900s, women made steady in-roads into the sporting culture, however the road to equality was far from straightforward. Almost fifty years later, following the Second World War, the medical profession continued to disrupt female participation. Polley (1998: 92) describes the limitation of female participation in the following terms:

First, women were pushed into certain sports deemed appropriately feminine...Second, team games developed in a limited way in parallel to rugby and football...Third, some sports were deemed appropriate for both sexes, but were generally diluted to accommodate women's perceived weaknesses.

Whilst sport was becoming increasingly available to women, this was within certain parameters.

However, British women were at the forefront of sport in the post-war era, with the inception of numerous sporting associations, such as the Women's Football Association (WFA) established in 1969, with similar associations for rugby league, boxing and rugby following shortly after (Polley 1998). The Women's Rugby Football Union (RFUW) was established in 1983 and within a decade there were 2,000 registered players in 142 clubs (Hargreaves 1994). The numbers today are significantly higher with the RFU quoting numbers around 13,000 to 15,000, possibly due to greater acceptance of women's rugby. Women's cricket in England has been

established since the 1920s with the first World Cup played in 1973, (Hargreaves 1994) but the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) resisted female members until 1999. This was regarded as a success for the women's sporting movement as the MCC's home ground of Lords is regarded as the most famous cricket ground in the world.

National governing bodies are gradually evolving and appear to be more accepting of women's involvement, although there is limited academic literature monitoring this shift. The merger between the women's cricket association and the men's cricket board took place in 1998 (Velija *et al* 2014). Since this merger, the women's elite game has received significant financial support, which in turn has been boosted by the performance of the women's elite set up (Velija *et al* 2014). Since 2014 women have also enjoyed central contracts, allowing them to play and train full time (Wilson 2014a). The media has also come on board, with its coverage of the 2009 cricket world cup for women showing a significant change in approach (Biscombe & Griggs 2013). The scheduling of matches has helped their cause, with women's games often being held before men's matches so that the infrastructure for coverage is already in place.

The Football Association (FA) has recently established a summer league for women - the Women's Super League (WSL) - in order to stop the number of players moving to the US, where ladies' soccer has enjoyed professional status since 2007 (Leighton 2009). The WSL starts in the men's off season, so that there is little or no competition for sporting media (See www.TheFA.com/FAWSL2014), which may lead to more print coverage. This lack of competition from the men's game also enables games to be shown live on ESPN and BT Sport. In addition, women players have taken to displaying their twitter handles on their shirts as means of further developing support for the women's game (Doyle 2012).

Women's rugby has been accepted into the men's governing body (RFU), allowing women equal access to facilities, expert advice and sponsors. Although the merger was agreed in 2003, it was not until the RFU was threatened with losing its funding from Sport England that the merger actually took place (Bond 2007). Both the RFU and RFUW were concerned about this potential loss of income during a wave of funding cuts in the lead up to the London 2012 Olympics (Bond 2007). The merger

has meant that women can now play on grounds such as Twickenham (the home of English rugby), which has in turn led to an increase in televised coverage of the women's game, as they are shown either before or after the men's game. Since their Rugby World Cup winning performance, the women's sevens setup has turned professional, with fulltime contracts, in preparation for the Rio Olympics (Duffin 2014).

The major governing bodies have all signed the Government charter tackling homophobia and transphobia in sport. The governing bodies involved cover the major sports: cricket, tennis, football, rugby league and rugby union. The Football Association has taken this further by publishing a forty-page action plan on LGBT inclusion (Bury 2015). Football has replicated its successful campaign against racism in football to challenge homophobia in the game (Bury 2015), although there is a clear acknowledgement that more needs to be done both at home and internationally (Bury 2015).

Although these changes introduced by sports' major governing bodies have begun to trickle down to elite women's sport, there remains much to address:- changes in perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes at grassroots level have still not been tackled. National governing bodies would appear to be making changes at the top of the participation pyramid with the rather naïve expectation that these changes will organically trickle down to affect participation at all levels.

Sporting leadership

History has shown that sport has been designed by and for men; consequently, men have taken the positions of responsibility. Hardy (2015) acknowledges that men preside over all the key aspects of sport, including playing, officiating and the organisational aspects of competition. Drury (2011: 430) explains the appeal of women-led clubs as follows: 'Much of the club's appeal was based not on the fact that is lesbian-identified, but instead, on its ability to provide an alternative approach to organizing and playing football.' This approach differs from the traditional competition based focus and fosters a more positive environment (Drury 2011). It could also be argued that lesbian women want to participate, but not necessarily for

the purpose of winning, which represents a moving of the goalposts in terms of sporting participation.

In the US, Melton and Cunningham (2014b: 190) have examined inclusion within the sporting workforce. They acknowledge that 'sexual orientation is a relevant issue in the sport context, as heterosexual employees traditionally have power and privilege,' resulting in them having more opportunity to evoke change. While inclusive practices can be seen within the sports working environment, such practices appear to be predominantly based on adherence to appropriate legislation and the avoidance of legal proceedings (Melton & Cunningham 2014b). Meanwhile in England, sports bodies must act in accordance with the legislation set out under the 2010 Equality Act.

National governing bodies (NGBs) in England have recently come under pressure to address the lack of women in leadership positions. Between 1998, when women's cricket was absorbed into the men's governing body (ECB) and 2010, there was not a single female representative on the board (Velija *et al* 2014). Women therefore conceded power within this newly merged organisation, where they had previously enjoyed full control of the women's game (Velija *et al* 2014). While women may have gained centralised contracts, sponsorship and additional media coverage through the merger with the men's cricketing board, they also conceded power and control.

By 2017, 25% of the board should be female, or the sport as a whole faces losing their Sport England funding (www.sportengland.org). However, as Shaw and Penney note, this may not be a solution: 'Such practices, include having a small number of 'token women' in senior organisation positions without challenging the organisational practices that might exclude other women on the basis of their gender (2003: 83).' Burton (2015) acknowledges that procedural changes are important to ensure positions of authority are open to women. Research carried out by the WSFF (Trophy Women Report 2014) shows that there has been a general increase in women on the boards of NGBs to 123 women in 2014. However, there has been no change in the number of women who chair boards and in some cases organisations have even shown a decline in the number of women occupying board positions

(Trophy Women Report 2014). While there has been a general increase in the number of women in board positions, there is still significant inequality in the top roles. The Trophy Women Report (2014) acknowledges that 23% of Chief Executives are women and 11% Chair the Board, showing significant room for improvement.

This does not seem to be a problem peculiar to the United Kingdom. Pfister and Radtke (2009: 241) acknowledge that women are also underrepresented in German sport:

Despite the fact that male and female members of executive bodies have similar qualifications, similar positions in their professional lives, and a similar commitment to sport, women do not have the same positions and the same status as men on the executive boards of sports organizations.

Shaw and Penney (2003) suggest that the reason for the status quo is based on the power relations within an institution that has traditionally been reluctant to change. While the Government and Sport England are imposing percentages on NGBs in terms of female leadership, this in itself may not address the inequality. It could even be the case that such policies actually damage gender equity as the relationship between equality policy and funding inhibits NGBs from engaging in the process reflexivity (Shaw & Penney 2003). The targets imposed on NGBs to be enforced by Sport England have come from the Davis Report². However, it is unclear how many NGBs will meet this target and this will remain unknown until full progress is monitored in 2017. In this way, it lags behind the US, where the enforcement of gender equity in sport took place in 1972 through Title IX (see below).

The impact and effect of Title IX

Title IX is legislation relating to sporting equality in the US. However, analysis of the impact of participation (both playing and coaching) shows an on-going inequality of women in sport in the US. Although of not direct relevance to the UK situation, Title IX shows how legislation is used to try and enforce equality. Burton Nelson (1994: 41) describes the legislation in the following terms: 'Title IX, a 1972 amendment to the

² The Davis report was commissioned by the government to examine gender inequalities on corporate boards (www.gov.uk)

Civil Rights Act, forbids gender discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal funds.' Title IX ensures that equality is maintained, from funding and accommodation, to guaranteeing that students' interests are met (Boxhill 1993). There was some opposition to Title IX in the 1970s. There was concern within male sport, particularly within American football, that the glory years were numbered and the blame was squarely placed on women (Burton Nelson 1994).

Title IX has allowed women entry to a sporting institution in America that had previously been the privileged domain of men (Dworkin & Messner 2002). The positive effect on participation rates for female athletes in the educational system has been substantial (Frey & Eitzen 1991). Figures provided by Adams *et al* (2005) note that participation has increased more than 800% since the implementation of Title IX. The United Kingdom has no direct equivalent, although the 2010 Equality Act covers all aspects of society, including sport.

The gains for American women go beyond participation statistics. There has been an increase in media coverage of women's sport, which has in turn created female role models inspiring young girls to take up sport (Boxhill 1993). However, Boxhill's reading of the situation may be overly simplistic. Adams (2005: 18) and colleagues cite changes within school social hierarchies: 'Athletic high school girls are the recipients of a form of power, prestige and status once relegated solely to cheerleaders and majorettes.' In this way, changes in perception of sport in schools, as well as media coverage, may have helped increase participation and these socio-cultural changes have led to increased social acceptance of women who play sports.

There is no doubt that Title IX made an impact, however it has not been entirely positive. Although participation rates have soared, the number of female coaches has decreased (Burton Nelson 1994). So although more women are now able to participate in sport, the by-product is an increased likelihood of playing under male coaches (Burton Nelson 1994). As Frey and Eitzen (1991: 517) note: 'In 1972, 90% of women's teams were coached by women, in 1989, 47% were coached by women.' In a Washington Post newspaper article in 2012, the percentage had decreased again to 43% (Greenwell 2012). According to Griffin (1992a) the reason for the change in recruitment strategy is to provide a mechanism for avoiding lesbian coaches. The

belief that male coaches are superior in their techniques and the idea that athletes will be safer with a male coach than a lesbian coach has led to this shift in recruitment (Griffin 1992a).

Before Title IX, the inequality of participation in male and female sports was in some cases as high as 50:1 (Hargreaves 1994). Most educational institutions, schools and colleges are funded by federal money and are therefore under obligation to comply with the legislation (Burton Nelson 1994). However, in most cases, schools are not actually complying with Title IX: 'At the Division I-A level only one out of 107 schools complies with Title IX. This is Washington State University (WSU), which was forced to do so by its own supreme court (Burton Nelson 1994: 126).' In 2003 Heywood and Dworkin found that 90% of educational institutions were still not conforming to the measures set out by Title IX. In order to meet requirements, some institutions have actually removed sports programmes, though the legality of this has been challenged (Burton Nelson 1994).

According to McDonagh and Pappano (2008: 102), Title IX was 'a weak, even meek tool.' The legislative absence of 'segregation sports' terminology renders it weak, in their view (McDonagh & Pappano 2008: 103). The legislation is further undermined by the number of exemptions. Griffin (1992a) suggests that it was the interpretation of Title IX that was problematic. It was not until 1988 that the legislation was sufficiently effective to allow educational institutions to be charged with sex discrimination. However, an analysis of US court cases in the last thirty years reveals only 32% involved sex discrimination (McDonagh & Pappano 2008). This statistic is significant and suggests that few colleges are adhering to the legislation.

As highlighted throughout this chapter, women have campaigned since the early 1900s to play sports and although there has been an increase in female participation, there is still substantial evidence of sex discrimination, both in the UK and US. Sport has also been shown to be a means of reinforcing masculinity, whereas for women sport not only undermines femininity but also questions the heterosexuality of participants. Lesbian athletes therefore face double discrimination, by virtue of being female and homosexual.

Chapter 3: Sport as a Homophobic Institution

Introduction

This chapter examines the history of homophobia in women's sport based on research conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. The majority of research on issues relating to lesbians in sport was undertaken in last few decades of the 20th century (Lenskyj 1986; Griffin 1998; Hekma 1998; Sykes 1998; Veri 1999). When lesbian athletes compete, this may be within a range of different environments: hostile; conditionally tolerant; or open and inclusive (Griffin 1998). Within the hostile and conditionally tolerant environments, athletes face homophobia either directly or via subtle rules and regulations placed on the team by organising institutions (Griffin 1998).

Gay men and lesbian women encounter different challenges with regard to homophobia, since women face the additional barrier of sexism when competing in sport (Griffin 2012), as they are participating within a male institution. This causes a division between lesbians and heterosexual women, thereby preventing a joint political approach by all women to fight for equality in the sporting arena (Lenskyj 1991). So although improvements have been seen in the acceptance of gay male athletes, the situation for lesbian women is not as straightforward. Women competing within sport challenge a social institution designed by and for men and confront traditional gender expectations by participation alone. However, the increasingly positive results being published on gay men's experience in sport (Anderson & McGuire 2010; Adams & Anderson 2011; Adams 2011; Anderson 2011a) suggest that the experiences of lesbian athletes are due re-examination using a social constructivist approach, to add the recent research carried out from a poststructuralist perspective. (Caudwell 2002, 2006, 2007; Drury 2011; Roy 2013; Tredway 2014).

Homophobia in Sport

Because homosexuality is considered outside of the (heterosexual) norm, it is often considered morally 'deviant' (Griffin 1998). Homophobia serves to stigmatize and

isolate individuals and groups because they do not conform to the hegemonic (heterosexual) norm. There are many forms of homophobia and homo-negativity. Homophobia is much more than 'an irrational fear or hatred of those who love and/or sexually desire those of the same sex (Veri 1999: 357). Homophobia can, like other forms of discrimination, manifest itself in numerous forms, including physical violence and abusive language. However, homophobia is not always overt. McCormack and Anderson (2010b) describe forms of covert homophobia which may be equally damaging. Lenskyj (1991) points out that homophobia is not limited to just individual incidence but that institutions can also be homophobic.

Various campaigns have been initiated within sport to combat racism and sexism. Yet homophobia remains as one of the last bastions of social discrimination (Veri 1999). Homophobia extends beyond the demeaning of sexual minorities. Griffin (1998: 18) describes homophobia as the 'glue that holds traditional gender role expectations in place.' More specifically homophobia ensures that women continue to look and act in a way that is considered feminine, so as not to create suspicion. Coupled with policing women's behaviour, homophobia also enables men to maintain patriarchal control over women (Pharr 1997). Sport is often considered as an indicator of social change and steps have been made to overcome both racism and sexism - although some discrimination remains, particularly within certain sports. However, homophobia has remained largely unchallenged (Anderson & Bullingham 2013).

Competitive, organised team sports are a masculine endeavour where men demonstrate key masculine attributes such as physicality, strength and power. Krane (2001) notes that expectations for women are different, because femininity and athleticism are perceived as contradictory. Russell (2004) takes this further, arguing that femininity and athleticism are not just contradictory, but also incompatible. Female athletes posing for magazine covers in a manner that accentuates their femininity is a visual demonstration of this process. The incompatibility argument is enhanced by those women who compete without softening their appearance, yet other women are able to balance their femininity and athleticism effectively, thus belying the claim that femininity and athleticism are not compatible. Those women who do not attempt to reconcile femininity and athleticism, who forego femininity,

are social regarded, rightly or wrongly, to be lesbian (Blinde & Taub 1992b; Griffin 1992a; Wolter 2010).

Gender binary matrix

From an orthodox view, any woman playing competitive, organised team sport is understood in some way as presenting a masculine image; the logical conclusion is therefore that she must be a lesbian (Lenskyj 1986). Tredway (2014: 169) uses Butler's heterosexual matrix to elaborate this point: 'A woman who is viewed as masculine, however, is understood as being a lesbian.' Butler's heterosexual matrix is defined as a 'cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desire are naturalised (2006: 208).'

Butler's gender matrix only works within a homophobic culture, where feminine behaviour in men is defined as homosexual; in a culture of reduced homophobia and more inclusive forms of masculinity (see Anderson 2009b) the matrix arguably becomes redundant. Tredway (2014) states that the matrix has to be adapted to accommodate openly lesbian athletes – this is, indeed, one failing of Butler's concept.

The assumed interplay between sports participation and lesbianism is particularly problematic for heterosexual and closeted lesbian women competing in traditionally male sports, such as football and rugby. Here, assumed homosexuality is a constant (Cox & Thompson 2001). Tredway (2014: 168) uses Butler's heterosexual matrix to explain this: '...a person's sex and gender are known to the viewer and this gaze leads the viewer to assume a particular sexuality for the person looked upon.' Put simply, if women are performing a masculine sport they will be deemed homosexual (Caudwell 2003). However, it is not just women that compete in traditional male sports that face questions about their sexuality; any woman who fails to meet the minimal expectations of femininity is subject to homophobic paranoia from society when participating in sport. Thus, sport has historically been used as a vehicle to reinforce homophobia (Hargreaves 1994), especially by male coaches who frequently attempt to instil an aggressive attitude in female players (Adams *et al* 2010).

Policing gender boundaries

It is this association of athletic competency with lesbian identity that forms the basis of Griffin's argument that homophobia is used to police gendered boundaries. Griffin (2002) suggests that homophobia is the main means by which women's gendered expression is controlled. In the case of sport, homophobia is clearly used to control women's behaviour and to channel them into certain 'appropriate' sports; namely those that are aesthetically pleasing activities for the gaze of heterosexual males, such as gymnastics or cheerleading. The lesbian label has historically been socially constructed by a heterosexual majority and carries with it an extremely negative social stigma, in the form of intimidation or even physical violence (Griffin 1998, 2002; Caudwell 2007). Lesbian women who play sport are therefore members of two marginalised groups:- not only are they women, they are deviant women (Lenskyj 2003) intruding upon men's privileged space. Within the sporting context, homophobia serves as a fierce and confrontational (Hargreaves 1994) mechanism, attempting to deny women equal participation in sport.

The outworkings of homophobia, however, affect not only lesbian women. Therberge and Birrell (1994) suggested that participation in sport for all women, regardless of sexual orientation, is hindered by the homophobic behaviour surrounding women's sport. Heterosexual women fear that any form of support offered to lesbians by themselves, will in turn cast suspicion on their own sexuality. The more lesbians are seen as the cause of the poor image of women's sports, the deeper the rift becomes (Griffin 1992a). This becomes a difficult cycle to break without the full participation of *all* women; the political campaign to remove homophobia requires lesbian and heterosexual women to work together to stand any chance of success. Yet the lesbian label is used to intimidate all women; in this way, it serves as a form of masculine social control (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Griffin 1998). However, the lesbian label may be considered as too simplistic to cover all women who are homosexual.

Caudwell (1999) explains how the 'butch' lesbian label can be considered antagonistic towards both heterosexual and lesbian women. In later work, she writes that the butch label is always associated with lesbianism (Caudwell 2003). Evidencing the severity of the lesbian stigma, older research shows that some athletes actually

preferred to be called 'whores' rather than 'dykes' (Blinde & Taub 1992a: 162). Although this is dated research, it demonstrates the vehement attempts of heterosexual women to avoid the lesbian label.

The majority of research on the impact of the lesbian label was carried out in the 1990s. However, more recent research has found that little has changed; findings demonstrate that once labelled lesbian, women still face discrimination (Fink *et al* 2012). Martina Navratilova and Billie Jean King serve as historical reminders of how hostile sport can be toward lesbians; both lost a huge proportion of their tennis income after coming out as lesbians, due to the homophobic culture at that time (Cahn 1994a). Sponsors did not want their name associated with athletes who challenged the hegemonic societal norm of compulsory heterosexuality (Griffin 2012). Companies did not want athletes who did not conform to a traditional feminine appearance to be associated with their products and in so doing, suggested that lesbians were in some way less worthy than feminised women. Griffin (1998) take this further, suggesting that lesbians are considered less principled and morally upright individuals compared to men or heterosexual women (Griffin 1998).

Griffin, a high profile scholar studying the intersection of sport and lesbianism (1998 2002), separates homophobia into six categories for more systematic analysis:

- Silence
- Denial
- Apology
- Promotion of 'heterosexy' image
- Attacks on lesbians
- Preference for male coaches

The promotion of the 'heterosexy' image can also be linked with gendered apologetic behaviour of athletes, originally discussed by Felshin in 1974. She explains: 'The apologetic has been served in countless ways from an insistence on "heels and hose" as an appropriate off-the court costume (Felshin 1974: 37).' These categories link to the aims of this study, specifically examining the type, extent and navigation of homophobia that openly lesbian athletes face in team sports.

Silence of 'the L word'

Lesbian athletes frequently use silence as a form of protection in hostile environments. Silence regarding their sexual orientation serves as a means of surviving constant hostility (Griffin 1998; Elling *et al* 2003; Krane & Barber 2005). But silence carries social-emotional implications as well. Silence is a form of oppression that is faced by lesbian women and its impact can be exceptionally damaging (Cahn 1994a). A media commentator noted that lesbian participation within women's sport is masked by 'a silence so loud it screams (Lenskyj 1995: 51).' Nonetheless, lesbian athletes participating within the male-dominated world of sport often maintain that it is safer to stay silent than to share their sexual identity (Lenskyj 2003). Blinde and Taub (1992a: 155) note that silence can manifest in a number of different ways:

(a) Athletes' difficulty in discussing lesbian topic, (b) viewing lesbianism as a personal and irrelevant issue, (c) disguising athletic identity to avoid lesbian label, (d) team difficulty in addressing lesbian issue, and (e) administrative difficulty in addressing lesbian issue.

Many of these points link to Griffin's (1998) 'unplayable lies,' lies which serve to prevent transformation in sport. One of the challenges that lesbian women face is the ever present threat of a media scandal involving a lesbian athlete, that can potentially undo years of headway made in gaining acceptance (Griffin 1992a). Lesbian women also face the additional challenge of casting homosexual suspicion on their teammates by coming out.

Silence may have provided some athletes with protection and perhaps allowed women's sport to progress in terms of gaining social approval from men, but this is open to debate (Griffin 1992a). Indeed, silence allows homophobia to continue and depoliticises lesbianism, allowing discrimination to remain unchallenged (Blinde & Taub 1992a). Yet silence should not be mistaken for acceptance (Griffin 1998). Although silence about a particular issue may be an indicator of acceptance or denial, the inability to discuss issues is usually a clear indicator that acceptance does not exist within a particular social group. It was clear in the 1980s that homosexuality amongst women competitors was not acceptable and the hostile treatment of

Navratilova and King (Hargreaves 2000), in a time of high homophobia (Anderson 2005a), forced other women back into the closet for fear of losing their endorsements.

However, silence around lesbians in sport is gradually waning this century, with a number of WNBA³ players coming out: Michele Van Gorp in 2004, Sheryl Swoopers in 2005, Seimone Augustus in 2012 and Brittney Griner in 2013. In England, hockey players Kate and Helen Richardson-Walsh broke their silence when they announced their wedding and England footballer Casey Stoney came out to the media when her partner was expecting twins. However, silence still remains a defensive strategy employed by many gay and lesbian athletes. If this silence is broken, athletes and coaches may adopt denial as the next form of defence (Griffin 1998).

Denial through heterosexual femininity

Within particularly hostile sporting environments, lesbians are pressured into denying their sexual preference (Griffin 1998). Hargreaves (2000) notes that sporting organisations, and those within them, deny the existence of homophobia and also deny that lesbians exist within their set-up. Forms and tactics of denial include the suggestion that sexuality is a private matter, (Kane & Lenskyj 1998) thus allowing indirect homophobia to continue unchallenged.

To avoid persistent questions surrounding their sexuality, athletes have to present messages of heterosexuality, which may include fabricating a boyfriend or altering pronouns from 'she' to 'he' (Lenskyj 1995). Lenskyj (1995) uncovers the lengths some women will go to in order to conceal their sexuality, even entering into marriages of convenience, as Billy Jean King did in the 1980s. Pronger (1990: 375) describes how denial can be a powerful homophobic weapon in women's sport:

The homophobia of women's competitive sport finds its expression in the repeated renunciation by athletes, coaches and sport administrators that there is a significant lesbian presence in women's sport. That homophobic culture of denial often ends in the public purges of lesbian athletes and

³ Women's National Basketball Association

coaches and functions to prevent the implicit homoeroticism of women's sport from becoming an explicit, indeed celebrated practice.

In some cases, coaches have gone even further by not only denying the presence of lesbians within their programme, but also stating that lesbians exist in rival programmes (Griffin 1992a, 1998). This process of negative recruiting⁴ is discussed later in this chapter. To try and counteract the negative effect of rumoured homosexuality on both her finances and her image on tour, Billie Jean King denied she was a lesbian (for a short while) and labelled the relationship she had with another woman a mistake (Griffin 1998). (As Griffin (2014) notes, Billie Jean King being subsequently 'outed' in the 1980s changed the media's perception of her and she lost all of her commercial contracts). King's denial was ineffective in protecting either her career or her endorsements, but serves as an example of athletes using denial as an (albeit ineffective) tool of self-protection and as a method of navigating homophobia within the sporting environment.

Performing a gendered apologetic

Apologetic behaviours occur because women are participating in the traditionally male domain of sport. Women's participation can be seen by some as unacceptable, straddling gender norms. To combat this, women have tended to adopt an apologetic stance (Felshin 1974). Hardy (2015: 156) defines this position as follows: 'The term 'female apologetic' refers to any behaviours that female athletes engage in to negate or negotiate the negative stereotypes associated with their involvement in sport by embodying the traditional, or hegemonic, heterosexual notion of femininity.' Apologetic behaviour can manifest in numerous ways: 'trying to look feminine, apologizing for aggression or physical force' (Davis-Delano *et al* 2009; 142). However, Felshin's initial research on the 'female apologetic' was conducted in the 1970s when women's elite sport was still in its infancy.

Coaches and administrators have taken it upon themselves to encourage or coerce women into demonstrating a feminine image. Hargreaves (2000: 135) notes that

⁴ A process of putting potential students off with the threat of lesbian athletes or coaches in rival programs

women feel forced into wearing 'make-up, nail polish, pretty clothes, jewellery and to show off boyfriends and husbands,' perpetuating an environment of heteronormativity. Blinde and Taub (1992a) state that some coaches have ensured that women were performing sports in typically feminine ways, at the same time making sure that their appearance was also feminised. Other coaches have offered financial incentives for women to bring boyfriends to away games (Mennesson & Clément 2003).

According to Adams *et al* (2005), apologetic behaviours have diminished of late, suggesting that women no longer have to conceal or understate the competitive, masculine aspect within their sport. Kane and Lenskyj (1998) note a changing culture within sport, with less pressure exerted on athletes in terms of proving their heterosexuality. They propose that this is due to more athletes choosing to come out. Pierman (2005: 82) however outlines the following reasons for this shift:

One might argue that the apologetic is mostly enacted where it is imposed downward on athletes by institutions – schools and colleges, clubs and franchises – organizations that desire to market an image, downplay lesbianism, and govern their very human products.

Here Pierman (2005) demonstrates how sporting institutions influence apologetic behaviour in lesbian sportswomen through downplaying homosexuality to enhance their marketability and attract greater sponsorship for women's sport.

In a study on female rugby players from the US, Broad (2001) found women to be demonstrating unapologetic behaviour. She shows how women are presenting an unapologetic approach to playing sport through appearance and behaviour, perhaps suggesting a cultural shift whereby women no longer feel that they have to promote a heterosexual image to play sport. Furthermore, she concludes that women within the team were confrontational, even demonstrating an 'in your face' approach in challenging gender roles. Likewise, Finley (2010) also discovered athletes in Roller Derby challenging apologetic behaviours and developing alternative forms of femininity.

However, findings within rugby have been mixed on apologetic behaviour. Unlike Broad in 2001, Ezzell (2009) found high levels of apologetic behaviour on one collegiate rugby team. Pierman (2005: 82) explains the differences in findings as follows:

Indeed, if the apologetic exists in sport, then it manifests in any sphere where women compete with men, for the institutions women enter as minorities are by their very nature oppressive until they are changed (when aggressive behavior is no longer described as masculine; and emotions as feminine; and so forth).

More recent research acknowledges that changes are occurring; while there is still some evidence of stigma being attached to the lesbian label, women are becoming increasingly accepted within the masculine sport of rugby (Hardy 2015). As Hardy (2015: 164) notes: 'The women in the current study demonstrated no apologetic behaviours, (and) portrayed women's rugby in Canada as a safe place for lesbians and heterosexual women.'

The apologetic behaviour uncovered by Felshin (1974) is now actively challenged or dismissed by female athletes. Due to inconsistent findings, Davis-Delano *et al* (2009) developed a new questionnaire to try and validate the findings surrounding apologetic behaviour. They established that apologetic behaviour was still evident (Davis-Delano *et al* 2009).

Promotion of a 'heterosexy' image

An athlete's image can determine the level of media coverage they receive and the amount of money they can earn through endorsements. Where female athletes present a feminine image, questions regarding their sexuality are limited (Felshin 1974; Lenskyj 2003; Fink 2012), as femininity equates to heterosexuality (Griffin 1998). However, athletes who fail to conform to this image by being muscular and/or overly athletic, face questions regarding their sexuality (Cox & Thompson 2001). Previous research has indicated that the sporting media consistently refer to women either in terms of their sex appeal, their sexuality, or alternatively, as 'the-girl-next-door' (Kane & Lenskyi 1998; Lines 2001; Wensing & Bruce 2003). All of these serve to

promote the athlete's heterosexuality. Lines (2001) comments that this girl-next-door description of the female athlete is linked to tales of bravery and courage. Griffin (1998: 53) describes the different ways in which the media portrays female athletes: '(1) the sexy beauty queen, (2) the wholesome girl next door, (3) the cute little pixie, (4) the bitchy slut, (5) the wife and mom.' Griffin (1998) explains that throughout the history of women's sport, athletes have had to occupy one of these categories in order to get media coverage and generate greater income.

Women who play sport challenge gender norms and therefore need to counteract this by adopting certain behaviours and body images to raise their feminine capital. Women can excel within the sporting environment as long as they exhibit (real or feigned) interest in men (Cahn 1994a; Hargreaves 1994). However, if women fail to conform to extreme notions of heterosexual femininity, they may be labelled a lesbian and seen to enjoy a physical advantage within sport (Griffin 1998), according to the stereotype. As an example of this, tennis player Amelie Mauresmo's body was heavily scrutinised by players and media alike. Hargreaves (2000: 149) notes fellow pro Lindsay Davenport's comments regarding Mauresmo that 'She has guy's shoulders, and looks better suited to the shot put.' Interestingly the media failed to acknowledge that Davenport not only towered over Mauresmo by around five and a half inches and weighed over thirty pound more (Tredway 2014). Although Davenport's statistics showed her to be both taller and heavier than Mauresmo, it was the musculature of Mauresmo that was seized upon as she challenged traditional gender stereotypes.

The image of sporting women in the media has become sexualised to hegemonic heterosexual male standards precisely to reaffirm heterosexuality. Burton Nelson (1994: 199) explains the rationale behind this:

There are too many of us [women] now. Almost two million high school girls play organised sports; sixteen million women play softball. They can't all be lesbians. Could they? What if they were? A world populated by lesbian amazon athletes? Too horrifying. So the myth has changed. Now our athletic bodies have been appropriate as decorative objects for male pleasure.

The heterosexualisation of athletes allows their performances to be undermined and trivialised (Duncan & Messner 1998; Eastman & Billings 2000). The media focus on athlete's bodies and clothing undermines their athletic prowess and also reinforces the feminine image a woman must present to prevent or limit homosexual suspicion. This is one means by which lesbian women effectively navigate homophobia within sport.

It is not simply clothing that serves to promote a heterosexy image. Athletes with short hair have also been 'tainted' by the lesbian label, too (Volkwein-Caplan & Ray 2005). To counteract this connection with lesbianism, some athletes have endeavoured to promote their femininity. Athletes have done this through having long hair and dressing in ways that enhance their femininity when outside the sporting arena, especially when the media are present (Cox & Thompson 2001).

This feminine or heterosexy appeal creates other problems for women. Female athletes may find it degrading, but more worryingly, such a presentation enables men to see women as readily available sex objects, whether this is justifiable or not. The heterosexy image portrays women as objects of erotic fantasy, which regardless of sexual orientation, demeans women's athletic performance (Griffin 1998). Female athletes thereby become hypersexualised under the public gaze, with athletic prowess undermined. Thus women who do not meet the visual expectations of the heterosexual male gaze inherently have an image problem (Knight & Giuliano 2003). This process of feminisation enable lesbian women to take part in sport, but possibly to the detriment of their psychological wellbeing. However, this image of the desirable female athlete is not just reinforced by the media, but also by sporting administrations.

Governing bodies of sports readily use the feminine image to promote their sport. Burrough *et al* (1995) note how the Australian cricket board have enforced a dress code that dictates women should wear skirts or dresses to official events. Furthermore, managers in the French women's football team studied by Mennesson and Clément (2003) had organised 'girly days' where again only dresses and skirts were deemed appropriate attire. There was a suggestion from the Amateur International Boxing Association that female boxers at the London 2012 Olympics

should wear skirts. However, following a backlash from female boxers, they backed down on the idea that skirts should be compulsory. More recently, some sports have actually challenged the expected feminine image. Finley (2010) notes that Roller Derby challenges the traditional concept of feminized sport; skaters actively confront the expected gender roles head on, using clothing and behaviour that promotes an alternative view of femininity (Finley 2010). Finley's research shows that there are potentially differences in cohorts, per sport and competitive environment.

Attacks on lesbians

Attacks on lesbian athletes include being labelled as sexual predators, being threatened of being dropped from the team, or even of being 'outed' to their parents. Some lesbian women have even suffered attacks on their property (Anderson & Bullingham 2013) or been subject to personal attacks resulting in injury (Caudwell 2007). To avoid such negative experiences and potential attacks on their character, lesbian women resort to such defensive tactics as silence, denial, apologetic behaviour and the promotion of a feminised body image. We have already seen that the threat of the lesbian label is a political tool used to ensure women conform to feminine behaviour patterns (Griffin 1998). Unlike men's sport, where heterosexual allies may speak out against homophobia, the threat of being labelled a lesbian prevents female heterosexual allies from speaking up from fear of acquiring the lesbian label (Griffin 2012). In this way, the lesbian label may not only impact lesbian athletes but also by association, heterosexual teammates, which in turn may see them suffer verbal or physical attacks.

Lesbian athletes exist beyond that which is deemed acceptable, as they do not fit into any of the previous categories as defined by Griffin (1998). Instead, they are subsumed within a separate group she terms 'lesbian bogeywomen'. This image may be conjured up within female sporting teams. Cox and Thompson (2001) explain how heterosexual women frame lesbian 'bogey' women as having male characteristics regarding sexual behaviour - for example, preying on women in a hostile or predatory manner. Lesbians have also been portrayed as sexual predators toward younger players and these accusations of sexual advances towards younger players create a toxic environment where the (innocent) accused no longer feel able to play for the

club (Hargreaves 1994). This predatory label is also used on lesbian coaches, who also suffer the grave indignity of being branded as paedophiles owing to the positions of power they occupy (Norman 2012). However, as Griffin (1992a) notes, there is no evidence to support lesbians as sexual predators. Female athletes are considerably more likely to face sexual violence from heterosexual men than they are from lesbian women according to statistical research (Griffin 1992a). Hargreaves concurs with this view, arguing that claims against lesbian women are 'unsubstantiated' (2000: 139) and that heterosexual men pose far more of a threat to women. The negative implications of being labelled a lesbian is clear from the above, as not only is their sexuality a matter for debate, they also suffer multiple character assassination via suggestions of paedophilia or predatory sexual behaviour. The lesbian label, and labelling via association, can be extremely damaging for individuals, coaches and teams.

Previous research has shown that in the past, lesbian women have faced physical and psychological threats at the hands of men, while participating in sport. The label of bogeywoman is used to define what is acceptable vis-a-vis unacceptable within sporting participation (Griffin 1998). However, the lesbian label affects all women, therefore the threat of the being labelled as such hangs over, and is detrimental to, any female player, regardless of their sexuality. As a result, as Cox and Thompson's (2001) study on football in New Zealand shows, some players choose to label themselves bisexual instead as a means of limiting stigmatisation and maintaining a distance from the lesbian label. However, within Roller Derby, skaters have shown that they are not fearful of the lesbian label and so find it unnecessary to distance themselves from lesbians (Finley 2010).

Attacks on lesbians in sport can vary from anti-lesbian policies among coaches, to players being dropped or verbally abused. Griffin (2012) suggests that negative recruitment policies for college athletes is still in evidence. Although some remain outspoken about homophobia, others are still use it as a means of recruiting. This suggests that there is still stigma attached to the lesbian label for the process of negative recruiting to be successful.

Griffin (2002) discusses how athletes within the US education system have to put up with lesbian-baiting which may take several forms. As Pharr (1997: 19) explains: 'Lesbian baiting is an attempt to control women by labelling us as lesbians... Lesbian baiting occurs when women are called lesbians because we resist male dominance and control.' Krane (1997) describes the psychological abuse that lesbians face in collegiate programmes, from verbal harassment, to being dropped from teams and threatened with exposure to parents by coaches.

Verbal and physical attacks may also take place, even damage to the property of some lesbians. Hargreaves (2000: 138) found a predominately lesbian team in the 1990s that regularly faced abuse with phrases used including 'you're disgusting', 'perverted sluts' and 'weirdos'. In England, Caudwell, (2007) found that a member of a lesbian football team in England had been physically assaulted. This occurred when she simply asked the men's team to vacate the training facility that had been booked for the women's team. While in America, Anderson and Bullingham (2013) found one athlete's car was vandalised and although never proven, she suspected her teammates were responsible. The range of attacks faced by lesbians can be verbal or physical but however such incidents occur, it is clear that the lesbian label remains threatening. The suspicion of being homosexual is damaging whether an athlete is lesbian or not, leading to assaults on the character and team position of the individual in question.

Preference for a male coach

The preference for appointing male coaches for women's teams in the American collegiate system has been a disappointing effect of Title IX (Griffin 1998; Washington & Karen 2001). The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the federal system that governs university sport, noted that this trend was continuing in their survey of 2010-2011. There are both sexist and homophobic reasons behind this shift towards male coaches. Male coaches, it is believed, are more effective as well as being better equipped to protect the team against any potential lesbian embarrassment (Griffin 1992a, 1998; Norman 2008). Additionally, male coaches can be used to camouflage the team where they previously had a lesbian image and this phenomenon is known as 'cloaking' (Thorngren 1991). In a study of online coaching

biographies, lesbian coaching staff are markedly underrepresented (Calhoun *et al* 2011) and this could be to ensure lesbianism is not associated with university programmes, which may have a negative effect on recruitment.

Jan Boxhill (1993) draws on personal experiences to describe the homophobia faced by lesbian coaches. She recounts how parents of potential athletes would ask her whether she was married and after the initial shock, she realised that parents were concerned about the presence of lesbians on the team and coaching staff. The administration on collegiate teams can also be responsible for developing and reinforcing homophobic environments (Fink *et al* 2012). The extent of homophobia in the 1980s is explained by Boxhill (1993: 29): 'The administration made it clear that they wanted either a married woman or a man, single or married, for the coaching position' to ensure that there could be no suggestion of lesbianism. Krane and Barber (2005) found coaches were asked about their personal lives during the interview to establish their sexual orientation.

When female athletes are appointed, the institution in question may go to great lengths to ensure that there is no association with the lesbian label. In 1979, Rene Portland began coaching at Penn State and for 25 years imposed a no lesbian policy; any athlete suspected was dropped from the team (Griffin 1998, 2012; Osborne 2007). Her coaching career only ended in 2007, following a legal battle brought by a former player, who claimed she had been dropped because of her sexuality. This example clearly shows the extent to which coaches went to distance themselves and the team from the impact and negativity surrounding the lesbian label.

By way of contrast, Cunningham (2012: 72) shows the positive effects that an open and inclusive environment can have on sporting institutions. He concludes:

The evidence is clear: not only do sport organizations have a moral and social obligation to provide a diverse and inclusive workplace, but it benefits them to do so. The advantages include improved internal processes, better external stakeholder relationships, and performance gains beyond what less inclusive organizations can realize.

However, it appears that this open and inclusive environment is a long way off within the US collegiate system. Today there is only one openly lesbian coach coaching at Division 1 level - Sherri Murrell at Portland State (Fink *et al* 2012).

The organising institutions of sport can have a significant effect on how inclusive environments for gay and lesbian athletes are. In recent research, Fink *et al* (2012) concluded that athletic departments have limited or no procedures to challenge homophobia and therefore the vast majority sustain an environment that is shrouded in silence and secrecy. Additionally, Melton and Cunningham (2014b) found that there are still issues around the employment of female coaches.

In England in the 1980s and 1990s, Hargreaves (1994) uncovers a similar pattern with regard to male coaches making inroads into women's sport; female coaches were becoming eclipsed by male coaches at all levels but most worryingly in the most senior positions. Since Hargreaves' (1994) research, there have been some high profile openly lesbian coaches - for example Hope Powell, the England women's football coach (1998-2013). Little research has been conducted on lesbian coaches in the UK, so comparisons with the homophobic collegiate system in America are difficult.

Norman (2012: 719) examines the experiences of lesbian coaches in the UK and concludes: 'The participants in my research recounted incidents of how everyday homophobia linked to being women is communicated in routine practices and interactions. These experiences left them feeling undervalued, trivialized, humiliated or framed as sexual predators.' Although the study only contained extracts from ten interviews, results clearly showed that lesbian coaches regularly face oppressive behaviour in the form of homophobic abuse and predatory insinuations (Norman 2012). Female coaches, particularly lesbian coaches, are in the minority even within women's sport and governing bodies appear to be apathetic in challenging both sexism and homophobia (Norman 2012). This shows that homophobia can affect athletes and coaches alike. The type and extent of homophobia may vary according to the climate within which athletes or coaches are competing and these various environments are outlined in the following sections.

Hostile environments for lesbian athletes

Griffin (1998) develops a taxonomy of climates that lesbians may face within a sporting environment. She uses a continuum from hostile, through conditionally tolerant, to open and inclusive (Griffin 1998). The hostile climate that lesbians might face can be incorporated within Anderson's (2009b) concept of homophobia (defined and discussed in chapter 4). Griffin (1998) denotes the hostile climate as one in which lesbian participation is not just disapproved of, but completely forbidden. However, the hostility goes beyond simple secrecy surrounding lesbianism, but one where lesbians are actually blamed for issues within sport (Griffin 1998). This creates problems for all women, as both homophobic and sexist attitudes are left unchallenged (Drury 2011).

Within a hostile environment, lesbian women may fear coming out and there may well be an expectation that lesbians keep their identity secret, ensuring that they 'maintain deep cover at all times' (Griffin 1998: 253). In hostile environments, lesbian women use silence as a survival strategy (Elling *et al* 2003; Lenskyj 2003); Hargreaves (2000: 95) describes breaking this silence and coming out as a 'heroic quest.' Krane and Barber (2005) found a similar environment for coaches within the American collegiate system.

There is evidence of this hostility extending across communities and within educational sporting environments (Lenskyj 1991). Within athletic departments in American educational facilities, there is an environment of silence surrounding lesbianism and departments appear disinterested in creating the cultural changes necessary to incorporate lesbian athletes (Fink *et al* 2012).

Research on specific sports shows particularly hostile individual environments. Some football environments have been found to be highly homophobic and lesbians have experienced clear issues with expressing their sexuality (Mennesson & Clément 2003). The Australian cricket environment in the 1990s has also been described as hostile to lesbian (Burroughs *et al* 1995). In the American collegiate system, two of twelve athletes interviewed by Anderson and Bullingham (2013) reported homophobic language being used by players on their team. A hostile environment

can therefore be defined as any climate where athletes must resort to survival strategies such as silence, denial or the projection of a feminised image. However, on a more positive note, the majority of these examples are dated and/or did not take place within the United Kingdom.

Conditionally tolerant environment for lesbian athletes

Within hostile environments, lesbian athletes are expected to remain in the closet to hide their sexual identity. However, within a conditionally tolerant climate, the closet still exists but is made of glass instead, where lesbians 'keep their identities 'secret' but everyone knows who they are' (Griffin 1998: 100). The concept of glass walls is evident within the world of business, where they are employed to segregate various minority groups to impede their progress within the corporate environment. In this way, minorities may view the other side, but can never break through the glass (Rowe 1990). Within the sporting environment, Dworkin and Messner (2002) describe a 'glass ceiling' for women in terms of muscular strength. Here it is not biological constraints at work, but restrictive gender roles which dictate women should remain attractive in the pursuit of a muscular physique. Plymire and Forman (2001) state that people involved in women's sport are compelled by strong cultural codes of heterosexuality; lesbians are effectively sworn to silence and kept locked in the closet to guarantee both media coverage and spectator numbers within women's sport. Within sporting bodies, employees demonstrably adhere to silence and conformity regarding the lesbian issue (Melton & Cunningham 2014a).

Within a conditionally tolerant climate, the issue is not lesbian participation but rather their visibility within sport; lesbians are allowed to participate providing they subscribe to a set of rules (Griffin 1998). This environment has more recently been described as 'don't ask, don't tell' (Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013), a policy implemented until recently within the US military. Within a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy, athletes may temporarily emerge from the closet to reveal their sexual identity, but after the revelation, normal play is resumed, with teammates ignoring the incident. In this way, the gay athlete is still denied transparency concerning their sexual identity (Anderson 2002). Krane and Barber (2005) have also discovered this climate within US coaching environments.

In Anderson's (2002) first study of openly gay athletes, he found that teams readily implemented 'don't ask, don't tell' policies. Of note within his study, gay athletes remained oblivious to this environment, even defending its existence. Anderson (2002) discovered that this policy of 'don't ask, don't tell' was practised between homosexual and heterosexual players, but also *between* two homosexual athletes. Gay athletes themselves helped to reinforce this climate, also having to remain within a glass closet, as nobody would talk about their sexuality post-revelation.

Similar findings are outlined in Anderson and Bullingham's (2013) study of openly lesbian athletes. Again, athletes defended a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy, claiming that sport was not the right forum for discussion on sexuality. Within a conditionally tolerant environment, lesbian athletes have to conform to a set of rules which include silence surrounding their sexuality (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). The lesbian athletes in this study conformed to their teams' ethos of silence and therefore the environment remained one of conditional tolerance. Anderson (2002) calls this downplaying of discriminatory practices by its victims as 'reverse relative deprivation.'

The theory of 'reverse relative deprivation' in relation to openly gay athletes originates from Anderson's work (2002, 2005b, 2009b). He explains that reverse relative deprivation occurs in this way: where there is an 'absence of severe expected intolerance, their [gay athletes] sense of how well things went may have been artificially boosted (2005b: 90). Gay athletes reflect on their experiences, comparing themselves to those less fortunate than themselves. Even though some athletes had lost friends following disclosure of their sexuality, or had endured silent treatment for teammates, they still described their coming out experiences as quite positive (Anderson 2005b). Athletes failed to notice that they were, in fact, existing within a conditionally tolerant environment. Because they had anticipated direct hostility, they believed themselves to have 'got off lightly' and viewed the experience and environment as positive. The gay athletes interviewed actually bought into this environment, not only in failing to talk openly about their own sexuality, but also by normalising their behaviour through taking part with heterosexual conversation. They all failed to recognise that this behaviour served to negate their identities as gay

men (Anderson 2002). Anderson discovered during his interviews that athletes were expecting outcomes such as physical assault or de-selection following disclosure of their sexual identity; in the face of passivity, they deemed the experience positive.

Similar results of reverse relative deprivation have been found in interviews on lesbian athletes in the American collegiate system. Anderson and Bullingham (2013: 11) conclude: 'Although they have not been fully accepted onto their teams, because (most) had not been dismissed or severely ostracised, they described their experience as a positive one—matters could have been much worse.' These athletes were also participating within a conditionally tolerant environment or within a team adopting a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy. However, if athletes had been participating within an open and inclusive environment, reverse relative deprivation would not occur, as homophobia would not be present.

Interestingly, Anderson (2002) found that gay athletes were only condoned by the team if they conformed to a winning mentality and the team were successful. Anderson (2005b: 23) describes how 'masculine capital' aids the reception of the athletes who come out. He defines the masculine capital dynamic as follows: '...the more a male adheres to these traits the more he raises his masculine capital – his worth among other boys and men. Anderson discovered in both his research of 2002 and 2005 that the more valuable the gay player is to the team's success, the more likely it is that he will be accepted. Indeed, there was a distinct pattern between the athlete's importance to the team and how well they were received when they came out as gay (Anderson 2002). Athletic ranking - otherwise known as athletic capital – relates to how integral a player is to the success of the team. Anderson (2002) found that 22 of the 26 of the openly gay athletes he interviewed had high athletic capital. Thus, athletic capital may influence the decision to come out, especially within conditionally tolerant climates. Anderson also found in his initial study that athletes expected to face homophobia when they came out, either in the form of abuse or deselection.

Since 2002, Anderson has updated his research on athletic capital. In 2011⁵, Anderson found that athletes who came out did not expect to face any homophobia from teammates. Perhaps most interestingly, Anderson found that athletic capital had been nullified as a value in 2011⁶; it was no longer the top athletes only coming out, but fringe members of the team were also disclosing their sexuality. Research on female athletes' capital is limited, but Anderson and Bullingham (2013) found that all of the lesbians they interviewed back in 2002 were valuable to the team, with seven even calling themselves the most valuable player. This research demonstrates that the possession of pre-disclosure high athletic capital influences the decision to come out. Therefore, high athletic capital is also a currency and coping mechanism adopted by lesbians to gain acceptance within a team.

Open and inclusive environment for lesbian athletes

Griffin's final category is an environment described as open and inclusive. This environment was viewed by Hargreaves as a distant dream for lesbian athletes back in the 1990s. Where an open environment has been achieved, lesbian women have been able to express their identity freely with some even using the sporting environment as a safe zone. Because of the high representation of lesbians within sport (Lenskyj 2003), athletes have found mutually supportive lesbian communities within sport (Cahn 1994a; Griffin 1998). However, this support mechanism only exists where athletes are 'out.' Those athletes who are the first on their team to come out are defined as 'trailblazers.'

Trailblazers often spark off the coming out process for team-mates. They set a precedent and an example to closeted athletes of what they might expect post-disclosure (Fink *et al* 2012). The importance of trailblazers is also noted by Hargreaves (2000: 146), who describes an openly lesbian athlete as someone who 'becomes a special symbol of resistance and promise.' Similarly, Griffin (1998) shows how high profile lesbian athletes influence values and help educate others. Likewise, Melton and Cunningham (2014a) note that when sportsmen and women come out,

⁵ Anderson 2011a

⁶ Anderson 2011a

they create an opportunity to challenge preconceived ideas concerning human sexuality.

In his 2002 study, Anderson discovered that gay athletes were participating in a conditionally tolerant climate. The situation had improved by his 2005 study and by 2011, all athletes were found to be competing within an open and inclusive environment. Further evidencing the changing cultural conditions for gay men in sport, Adams and Anderson (2011) monitored the effect of a gay player coming out on an American football team and discovered an open and inclusive environment, even within a Catholic college where homophobia may have been anticipated. Changes in the sporting environment for gay and lesbian athletes can be seen in posts on the website *outsports.com*, too; here openly gay players blog about the coming out process (Anderson 2011b). Anderson (2012: 41) summarises his decade of research in America, England, Australia and Canada, writing:

1) We can no longer assume homophobia based on team sport affiliation; and therefore 2) We can no longer assume homophobia based on simply being a young male – the relationship between masculinity and youth is changing.

Travers and Deri (2010: 495) have found that climates for transgendered athletes are also changing. They note, 'Our data indicates that the climate is welcoming for all of our participants at least some of the time.' This represents a significant shift for the LGBT sporting community.

Some inclusive environments were uncovered by Fink *et al* (2012) in their study of the US collegiate system. Likewise, Hardy (2015) found a positive environment for female rugby players in Canada. However, more research is needed to discover if the positive results from the US and Canada are present within sporting cultures in the United Kingdom. Therefore, this study will examine the extent and type of homophobia faced by lesbian athletes within their teams (internally) as well as externally through spectators and opposition.

Chapter 4: Overview of Gender and Sexuality Concepts

Introduction

Hegemonic femininity (developed by Connell from her theory of hegemonic masculinity), or emphasised femininity, is one of the theories examined and critiqued by feminist scholars. However, hegemonic masculinity was developed during a time of high homophobia, which Anderson (2009b) claims could actually be described as homohysteria. Homohysteria has, until recently, only been applied to the plight of gay men in sport (Anderson & Bullingham 2013; Bullingham *et al* 2014; Worthen 2014). Lesbian women also competed in the 1980s and 1990s, but unlike men, some braved 'coming out of the closet'. Homohysteria does not just affect lesbian women; heterosexual women face being tarnished with the highly damaging 'lesbian label' purely through association with lesbian teammates (Griffin 1998).

Organising Principles in Society

Compulsory heterosexuality, driven by feminist scholars such as Rich (1980), was the precursor to heteronormativity (Jackson 2006). Rich (1980) examined compulsory heterosexuality as an organising principle within a society that is socially constructed. Ferez (2012) concurred, confirming that compulsory heterosexuality is a constant, reinforced by a variety of social interactions. Knoppers and McDonald (2010) show sport to operate as a social institution, in which the concept of compulsory heterosexuality is constantly reinforced.

Compulsory heterosexuality is not regarded as a choice within society; it is seen as the norm and therefore does not require explanation (Rich 1980; Caudwell 2002). By contrast, homosexuality requires an explanation as it challenges the 'normal' socially constructed boundaries and is seen as deviant (Rich 1980; Jackson 2006). As Fusco (1998) notes, those who do not conform to compulsory heterosexuality remain invisible and miss out on privileges enjoyed by the heterosexual norm. Although these principles relate to society as a whole, sport can be described as a microcosm of society and therefore compulsory heterosexuality can be applied within the sporting context.

Furthermore, compulsory heterosexuality as an organising principle results in a negative social experience for lesbians. Rich (1980: 632) describes a sliding scale where lesbians are perceived 'from deviant to abhorrent, or simply rendered invisible.' Lenskyj (2003: 39) also notes that this discrimination is uni-directional; in other words, heterosexuals face no discrimination, or as she puts it, 'heterophobia'. Lesbian athletes are part of a social institution that is not only designed and controlled by men, but also where lesbianism is either ignored or worse, actively discouraged. As a result, Hargreaves (2000) speaks of a power imbalance between heterosexual and lesbian women that is reinforced through homophobic abuse and harassment. This reinforcement occurs beyond the locker room; the media regularly subtly confirm an athlete's sexuality to an audience.

Compulsory heterosexuality is expressed and reinforced through the media focus on athlete's relationships with the opposite sex (Stevenson 2002). This is done within broadcast commentary, but also in the print media, where athletes' relationships are regularly publicised, a clear gendered practice within sporting media. Indeed, athletes are encouraged to demonstrate heterosexuality, to ensure they are not labelled lesbian (Hargreaves 1994, 2000). Blinde and Taub (1992a) show the influence of compulsory heterosexuality in describing how female athletes adopt socially acceptable (heterosexual) behaviour, thereby suggesting that lesbian behaviour is unacceptable.

As Lenskyj (1986) notes, the study of compulsory heterosexuality is particularly relevant for women in sport, since sport can be defined as a male preserve. As Rich (1980) explains, compulsory heterosexuality is a form of power that is controlled by male denial of lesbian sexuality. Rich (1980: 642) examines the use of compulsory heterosexuality as a form of power in the work place:

A lesbian, closeted in her job because of heterosexist prejudice, is not simply forced into denying the truth of her outside relationships or private life; her job depends on her pretending to be not merely heterosexual but a heterosexual *woman*, in terms of dressing and playing the feminine, deferential role required of "real" women.

However, it is not simply the power relations between men and women that are unequal. Hargreaves (2000) asserts that lesbian and heterosexual women also face unequal power relations. Lesbians can challenge and resist compulsory heterosexuality by being open about their sexuality. Caudwell (2006) notes that in lesbian-only teams, there is a clear and defined relationship between their sporting participation and political agendas.

Sport as an institution reinforces compulsory heterosexuality, particularly for male and female athletes competing in traditionally male sports (Hargreaves 2000; Anderson 2002). Compulsory heterosexuality would be seen by radical feminists and lesbians as the key factor in understanding the oppression of women in sport (Hargreaves 2000). Adams *et al* (2005) describe the influence of compulsory heterosexuality on perceptions of sportswomen, stating that society struggles with the idea that women can work out and become athletic - even muscular - without retaining imposed gendered behaviours, such as wearing makeup or jewellery. Hargreaves (2000) concurs, demonstrating how women fear the label muscularity with its close relationship to the lesbian label. Conversely within male sport, as Anderson (2002) shows, any behaviour considered effeminate is automatically viewed as 'gayness' and deemed entirely unacceptable.

Like compulsory heterosexuality, heteronormativity is an organising principle within society that views heterosexuality as the norm (Calhoun *et al* 2011). The system of heteronormativity allows a heterosexual patriarchal culture to flourish (Fusco 1998). Theories of heteronormativity focus on how heterosexual norms are constructed, maintained and reinforced in everyday situations and through institutional structures (Jackson 2006). Engh (2011) notes that the system of heteronormativity reaches far beyond the realm of sexual relationships, also affecting other aspects of relationships, including but not limited to, roles and behaviours.

Sport has traditionally been an institution that perpetuates heteronormativity and allows its principles to be reinforced and reproduced, and this is particularly evident in conditionally tolerant environments for openly gay (male) athletes (Anderson 2011a). Indeed, the construction of sporting events such as the Gay Games have occurred because of (and not merely in spite of) sport's reinforcement of

heteronormativity (McDonald & Eagles 2012). Anderson (2002: 874) states that this happens ‘through the use of homophobic discourse gendered to discredit homosexuality and treat it as something loathsome.’

Not only can heteronormativity be challenged, but the level of heteronormativity can also change within a subculture – in this case, the subculture being the institution of sport. Since his initial research on gay athletes in 2002, Anderson has examined changes in society with regard to heteronormativity. Anderson and colleagues have particularly noted changes in the level of heteronormativity within undergraduate men and within teams (Anderson 2012; Ripley *et al* 2012). Indeed, heterosexual men also appear to be challenging heteronormativity through engaging in same-sex kissing within a university in Britain (Anderson 2012). In one case, a decrease in heteronormativity was caused by an athlete coming out in a US Catholic male soccer team (Adams & Anderson 2011). For men, particularly undergraduates, it appears that the importance of heteronormativity is decreasing.

However, this decline in heteronormative behaviour cannot be considered universal within the social institution of sport. As Cleland (2013: 9) suggests with regard to football in the UK: ‘Heteronormativity remains privileged through the reference to a player’s sexuality remaining a private matter.’ However, the situation for women is more complex, as they not only face sexism but also homophobia when competing in sport, a point made earlier.

Engh (2010) states that it is the constant attachment of a labels to women who fail to meet the expectation of heteronormativity which helps reinforce widespread homophobia within sport. Drury (2011: 424) highlights the complexities within football:

It is important to acknowledge that the workings of homophobic and heteronormative discourses within women’s football spaces are by no means straightforward. An understanding of complexities and tensions inherent within these discourses allows for the exploration of the various means by which they may be resisted, and more importantly, transformed.

When Martina Navratilova came out, she challenged the perception of tennis as a heteronormative sporting arena (Vincent & Crossman 2007). This suggests why Navratilova received such negative media coverage. Caudwell (2002) explains that women's football has traditionally been an area of heteronormativity. This is maintained through the idea that heterosexuality is normal and homosexuality is beyond the boundaries of normalcy.

Broad (2001: 195) examined a US rugby team and unlike other research of the time, discovered that women playing rugby adopted an 'in your face' approach and were proud to confront traditional gender norms. In relation to heteronormativity, she found that the women openly defied any expectation of heterosexuality by ensuring the acceptance of diverse sexual identities. Broad's 2001 study was unusual, as contemporaneous studies found heteronormativity to be reinforced by sport (Caudwell 2002; Engh 2010; Hamilton 2007). Broad's (2001) findings have been supported more recently by Fink and colleagues (2012), who discovered various examples of heteronormative behaviours being challenged in sporting environments.

In more recent research, Better (2014: 37) uncovers women who refuse labels imposed on them as well as increased sexual fluidity among women. In fact, she concludes: 'Maybe today no sex or sexual identity is normative.' Previously, as Hamilton (2007) notes, lesbians faced a choice of whether to be seen but unaccepted/ignored, or to remain closeted yet enjoy social inclusion. However, it appears binary concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality are shifting, with the reluctance of many women to label their own sexuality (Adams & Anderson 2011; Better 2014; Davis-Delano 2014). This is an interesting finding with regard to the potential reduction of animosity in sports teams. A rejection of sexuality labels reduces both the stigma of the lesbian label and the need to conform to the heterosexual norm.

Finley (2010) also found women actively challenging heterosexuality norms within Roller Derby teams, though those authors writing of such challenges to heteronormativity (Drury 2011; Fink *et al* 2012) concur that the impetus for change is openly lesbian athletes competing in an open and inclusive environment. This challenge to the heterosexual norm can be seen as a recent change. Previously

Connell (1995) had found that, women play sport within hierarchies, with lesbian women near or at the bottom. Similar hierarchical structures can be found within male homosexual sports teams.

Analysis and application of hegemonic femininity

In order to understand the theory of hegemonic or emphasised femininity, it is essential to consider the original theory of hegemonic masculinity. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is based on the premise that there is a hierarchy within differing forms of masculinity, with one level always enjoying an elevated social status. The men at the top of the hierarchy fit a certain mould: they are 'socially elite, white, Western, heterosexual and able-bodied (Vincent & Crossman 2007: 82).'

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) described the top of the hierarchy as the point of highest regard. The importance of this hierarchical concept is underlined by Connell and Messerschmidt, who claim the significant impact of this theory, not only in studies of men, but also in studies of gender and social hierarchy. It is not without its critics however, since the theory has maintained a rather static position since its inception, with various questions being left unanswered. Hegemonic masculinity is a mobile theory, meaning that different men can challenge the hegemonic ideal at any given time, but those who operate at the pinnacle of the hierarchy hold the power. The only stratum of males who cannot reach the pinnacle is gay men, as they sit at the bottom of the hierarchy at all times. Women do not even feature.

One criticism of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is that despite alluding to the existence of multiple femininities, these are neither described nor discussed, as the focus is on masculinities (Schippers 2007). According to Schippers (2007: 85⁷) a theory that describes 'the hierarchical femininities *as central to male dominant gender relations* has not yet been developed.' Finley (2010) provides a reason for this; hegemonies relates to power within relationships yet women lack power over their female peers as the dominant power masculine.

Krane (2001: 117) uses the term hegemonic femininity to describe expectations surrounding women's behaviour. Authors have attempted to describe various traits

⁷ All italics are the authors.

presented by an individual demonstrating the idealised form of hegemonic femininity. For example, the hegemonic female body would be slim but toned (Krane *et al* 2004), while their personality would be 'emotional, passive, dependent, maternal, compassionate and gentle.'

Krane (2001) uses Butler's concept of the 'performative act' to describe how women behave in a sporting context. Krane *et al* (2004) note that the concept of femininity is learned and then performed by women, with athletes also appearing to have an understanding of how they should present themselves and behave in order to be successful. Finley (2010) adds that any analysis needs to go beyond the gendered performance and also consider the importance of relationship. According to Choi (2000), women who appear to be conforming to the feminine ideal receive greater plaudits. On the other hand, as Stone and Gorga (2014: 350) note, lesbians are seen as a 'double threat to hegemonic femininity.' Therefore, lesbians pledging for sororities remain silent or delay disclosure of their sexual orientation (Stone & Gorga 2014). This situation is replicated in sport, where athletes are already challenging hegemonic femininity by simple virtue of taking part, therefore, coming out as lesbian would only magnify the distance from idealised perceptions of hegemonic femininity.

Schippers (2007: 94) redefines Connell's explanation of hegemonic femininity and places the relationship between masculinity and femininity at the centre of her theory:

Hegemonic femininity consists of characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

Schippers (2007) argues that male domination is aided by hegemonic femininity, as hierarchical behaviour amongst women in terms of femininities reinforces gender order, as men retain their place at the top of the hierarchy. Lesbian women fit into Schippers' (2007: 95) schema as '*Pariah femininities* instead of subordinate because they are deemed, not so much inferior, as contaminating to the relationship between

masculinity and femininity.’ Finley (2010: 362) develops this further, stating that pariah femininities ‘are stigmatized and less threatening to hegemonic gender relations.’ However, the suggestion that any femininity can be hegemonic is questionable, as in a patriarchal society masculinity will always be dominant. In other words, even if a woman performs as close to the feminised ideal as possible, she will still be - and always will be - subordinate to men.

Hegemonic femininity was re-evaluated and redefined as emphasised femininity (Connell 2005). Finley (2010) states that the development of emphasised femininity has led to a two tiered system, limiting analysis around women and femininities. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe how irregularity occurs due to society being organised along patriarchal lines, where masculinities and femininities cannot be considered as equals. Importantly, emphasised femininity is always considered as a submissive position in relation to the patriarchal hegemony (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) - though this theory assumes that all men within society reinforce and reproduce patriarchy, which may no longer be the case with men displaying increasingly more inclusive attitudes and behaviours (Anderson 2009b). Both hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity are socially constructed, but according to Vincent and Crossman (2007), the hierarchical process itself is not stable. Although one form of masculinity or femininity may sit at the pinnacle, these masculinities and femininities may be challenged, which can strengthen or weaken their position at the top, or the structure as a whole.

Carlson (2010: 429) defines emphasised femininity as ‘an idealized version of Western womanhood that posits that women be physically inferior to men, weak, docile, concerned with their appearance, and attentive to enhancing their heterosexual desirability.’ A key point highlighted by Schippers (2007) underlines that the idealised form of femininity allows men to seize control at any time within the relationship.

Grindstaff and West (2011) are also critical of emphasised femininity, pointing out the limitations of an idealised form of based purely on female submission to men. Schippers (2007) also points out the restrictions within this theory, since Connell has focused almost exclusively on masculinity in its various forms, failing to critically

examine diverse forms of femininity. Pope (2012) highlights that not all women want to conform to this societal expectation of femininity and prefer to assume a tomboy identity to become true football fans. This may be because, as Caudwell (2003: 378) explains, 'tomboy does not always carry a 'deviant' sexual connotation. In fact, the simplicity of Connell's argument - that all men have power over all women - ignores any impact that inter-sex stratification could have on the subject of power. On the subject of power, Anderson (2007) also discusses the limitations of Connell's argument by posing the interesting point that some women have power over some men and this is not accounted for in Connell's theory.

Several critics have assessed theories on the plight of lesbians in sport. Lenskyj (2003) notes that emphasised femininity does not address either homophobia or the pressure facing lesbian women to remain closeted. Lenskyj (2003) proposes instead that increased female participation in sport, coupled with societal changes, means that women are under less pressure to present an overtly emphasised feminine image. Indeed, Hardy (2015: 164) believes female rugby players are showing a 'resistant version of femininity.' It appears that there is no longer a dominant form of hegemonic femininity that women need conform to (Hardy 2015). Similar results have been found in women playing Roller Derby, who are actively challenging the hegemonic norm (Finley 2010).

Homophobia

Cultural trends in homophobia have been tracked by General Social Survey (GSS) data. Keleher and Smith (2012) used GSS data to demonstrate that there was a peak of homophobia during the 1980s but that since 1991, there has been growing acceptance of same sex relationships. Keleher and Smith (2012: 1308) write:

From 1973 through 1991 70-78% of the public thought that sexual relations between two adults of the same sex were always wrong. By 2010, the number saying that gay and lesbian relations were always wrong had fallen to 46%.

Even with increased acceptance, Anderson (2009b) provides a word of caution when citing GSS data, stating that any data findings should be considered carefully, since

the wording of the question could potentially allow participants to record a homophobic answer unintentionally. In particular, he refers to the constant use of the word 'wrong' in questions: is homophobia always wrong, sometimes wrong, never wrong. For Anderson, whatever the GSS data shows, the reality is actually better (Anderson 2009b) than the harsh viewpoint conveyed by statements including the word 'wrong'. Using the same methodology, and therefore laying itself open to the same criticisms, The *British Social Attitudes Survey* (BSAS) shows the apex of the view of homosexuality as 'always being wrong' occurring in 1987. Given both the GSS and BSAS data, it can be concluded that homophobia peaked in both the US and UK between 1987 and 1988.

Reflecting on the 1980s, Anderson (2009b) describes how US and British cultures were not just homophobic, in fact both cultures were *homohysterical*. Anderson and colleagues have used the concept of homophobia to describe the plight of gay men in the 1980s and into the 1990s. However, the concept has only recently been applied to lesbian women (Anderson & Bullingham 2013; Bullingham *et al* 2014) therefore the research so far on homophobia is based on men's sport.

Anderson (2009b) describes how homophobia occurs when the general public realise that anyone can be homosexual, that their neighbour or colleague could be something other than 'normal'. The impact of homophobia ensures that men act and behave in a certain manner to ensure their heterosexuality is maintained. There are three variables incorporated within homophobia (Anderson 2011a: 87):

- (1) Mass awareness that homosexuality exists as a static sexual orientation,
- (2) a cultural zeitgeist of disapproval towards homosexuality, and (3)
- disapproval of men's femininity because it is associated with homosexuality

These three variables interact, resulting in differences in men's behaviours (Anderson 2011b). However, it is essential to have an understanding of cultural differences. As Anderson explains (2010: 568):

For example a highly homophobic culture that believes homosexuals do not exist within their religion is not homophobic. This is why men in many highly homophobic Muslim countries are permitted to engage in homosexual

intimacy without threat to their publicly perceived heterosexual identities:
They do not believe someone can be gay.

This demonstrates how it is possible for men to engage in physical gestures such as hand-holding within certain cultures with no suggestion of their being homosexual (Anderson 2010). This shows the importance of cultural context in interpreting behaviours within the research process.

Anderson (2009b) highlights the synchronisation that occurred in the 1980s:- the revival of religious fundamentalism coupled with an exceptionally homophobic atmosphere created a culture of homohysteria. Anderson (2009b: 86) describes the role played by the church in stirring up a level of homophobia leading to homohysteria:

At a time in which church attendance began to decline, the advent of cable television brought various ministries into millions of living rooms. Christianity used the hysteria about homosexuality to milk money from callers. Unfortunately this further helped inspire Christianity to move from the pulpits and into the political arena.

However, it was not just the church that helped to create this homohysteria; society was gripped by the HIV/AIDS virus which allowed homosexuals to become stigmatised as diseased (Anderson 2009b).

The spread of the HIV/AIDS virus revealed the proportion of homosexual men that existed within society so that homosexuality was no longer invisible. The shock value lay not only in the sheer quantity of men that were dying, but that these men appeared normal to all intents and purposes, existing within normal families (Anderson 2009b 2011a). The HIV/AIDS epidemic also modified the stereotype of a gay man from an effeminate man to an effeminate man with an incurable disease (Anderson 2009b). This led to gay males idealising the ultra-masculine male body, as they attempted to project an image of physical fitness and good health in the face of such tragedy (Anderson 2009b). Men also shied away from expressing emotional frailty or having any form of physical contact with male friends or teammates (Anderson 2012). Men distanced themselves from other men to ensure that their

heterosexuality was not threatened (Pronger 1990; Ibson 2002). Adams (2011) explains that in order to be a real man at that time, certain characteristics were required – firstly, there should be a detachment from any form of feminised behaviour, secondly there should be a complete disassociation from homosexuality. In terms of behaviour and attitude, expectations for men during times of homophobia - in society in general and within a sporting context – are all too clear. The situation for women within sport is more complex, since participating in sport alone may automatically lead to assumptions of homosexuality (Engh 2010).

Homophobia for women

In the 1980s and 1990s, numerous scholars researched the relationship between women and sexuality (Lenskyj 1986, 1995; Cahn 1994a; Hargreaves 1994; Griffin 1998). Although these authors focused on the plight of lesbian athletes, the cultural environment was significantly more homophobic than today. Anderson's notion of homophobia was written retrospectively, based on both his own experiences as a high school coach as well as several research studies (2002, 2005a).

Homophobia in women's sport has been in spotlight since the 1980s, when Martina Navratilova came out publicly at a time of high homophobia. Homophobia for women is different and more complex than for men, because men participating in sport reinforce their masculinity and therefore their heterosexuality, while women participating in sport challenge traditional gender boundaries and attract suspicion of homosexuality by virtue of participation alone (Hargreaves 2000; Engh 2010). In the 1980s, the feminist movement shifted its focus from the political arena to cultural institutions, including sports (Hargreaves 1994). Academics such as Hargreaves (1994) and Lenskyj (1991) began to highlight the inequality surrounding women's participation in sport and it is within this context that issues surrounding sexuality and sport for women were first identified (Bandy 2005). This stands in contrast to the homophobia surrounding men in the same time period, where any mention of homosexuality was greeted with disdain and even violence. Authors such as Griffin (1998), Hargreaves (1994) and Lenskyj (1991) were openly writing about lesbians in sport in the US, UK and Canada at this time. Whilst their findings were largely negative, at least (female) homosexuality and sport were being discussed, written

and published about, raising the profile of lesbian experience within sport. More recent research on lesbians in sport have taken a post-structuralist position (Caudwell 2006, 2007; Drury 2011; Roy 2013; Tredway 2014; Hardy 2015).

The application of homophobia to women's experiences in sport has been developed by various academics (Anderson & Bullingham 2013; Bullingham *et al* 2014; Worthen 2014). Worthen (2014: 141) has adapted the concept of homophobia and directly applied it to heterosexual women. She explains under what categories homophobia can be measured in women:

- (1) social inclusion of *lesbian and bisexual* peers
- (2) the embrace of once-masculinized artefacts
- (3) *sexualisation* and the 'party-time rule' of homosexuality
- (4) increased assertiveness of heterosexual women.

Worthen's (2014) application of this concept has not been used with empirical data until now.

The social inclusion of all women, including bisexual and lesbian women, is not achievable within homophobic cultures. However, as Worthen (2014) explains, heterosexual women are now able to enjoy friendships within lesbians without the fear of being labelled lesbian themselves. This represents a significant shift, enabling all women to challenge homophobia in a way not seen before. This has potential impact for women in sport, as a decline in homophobia increases the likelihood of heterosexual allies, which may in turn increase direct challenges to homophobia.

Worthen (2014) points out that the women can now wear more masculine styled clothing without fear of being labelled as lesbian. However, references to 'masculinised artefacts' is more specific to analyses of sporting environments. The impact that this has had on sporting participation, particularly within sports that require physical aggression (Worthen uses boxing as an example), is that women are now able to develop a muscular physique without concern (Worthen 2014). As Worthen (2014: 144) acknowledges: 'Heterosexual women are actively embracing a masculine sporting identity that pushes the boundaries of their own femininity.' This

cultural shift is also visible in sporting events. Pope (2012: 189) notes that women are now even adopting 'tom-boy' identities to support football teams. These changes are significant for women competing in team sports, as historically participation alone has called an athlete's sexuality into question.

Worthen's (2014: 144) sexualisation and party time rule links to Anderson's 'one-drop rule' of homosexuality. Worthen (2014: 144) explains the difference:

As a result, heterosexual women do not endure the restraints of the "one time rule" of homosexuality, rather they are social rewarded (by heterosexual men) if they engage in "party-time" same-sex sexual behaviors whereby public kissing and affection is celebrated and exploited.

Heterosexual female athletes have been known to end friendships with lesbian players and to create distance between themselves and lesbian teammates, in order to avoid any association with homosexuality (Hargreaves 2000; Krane & Barber 2003). In this respect, lesbianism is looked upon as contagious and this concept of contagion links in with Anderson's 'one time rule of homosexuality (2009b: 142).' Anderson (2009b) borrows this concept from Harris's (1964) one-drop theory of race, in which 'one drop of 'black blood' renders an individual black (Aspinall 2003: 280).

Anderson (2009b: 142) takes this concept and applies it to homosexual orientations:

This one-way application of the one-time rule has traditionally created a double jeopardy for men who reveal that they have experience with any form of socially coded same-sex sexual behaviours, as it excludes them from achieving the requisites of heterosexuality and diminishes their masculine capital.

Both Anderson (2009b) and Aspinall (2003) relate this concept to individuals, to sexuality and race respectively. However, this principle could also be adapted for women's team sports. If one player on a team comes out, she not only affects her own standing within the team but also that of her teammates. The one-drop rule of homosexuality is applied to the entire group: one player coming out casts aspersions on her teammates. In this way, women coming out in sport face a more difficult

scenario, as they potentially not only damage their own image and reputation, but also threaten the image of their teammates and club. However, with the party-time rule of homosexuality, coupled with women's increasing sexual fluidity (as identified by Better 2014), it could be argued that such associations are no longer relevant.

In a culture of declining homophobia, women's behaviour has changed. Worthen (2014) draws on examples of overt sexualisation of same-sex behaviours in mainstream culture, for example Katy Perry's pop hit *I Kissed a Girl* in 2008. However, unlike men who kiss their friends as a sign of friendship (Anderson *et al* 2012), women are kissing women for the attention of men (Worthen 2014). Although Worthen (2014) acknowledges that this is not an entirely positive effect of declining homophobia, given its exploitative potential, it has positive implications for other aspects of society. The freedom of women to enjoy same-sex company and affection in turn reduces the impact of the lesbian label and this is of benefit to all women. This has particular advantages for women's sport, given the negative effect of the lesbian label and its impact on all women, regardless of their sexuality.

The final point Worthen (2014) makes relates to assertion. She notes that traditionally, assertiveness has been directly associated with masculinity. Therefore, an assertive woman in a position of power is assumed to be a lesbian. However, with the decline of homophobia, this association has weakened. Worthen (2014: 245) concludes: 'Today, lessening homophobia is correlated with a reduced bias toward assertive women (and) the increased presence of women in leadership roles.' Therefore, women are now able to assert themselves and hold positions of power and responsibility without lesbian assumption.

Worthen's (2014) adaptation of the concept of homophobia is potentially useful when considering lesbian women competing within sporting cultures. Although this concept has not been applied to empirical research on women in sport, it allows an alternative approach based on research from the highly homophobic 1980s and 1990s. It should also be noted that Worthen's research was based on US culture, therefore there is some inconsistency in the decline of homophobia, in a nation where conservative religious environments are still very much present. Therefore,

more research is required within the United Kingdom to discover if this theory can be applied to other Western cultures outside of the US.

Chapter 5: Changing Climates

Introduction

A considerable amount of research on openly lesbian athletes was conducted in the 1990s (Lenskyj 1986, 1990, 1991, 1998; Cahn 1994a, 1994b, 1994c; Hargreaves 1994; Griffin 1998). The timing of the research is significant, as the 1980s and early 1990s include those years deemed 'homohysteria' by Anderson (2009b). Some research has been undertaken and published since 2012 (Cunningham 2012; Fink *et al* 2012; Hardy 2015), but the sample sizes have been small and relate solely to North America. In the United Kingdom, articles have been written on lesbian identified football teams (Caudwell 2002, 2006, 2007; Drury 2011), surfing culture (Roy 2013), tennis (Tredway 2014) and on the experiences of lesbian coaches and PE teachers (Sykes 2004; Norman 2008). While these studies have described attitudes and behaviour towards lesbian athletes, they have tended to be limited to one sporting culture, rather than covering a range of sports.

However, the same cannot be said for men's sport. Since Anderson's initial article in 2002, numerous authors have documented a steady decline in homophobia in men's sport (Anderson 2005a, 2005b, 2008, 2009a, 2011a; Anderson & McGuire 2010; Adams 2011; Adams & Anderson 2011; Cashmore & Cleland 2011; Cleland 2013; Magrath *et al* 2013; Magrath 2015). This chapter aims to examine the decrease of homophobia in both society and sport.

Changing society

Numerous factors can be argued for the steady decline in homophobia, including politics, religion, media, the internet and openly gay celebrities. Times have changed since Martina Navratilova lost her sponsorship in the 1980s and since Ellen DeGeneres had her television show cancelled following disclosure of her sexuality in 1997. Ellen DeGeneres now has her own daily talk show and over 54.8 million followers on Twitter. In 2007, she became the first openly gay host of the Academy awards, a decade after coming out.

The Office of National Statistics has monitored internet access in homes; in 1998 only 9% of the population had internet access at home, compared with 80% in 2012 and up to 86% in 2016 (www.ons.gov.uk). Alongside the internet, social networking has enabled gay and lesbian youths and adults to make contact more easily and also anonymously (Griffin 2014). The internet has not only helped liberalise society, it has also enabled online campaigns to reach more people than ever before. A campaign called *It Gets Better* launched in 2010 now has upwards of 50,000 videos uploaded charting LGBT people's experiences. It has been viewed 50 million times (www.itgetsbetter.org), with numerous high profile sports stars and sports teams making their own videos. (The original aim of the campaign was to show support to LGBT youths following a number of LGBT teenage suicides in America.) Websites, such as outsports.com and organisations such as 'Stand up Foundation' (founded by Ben Cohen, a retired rugby union player) provide support for the LGBT community and help raise the profile of gay athletes. Yet interestingly, this is the point at which women and men's sports vary dramatically. Numerous heterosexual male athletes actively campaign for the LGBT community. But lesbians lack heterosexual allies, because support for LGBT rights among heterosexual women casts aspersions on their own sexuality (Griffin 2011). Melton (2013: 18) notes:

The absence of women in the campaign for LGBT equality is striking. This may be because of the difference in coverage that men's and women's sport receive. Men become household names and role models whereas the limited coverage of women's sport coupled with a potential image problem may prevent women from speaking out. In many respects it highlights the immense fear associated with being labelled a lesbian and illustrates how sexual prejudice serves to maintain women's status in sport.

As previously mentioned, just one lesbian within a team may cast suspicion on the team as a whole.

Religion can impact on levels of homophobia within society, as conservative expressions of religion actively discourage homosexuality, portraying it as a sin. Religious affiliation may therefore affect the attitudes of some sportsmen and women towards homosexual teammates. Although the Bible only directly mentions homosexuality in seven passages, right-wing Conservative Evangelicals have been

quick to blame fatal events (anything from school shootings to destructive hurricanes) as God's judgement on gay marriage and increasingly liberal/secular attitudes in the US. The Pew Research Centre (Horowitz 2013) found that in countries with high religiosity, levels of homophobia are higher, hence higher rates of homophobia in the USA, where religious affiliation is strong. The latter cannot be said of the UK, where church attendance is in decline.

Church attendees tend to express more conservative and fundamentalist views (Cunningham & Melton 2013) therefore religious affiliation can potentially affect attitudes towards the LGBT community. Religious affiliation in the last census in United Kingdom showed 59.3% of people identified themselves as Christians, down from 72% in 2001. Perhaps more interestingly, the number who stated they had no religious connections increased from 15% in 2001 to 25% in 2011. However, statistics alone are not the only signifier of the declining influence of religion; Cunningham and Melton (2013: 406) found interesting results when considering religious fundamentalism. On interactions between religious people and their openly gay and lesbian peers they conclude: 'Our results demonstrate that friendships with lesbians and gay men can lessen the impact that religious fundamentalism has on sexual prejudice.'

There has been a steady increase in the entertainment industry's acceptance of the LGBT community both sides of the Atlantic. Ellen DeGeneres came out as a lesbian on her sitcom in the 1990s, drawing in a large audience. However, in the subsequent series, every episode started with a parental disclaimer and the show was eventually cancelled. However more recently, television programmes such as the *L Word* (US) and *Lip Service* (UK) have been created, with the main story lines devoted to lesbian characters. Progress has not been straightforward though. Lee and Meyer (2010: 247) note in an article on the *The L Word*: 'As scholars, we find ourselves torn between applauding progress and remaining wary of the new array of lesbian images offered for public consumption.' Lee and Meyer (2010) acknowledge the breaking of the silence and invisibility that the programme supplies, but provide words of caution surrounding the presentation and application of the story lines.

The changes are predominately seen within youth culture. Anderson (2012) describes how youth culture is more inclusive, allowing all men and boys to be accepted regardless of their sexuality. This shift in youth culture has driven the softening of masculinity, allowing pupils to come out safely at school. Indeed, it has even permeated the historically homophobic institution of sport, allowing gay men to take part without fear (Anderson 2012) for the most part.

Changing use of language

The language that individuals use affects their immediate environment. Previously language has been seen as damaging for lesbian athletes (Hargreaves 2000). Caudwell (2006: 425) shares some homophobic expressions witnessed: 'During the 2004/2005 season one of the teams at Hackney received homophobic and anti-lesbian comments during an 11-a-side fixture.' However, it is not always easy to know what constitutes homophobia and is therefore damaging, and what can be passed off as 'banter' (Harris 2005). However, more recent literature suggests that gay athletes are able to make a clear distinction between banter and damaging homophobic language (Jones & McCarthy 2010).

Participants themselves have defined banter within one study as 'taking the piss,' while academics have described it as 'jocular abuse (or teasing)' (Plester & Sayers 2007: 158). There are unwritten rules surrounding the use of banter. As Plester and Sayers (2007: 159) explain: 'The word banter invokes the idea of an exchange back and forth—of a type of equitable competition. This focus on the characteristics and traits of others means that banter is often intensely personal.' However, this personal banter can only take place between close acquaintances and is more likely to occur if the individual has already self-referenced the personal trait in question in a jocular way (Plester & Sayers 2007).

Research has shown that banter can be a useful way to build cohesion in a team within potentially stressful environments (Alexander *et al* 2012), where the pressure of winning and losing and group dynamics may have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the team as a unit. Plester and Sayers (2007: 168) acknowledge that banter can help establish friendships between colleagues in the IT environment that

they surveyed. They uncovered six key functions of banter: 'making a point, boredom busting, socialization, celebrating differences, displaying the culture, and highlighting and defining status. While these functions were exhibited within an IT environment, they can also be adapted to sporting cultures.

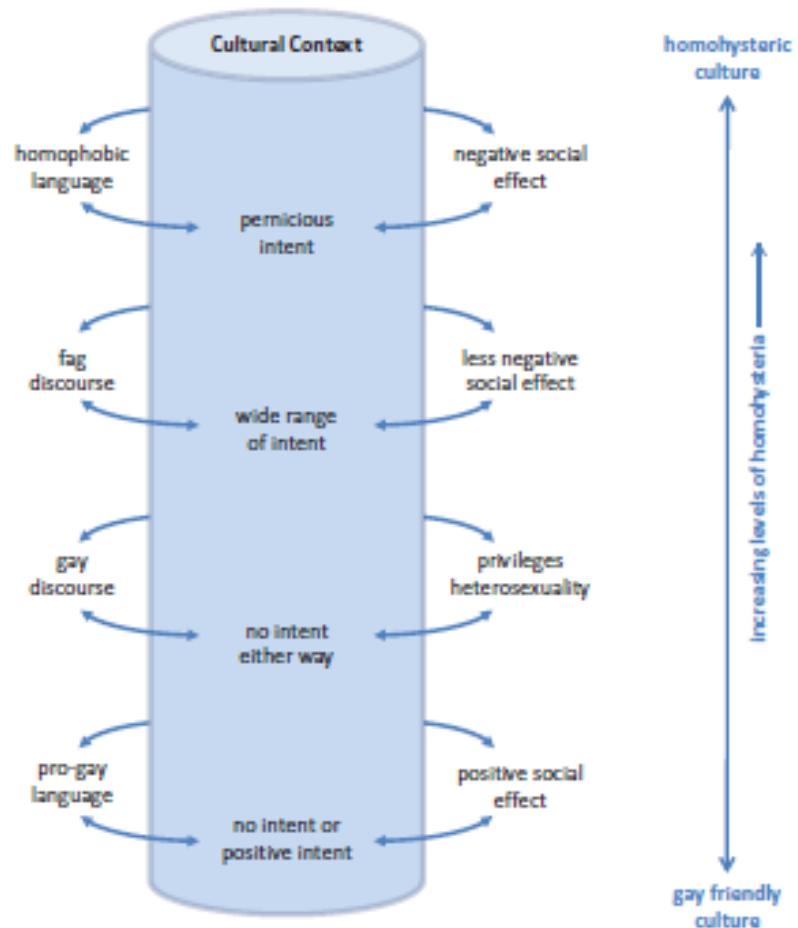
Language within school environments has been a focus for numerous studies (Sykes 2004; Tallon 2011; McCormack 2011b). Sykes (2004) expresses the need to move away from simply implementing policies to reduce homophobic language in schools, to educating children of the meaning and impact of the language they are using. Tallon (2011) concurs with the educational approach, explaining that the focus should not be on labelling the child as homophobic, but rather on teaching them why the language they are using is not appropriate. However, it is clearly not easy for closeted teachers to begin the process of either challenging or educating young people on appropriate language (Sykes 2004; Edwards *et al* 2014).

Within sport, homophobic language has frequently been used by coaches as a means of geeing up their players before a game (Adams *et al* 2010). Whilst this behaviour was exhibited by coaches, players were only seen to express homophobic language on the field of play (Adams *et al* 2010). Jones and McCarthy (2010) found that gay players were not unduly bothered by the use of homophobic language on the pitch. This is supported by Jones and McCarthy (2010: 168): 'Indeed many [gay men] counter with their own banter which, interestingly, often uses homophobic comments as a form of counter-attack.' It is not only banter that is a contentious issue among academics, the actual words used within such exchanges also come under intense scrutiny.

While Tallon (2011) reveals high levels of homophobia in the Stonewall study on language in schools, there was a particular focus on one phrase within this study - 'that's so gay'. As McCormack (2011a) explains, the word gay is not always homophobic in this context, as it has two meanings - 'rubbish' as well as denoting sexuality. In order to facilitate the study of language within different environments, McCormack (2011a) has developed a model of model of homosexually-themed language (see figure 1). Within this model McCormack (2011a: 674) shows that the same words can be used in different environments to different effect. In the same

way, banter can be defined as bullying when used out of context, or where the people concerned lack an appropriately close relationship with one another for banter to take place.

Figure 1: McCormack's model of homosexually-themed language



While McCormack (2011a) acknowledges that his model simplifies the complex issue of language somewhat, this model provides a method of understanding how culturally declining homophobia can influence language. McCormack (2011a: 670) examines cultural change through this model using the aforementioned phrase 'that's so gay.' He notes:

This means that when young people hear the phrase, they do not automatically associate it with homosexuality and it is not necessarily the case that the expression of dissatisfaction translates to negative feelings about same-sex desires or gay people.

Tallon (2011) suggests that this phrase is homophobic and notes how frequently it is used by students and overheard by staff. McCormack (2011a) argues that it is the context, environment and people that cause language to be perceived as homophobic, not the words themselves.

While homophobic language and fag discourse occur in cultural environments of homophobia, where people are fearful of any association with homosexuality, gay discourse⁸ and (fully inclusive) pro-gay language occur in environments of declining homophobia, where homosexual association is not feared (McCormack 2011a). These environments can be organised in line with Griffin's (1998) categories: hostile to homophobic language; conditionally tolerant to fag discourse; open and inclusive to gay discourse or if it is fully inclusive, pro-gay language. Gay discourse does not have 'negative social effects,' unlike homophobic language or fag discourse, yet maintains heterosexual privilege (McCormack 2011a: 670). Whereas McCormack defines pro-gay as 'A way of understanding homosexually-themed language which has a *positive* social effect (2011b: 97). While it could be argued that this is a simplistic approach to changes in language, it does nevertheless show the importance of analysing cultural context when studying language. This research has been derived from findings carried out within male sporting cultures, featuring teenage boys in school environments. There is evidently more need for research in women's sport as well, to analyse any potential language shifts within female sporting cultures. However, this model does provide a method of linguistic analysis in environments of varying acceptance towards homosexual athletes.

Due to these shifts occurring in youth environments, there is considerable generational differences in use of language, that McCormack (2011a) terms 'cultural lag'. Cultural lag is present when one of two associated parts of culture change, creating a gap within the culture (Ogburn 1957; McCormack 2011a). This can particularly be seen in an analysis of the colloquial phrase 'that's so gay.' Youth cultures do not find this phrase homophobic, where others might within difference environments (McCormack 2011a). While some may consider this change to be an inevitable linear process, or march towards inclusion, this is not necessarily the case.

⁸ Gay discourse is when there is still evidence of heterosexual privilege (McCormack, 2011a).

McCormack's model also shows that this is not a one-way process and that cultures may slide up and down the scale according to levels of cultural homophobia (McCormack 2011a). As Plummer (2014: 216) notes there is an 'ebb and flow of homophobia' within cultures. Walks (2014) concurs, noting that there is 'flow and flux' for the LGBT community in terms of social institutions. Perhaps the best current example of this 'flow and flux' is the homophobic environment in Russia for LGBT minorities. Homosexuality was punishable by imprisonment under the Soviet regime, but following the collapse of the USSR, major cities saw gay bars open up and LGBT activist groups established (Essig 2014). However, in later years homophobia has mushroomed once more in Russia and new laws have been imposed to restrict the social and cultural freedoms of its gay and lesbian citizens (Essig 2014). The example of Russia demonstrates that change is not always linear or permanent and that cultures may regress in terms of inclusive attitudes.

Changing culture in the United Kingdom

In the UK, the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 marked the first step in obtaining equality for women (Hargreaves & Anderson 2014). However, it was not until the late 1990s, when the Labour Party returned to power, that attitudes towards minority groups improved. Nevertheless, it was not until 2003 that the infamous Section 28, which banned the promotion of homosexuality in education, was finally repealed following a failed attempt in 2000. An apology from the Conservative Party did not follow until 2009.

Two additional Acts of Parliament helped to improve equality and acceptance of the LGBT community: The Human Rights Act of 1998 and the Equality Act of 2010 (Monro 2010). The Equality Act was beneficial in its simplification of several previous acts covering groups with 'protected characteristics' while adhering to various European mandates (Hunt 2013). The Equality Act covers all aspects of life, including work, education and leisure activities. Caudwell (2007: 185) notes the wide-reaching impact of political changes first instigated by the Labour Party following its victory in 1997. She explains how 'neo-liberal moves for 'tolerance' espoused by Blair's New Labour can help explain members' disengagement with an over lesbian-feminist political agenda.' Therefore, there could be a suggestion that women, particularly lesbian

women, are no longer as politically active as previous generations owing to the positive political changes of the last twenty years brought about by the efforts of their predecessors.

These political changes have allowed organisations such as Sport England to develop various strategies and policies aimed at ensuring equality for all protected groups (Sport England Equality Scheme 2012). Sex, civil partnerships (and marriage), sexual orientation and gender reassignment are all protected characteristics under the Equality Act of 2010 (www.equalityhumanrights.com). Interestingly Sport England acknowledge the impact of this Act within their Sport England Equality Scheme: 'This means that we must go further than merely ensuring a person in a particular instance is not treated less favourably on the basis of their Protect Characteristic (2012: 4). In the US, Melton and Cunningham (2014a: 31) suggest that sport organisations need to go further in terms of their employees: 'Finally, to truly promote inclusiveness, sport organizations need to implement formal policies that foster equality, such as posting a non-discrimination statement or by offering domestic partner benefits.' This suggests that while Title IX⁹ has been beneficial to female players, the institutions have yet to respond to LGBT rights effectively and therefore equality in its fullest sense has not been achieved.

Civil partnerships for gay and lesbian couples have been legal in the United Kingdom since 2004 and in 2013 Parliament voted in favour of equal marriage - an Act already passed in numerous US states and several countries, including New Zealand and France. Some lesser-known Acts that have affected the gay and lesbian community over recent years have been the Children's Act of 2002 and the Employment Equality regulations of 2003 (Richardson & Monro 2013). The Children's Act made provision for new fostering and adoption laws for the LGBT community, while the Employment Equality regulation of 2003 protect gay and lesbian employees from any form of discrimination (Richardson & Monro 2013).

Arguably one of the most significant changes has been witnessed within the British education system. As McCormack and Anderson (2010a) note, it was not until 2003 that any teacher or teaching resources were permitted to promote homosexuality as

⁹ Legislation ensuring equal funding for men and women in the US collegiate system.

a valid identity and lifestyle within schools. Further progress was seen in 2008, when the Department for Children, Schools and Families finally published guidance giving advice and support for schools on homophobic bullying (McCormack & Anderson 2010a). This acknowledgement of homophobia finally enabled pupils to be taught about key LGBT events and made LGBT role models accessible for the first time (McCormack & Anderson 2010a).

While these changes have benefitted students, teachers remain closeted. Edwards *et al* (2014: 5) found lesbian teachers facing ‘a sense of alienation’ and ‘personal turmoil’ (2014: 6) within the school environment, as they still felt the need to remain closeted. In fact, the teachers interviewed used a range of strategies to both conceal their sexuality and to maintain a heterosexual demeanour to quell rumours or suspicion (Edwards *et al* 2014). Teachers are currently using strategies similar to those adopted by openly lesbian athletes competing in hostile and conditionally tolerant environments¹⁰ to protect themselves from homophobia in the work place. Fortunately, the picture for students appears to be more positive.

Within secondary schools in England, male pupils are finding new ways to frame their masculinity without resorting to homophobia or misogyny. McCormack and Anderson (2010a: 846) describe how heterosexual recuperation is used to describe these changes in behaviour. They define heterosexual recuperation as ‘a heuristic tool for understanding the strategies boys use to establish and maintain heterosexual identities without invoking homophobia.’ These behavioural shifts are indicative of cultural change, as previously boys used homophobic discourse to reinforce their heterosexuality. This change in culture is revealed in responses to questions. Participants showed themselves to be resolutely against homophobia, describing homophobia as a juvenile verbal or behavioural response (McCormack & Anderson 2010a). This represents a significant change in male behaviour. Now instead of using homophobia to reinforce heterosexuality, the boys have found different ways to promote their heterosexuality. Increased tactility between boys is now accepted as the norm (McCormack & Anderson 2010a), whilst attitudes of university students regarding women and gay men are changing from orthodox to inclusive masculinity (Southall *et al* 2009; Anderson & McGuire 2010; McCormack & Anderson 2010a,

¹⁰ See chapter 3

2010b; Anderson *et al* 2010; Anderson *et al* 2011; Bush *et al* 2012; Magrath *et al* 2013; Magrath 2015).

Changing times for male athletes

Through a personal account of coming out as a gay coach published in *Trailblazing: America's first openly gay high school coach*, Anderson (2000) describes the change in the attitude of his team. However, Anderson's coming out led to the assault of one of his athletes, who was considered gay by association (Anderson 2002). This event was considered one of the most important moments in gay sporting history by the website *outsports.com*, as it raised the profile of homophobia in schools and sports.

In the United Kingdom, Gareth Thomas, the Welsh international rugby player, is another prominent trailblazer. Since he came out of the closet in 2009, more athletes have broken their silence. Most recently, Michael Sam has become the first openly gay player drafted in the NFL, while Jason Collins (basketball) became the first openly gay player to come out while still playing professionally in the NBA in America. Robbie Rogers (football) initially retired immediately after coming out, but within the same season moved back from England to the professional US Soccer league, receiving a standing ovation from the crowd in his first match back. Steve Davis (an English cricketer), Anton Hysen (a Swedish footballer) and Orlando Cruz (a boxer from Puerto Rica) have all come out as gay, all the first to do so within their own sporting environments. In 2013, Tom Daley (a diver from the United Kingdom) joined the list of athletes to come out, although in the YouTube clip he uses to disclose his sexuality, Daley does not refer to himself as gay and states that he still 'fancies girls' before revealing he has a boyfriend. Daley chose to come out on social media via YouTube, a mechanism which allowed him more control over media coverage of his disclosure.

Matthew Mitcham is an Australian diver who won gold in Beijing 2008 and is openly gay. A media analysis of Mitcham's sporting achievement shows a decline in homophobic rhetoric within the sports press (McDonald & Eagles 2012). Nevertheless, although Mitcham achieved extensive coverage within the specialised LGBT press, the mainstream press was still slow to accept Mitcham's achievements in

comparison (McDonald & Eagles 2012). On a positive note, corporate sponsors remained supportive of Mitcham (McDonald & Eagles 2012), in stark contrast to the experiences of Martina Navratilova in the 1980s and Billie Jean King in the 70s. In fact, Mitcham gained numerous sponsors after the victory. As noted by McDonald and Eagles (2012: 312):

Mitcham's ability to gain sponsorship is further indicative of changing corporate setting and their desire to create a public face of inclusion and diversity more reflective of twenty-first-century Australia, the rising value of the pink dollar and changing attitudes in Australian society toward sexuality.

Other positive signs of change within the sporting media can be seen through a textual analysis of narratives surrounding John Amaechi (the first former NBA player to come out as gay). Positive traits were seen within print media, with journalists exhibiting low levels of homophobia and repeatedly arguing for further integration of gay athletes within the sporting arena (Kian & Anderson 2009). There are therefore clear signs that the media is changing to become more positive and inclusive in its coverage of openly gay athletes (Kian & Anderson 2009; McDonald & Eagles 2012; Cleland 2014; Kian *et al* 2015).

All these (male) athletes appear to have found acceptance, yet few women have stepped out to become trailblazers, making a comparison of media coverage problematic. Fink *et al* (2012) provide an update with regards to US college athletes, however only fourteen athletes were interviewed, among which three identified as bisexual, thereby limiting the usefulness of the study. The same cannot be said for openly gay athletes. Anderson and colleagues (Anderson 2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2011a; Anderson & McGuire 2010; McCormack & Anderson 2010a, 2010b; Adams 2011; Adams & Anderson 2011; Magrath *et al* 2013; Magrath 2015) have documented the changing nature of male sport and education. Although such studies may not appear directly relevant to the experiences of openly lesbian athletes, academics have tracked cultural shifts from the homohysterical environment of the 1980s to the 'metrosexuality' of the 2000s and such positive shifts provide an insight into levels of homophobia in society. However, as Bush *et al* (2012) note, whilst cultural homophobia is dwindling, this process is not uniform throughout society. Since changes have occurred in male sporting environments, it could be

hypothesised that similar changes are taking place within women's sports – but more research is required to test such a hypothesis.

Changing times for women in sport

Although research has shown significant improvements within male sporting culture, women's sport is more complex, since, as already mentioned within this study, women who play sport challenge gender norms and therefore face both sexism and homosexual suspicion through participating. The number of high profile men coming out does not seem to have impacted on homophobia in women's sport (Griffin 2012). Burton Nelson (1994: 21) highlights the importance of history: 'Everything that happened a hundred years ago is happening today. Women are still demanding equality in the workplace, but in addition, today's women are also fighting homophobia and violence. Burton Nelson concludes that women are 'asking men to change diapers and become better lovers. They are demanding access not only to women's sport, but to men's. However, change is slow and women remain far from equal to men in many aspects of life.

In the 1980s, both Martina Navratilova and Billie Jean King were outed. They promptly lost sponsorship and gained negative media coverage (Forman & Plymire 2005; Hargreaves 2000). Since coming out in 1999, Amelie Mauresmo (now retired) has received negative coverage from her fellow players and come under intense scrutiny from all sectors of society (Forman & Plymire 2005; Tredway 2014). Prior to coming out, the situation was no better; Hargreaves (2000) describes how Mauresmo regularly faced derogatory remarks with constant inferences that she was a lesbian. Indeed, a media analysis by Forman and Plymire (2005) showed evidence of her muscular body causing alarm and even panic. They conclude that rather than being portrayed as a 'lesbian hero,' Mauresmo appears to be more of an 'underdog hero' (Forman & Plymire 2005: 121). Tredway (2014: 173) has examined Mauresmo through Butler's heterosexual matrix and notes: 'Indeed, Mauresmo's musculature was not more pronounced than others on the tour. However, Mauresmo was marked as masculine when she came out as a lesbian. Mauresmo was seen as 'rejecting heterosexuality' and 'rejecting femininity' owing to her masculine physique.

Despite negative media coverage and disparaging remarks from fellow professionals such as Martina Hingis (who attracted negative crowd reactions as a perhaps surprising result, see Krane & Barber 2003), Mauresmo continued to be sponsored by Nike, amassing career earnings of some seven million US dollars (Forman & Plymire 2005). In fact, rather than covering up Maurermo's body, her clothing sponsors, Nike, actively encouraged her to reveal her muscular physique and designed clothing specifically to expose her athletic build (Forman & Plymire 2005). This change in approach caused Tredway (2014) to re-examine the heterosexual matrix with its failure acknowledge openly lesbian athletes. However, her adaptation fails to account for openly lesbian athletes who do not acknowledge their muscularity. As Tredway (2014: 175) explains: 'Once we know that a woman is a lesbian, we are prepared, even eager, to re-read her physique in masculine terms, presumably because lesbians are socially coded as masculine. However, athletes who have come out in more recent times do not fit this notion of masculine social coding. Although no academic research has been conducted on athletes coming out recently (Casey Stoney, Helen and Kate Richardson-Walsh), media articles show positive coverage of their stories.

In a search, Clarke (1998) found only 27 names of 'out' lesbian elite athletes. One of the earliest (post Navratilova and King) was Muffin Spencer-Devlin (golf), who came out in 1996. The WNBA has seen four players come out: Michelle VanGorp in 2004; Sheryl Swoopes in 2005 (who is reportedly now engaged to a man); Seimone Augustus in 2012 and Brittney Griner in 2013. There is only one openly lesbian coach: a Division 1 basketball coach, Sherri Murell, who received national attention when her family photo was posted on the university website (Melton 2013).

At the start of her career, Sheryl Swoopes won a full scholarship to play basketball at the University of Texas. However, she soon left because - according to her mother - the team included lesbians, all of the negative coverage caused the team to plummet in the national rankings (Miller 2001). This shows one of the differences faced by men and women; women may be 'guilty by association' (Blinde & Taub 1992b: 526). The effect of association is damaging for all athletes, straight and gay alike. It causes heterosexual athletes to reinforce their sexuality by performing in hyper-feminine ways (Krane 2001; Kauer & Krane 2006; Griffin 2014) and heterosexual athletes are

also warned off from becoming allies of homosexual athletes (Griffin 1992, 2014). This operates in stark contrast to men's sport, where male athletes may support gay athletes and gay rights, since by virtue of participating in sport alone, the heterosexual athlete reinforces his masculinity and does not come under suspicion (Griffin 2014). This difference enables men to come out more easily in sport, as they are not negatively affecting their teammates in anyway. Whereas if a female athlete comes out, she casts suspicion on all of her teammates regardless of their sexuality, as they are already challenging gender norms by participation alone (Carlson 2010; Davis-Delano 2014).

Interestingly, at the time of Sheryl Swoopes' coming out in a magazine article in 2005, she was deemed the most valuable player in the women's American basketball league (WNBA) (Chawansky & Francombe 2011). In order to prevent any potential damage to her career earnings, Swoopes signed a sponsorship deal with a holiday company aimed at the lesbian travel market (Chawansky & Francombe 2011). The timing of her coming out demonstrates awareness of previous experiences faced by lesbian athletes. As Anderson (2002) discusses, MVP status on a team helps with acceptance of (homo)sexuality. Swoopes was not only the most important person on the team, but the most valuable player in the entire league. This high athletic capital guaranteed her place on the team and she also had the foresight to organise additional endorsements prior to coming out. In fact, she cited this contract with the lesbian travel firm as an influential factor in helping her come out of the closet (Chawansky & Francombe 2011). Swoopes' career hit a low in 2009 when she was not offered a new WNBA contract, but after a short break from the sport Swoopes returned in 2011 (Ogden & Rose 2013). In the two years out of the sport she has seemingly split with her female partner and become engaged to a man (Ogden & Rose 2013) this was significant as she came out as a lesbian and not bisexual.

Griffin noted in 1998 that younger lesbian athletes were starting to challenge the silence surrounding women's sport; nevertheless, it remains the case that few top level female athletes have come out. Football can be seen as leading the way with fifteen out players and two out coaches participating at the FIFA Women's World Cup (www.thinkprogress.org). Yet at the London 2012 Olympics, there were only eighteen openly lesbian women and three gay men competing out of a total of 10,500 (Briggs

2012). Football and field hockey both had four openly lesbian athletes competing, none of these athletes were British¹¹ (www.outsports.com). Still, there is some cultural progress. Evidence of this can be found in the stepping down of Rene Portland, after 27 years as coach at Penn State University, who resigned due to her long-standing enforcement of a no lesbian policy. However, she only resigned after players invoked discrimination legislation against her, with a lawsuit and settlement following in 2007 (Griffin 2014).

In England in 2013, Kate Walsh and Helen Richardson announced they were getting married to very little press coverage, despite both players competing for the same domestic and international team, a unique media angle which has yet to be analysed by an academic peer-reviewed journal. An article on the BBC sports website noted how understated the event was: 'Hockey's same-sex wedding sparked little coverage beyond congratulations. There was no discussion – players say none was needed (Williams 2014).' This is despite Kate Walsh previously having been in a relationship with Brett Garrard and their relationship being described as 'The Posh and Becks' of hockey (Harris 2013). Walsh and Richardson have received an 'overwhelming positive reaction to their civil partnership' but still found it difficult initially to make the relationship public (Harris 2013). However, hockey receives limited coverage, apart from major international competitions, which could potentially explain the lack of coverage. Interestingly, Helen Richardson-Walsh's exclusion from the World Cup and Commonwealth Games and then subsequent inclusion for the World League semi-final appeared to spark more media interest than the Richardson-Walsh civil partnership (Wilson 2014b, 2015; Archer 2015).

Casey Stoney came out in 2014, announcing that she was in a relationship with another footballer. Since coming out, her partner has given birth to twins, which also received significant media coverage. Yet again, there has been no academic research on this event from a media analytical standpoint. Stoney has openly acknowledged her positive reception, but has also made public the anonymous abuse she received on Twitter and the fact that she received a passage of Scripture through the post

¹¹ In the Paralympics Carl Hester, who is openly gay, competed in Equestrian for Great Britain. Clare Harvey, who is openly lesbian, competed in the seated volleyball at the Paralympics representing Great Britain.

anonymously (Steinberg 2014). Interestingly, this anonymity is also indicative of an inclusive society, since so-called Twitter trolls tweet behind a cloak of anonymity, enabling them to challenge culturally declining homophobia without fear of personal repercussions (i.e it is homophobia, not homosexuality, that is likely to expose them to abuse from other users, a sign of changing attitudes). Her decision to come out was aided by the reception that diver Tom Daley received; indeed, Stoney was quick to acknowledge that Daley's experience helped her make the decision (McCloskey 2014).

Researchers have monitored those changes in society as they potentially create a more inclusive environment for the LGBT community. Melton (2013) notes how the acceptance of women's bodies is changing; women are starting to move away from traditional hourglass depictions of feminine beauty and move towards a figure that can include muscle definition and even a level of muscularity. Evidence of change can be seen in the pictures of Jessica Ennis, the face of London Olympics in 2012; both pre- and post- games photos show her muscular abdomen muscles. As Finley (2010: 360) concludes in relation to Roller Derby, 'women can now kick ass.' This represents a direct challenge to traditional femininity and allows women to express themselves in a greater variety of ways.

Social media may also be seen to be helping shape social attitudes (including outlets such as YouTube, Facebook, blogging and Twitter). As Hardin *et al* (2009) note in a lecture for the Tucker Center, social media has allowed women to discuss sport without gatekeepers of any kind. The lack of gatekeepers within social media has also been discussed by Melton (2013), who also notes the importance of social media for athletes, as they can now choose how they come across to a large audience and exercise more control over their public persona. However, Alice Arnold (Clare Balding's civil partner) notes a word of caution with regard to Twitter, claiming that she has been on the receiving end of 'filthy' homophobic tweets (McCormick 2013). So while social media may provide open access for athletes, it also provides an opportunity for people to share views anonymously. The anonymity of social media allows individuals to share views that are deemed unacceptable, in terms of homophobia or racism by way of example, without facing personal reprisal. Supporting the hypothesis that anonymous posts can lead to less inclusive

behaviours, similar findings have been found on sporting fan boards. Kian *et al*, (2011) found that hegemonic masculine behaviours were evident within fan boards, including homophobic language that went unchallenged by board users.

Despite important changes for the better, there are still areas where significant inequality exists. In Chapter 2, I examine the history of women's sport and while there have been noteworthy improvements within female sporting participation, there are others areas where change has been much slower. Women within sporting leadership in particular, including within coaching, is an area that continues to lag behind (see Chapter 2).

While it is clear that moves towards inclusion have occurred with society and within male sport, there is a lack of research on progress for lesbian athletes beyond the post-structural framework. While the work of Caudwell (2003, 2007), Drury (2011), Roy (2013) and Tredway (2014) have been useful in developing research in this area, a qualitative interview approach is being taken here to allow rich, in-depth data to be analysed. Sykes (2009: 244) discusses how poststructuralist research aims to 'understand and challenge' sexuality with sport. As Elling and Janssens (2009: 72) explain:

We acknowledge the fact that poststructuralist theory and methodology is extremely important for producing refined and contextualised knowledge of the subject of the sexuality of sport. We argue, however, that qualitative research can be very fruitful and is even necessary for a more complete and representative understanding.

Whilst acknowledging the importance of post-structural research, the author notes that a rich qualitative approach can help to develop a broader understanding of the area. This is particularly evident in the topic of sexuality in women's sport, where significant research has been conducted from a post-structural perspective, but little qualitative data produced. A climate of homophobia in the 1980s has been replaced by an open and inclusive environment for gay male athletes, even if they still have low athletic capital. This study seeks to examine if the same can be said for lesbian athletes competing in team sports.

Chapter 6: Approaches to Grounded Theory

Introduction

Grounded theory is predominately used in fields where little is already known, or to re-analyse a social institution that has not been recently examined (Strauss & Corbin 1990; Goulding 1998; Birks & Mills 2011). Grounded theory, originally established in 1967, is used here as a methodology rather than a theory. It has developed into a variety of forms from different ontological and epistemological stand points, allowing researchers flexibility in their position towards their research subjects.

This chapter provides an overview of grounded theory from its inception in the 1960s by Glaser and Strauss (1967) through the various changes and modifications proposed by different researchers. Each adaptation involves subtle differences in coding procedures. Additionally, the use of memos in the process of reflexivity is analysed to ensure that the results from the data are valid, as memos shows why decisions are made and how research conclusions are formed. Grounded theory also advocates the writing of literature reviews *after* data collection; however, this has methodological problems, something I address later. Finally, this chapter concludes with this study's ontological and epistemological positioning based on this grounded theory approach.

A history of grounded theory

Glaser and Strauss published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* in 1967. Since its inception, grounded theory has become one of the most popular research designs (Birks & Mills 2011) in the social sciences. Suddary (2006) explains that grounded theory was initiated as an alternative to the traditional positive approach seen in the majority of social research. Grounded theory uses the strengths of quantitative methods - for example, the coding procedure - but using a qualitative approach (Walker & Myrick 2006). It is an approach that is particularly useful when discussing topics that involve psychology; for example, personal experience (Charmaz 1996).

Using grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss attempted to analyse actors within a social setting. As Suddaby (2006: 634) explains:

Glaser and Strauss offered a compromise between extreme empiricism and complete relativism by articulating a middle ground in which systematic data collection could be used to develop theories that address the interpretive realities of actors in social settings.

In their initial book, Glaser and Strauss claim that there are insufficient theories to encompass all areas of life, necessitating a methodology that allows the development of a new theory grounded in data. Glaser and Strauss (1967: 11) also argue that 'Further, some theories of our predecessors, because of their lack of grounding in data, do not fit, or do not work, or are not sufficiently understandable to be used and are therefore useless in research, theoretical advance and practical application.' Indeed, grounded theory is seen as a way of developing theories in order to understand the world that we are studying (Charmaz 2006). In the case of this study, it is being used to test the concept of homophobia when applied to lesbian experiences in team sports. However, grounded theory is not always the most appropriate methodology and is frequently used incorrectly.

Grounded theory should be chosen when it is applicable to the research problem (Charmaz 2006). As Suddaby (2006: 634) explains:

Grounded theory should be used in a way that is logically consistent with key assumptions about social reality and how that reality is "known". It is less appropriate, for example, to use grounded theory when you seek to make knowledge claims about objective reality, and more appropriate to do so when you want to make knowledge claims about how individuals interpret reality.

This view is supported by Goulding (1999), who notes that the theory developed, in grounded theory based studies, has originated from data acquired within social research. Suddaby (2006) develops the argument, noting that it is an interpretive process. As opposed to research that seeks to describe or explore a social setting, grounded theorists aspire to explain what is occurring within the area studied (Birks

& Mills 2011). As Glaser (2010: 6) concludes: 'Grounded theory is what is, not what should, could, or ought to be.' In short, the findings derive directly from the data.

Grounded theory allows the researcher to work within guidelines rather than having to follow a set of fixed set of instructions (Charmaz 2006). Holt and Tamminen (2010: 407) explain that there are eight original key aspects to grounded theory in praxis:

Eight core characteristics of a grounded theory (an iterative process, theoretical sampling, theoretical, codes, memos, and concepts, constant comparison, theoretical saturation, fit, work, relevance and modifiability, and substantive theory) were proposed in the original article.

These guidelines have been adapted over time since their inception in 1967, as three main strands of grounded theory have subsequently been developed.

Alternative grounded theory approaches

Since its inception, there have been significant changes and adaptations to the initial grounded theory text. In 1990, Strauss and Corbin published the first adaptation of grounded theory with their text *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures*. This text caused a split between the original authors, Glaser and Strauss, creating two approaches to grounded theory: the Glaserian and the Straussian version (Birks & Mills 2011). The third approach to grounded theory, constructivist, has been developed predominately by Charmaz (1995, 2000, 2006).

Some authors have welcomed the changes to the grounded theory approach. Hallberg (2006: 148) acknowledges that: 'grounded theory has renewed itself, making it even more useful as a research approach, with capacity to manage a complex and continuously changing social world'. Breckenridge *et al* (2012: 64) however, are less impressed with the range of different approaches:

Often armed with only a limited understanding of 'grounded theory', new PhD researchers are faced with the challenge of navigating their way through the methodological mire in order to arrive at an informed decision about which 'version' of grounded theory to use: Classic (or Glaserian) grounded

theory, Straussian grounded theory, feminist grounded theory or constructivist grounded theory.

The different approaches to grounded theory are far from straightforward; each has positives and negatives as well as proponents and opponents. Furthermore, each approach to grounded theory has methodological variations, from the coding procedure to the importance of reflexivity, both of which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Understandably, there is friction between the different schools of thought. Urquhart describes the fall out between Glaser and Strauss as 'cataclysmic' (2013: 18), represented by Glaser's request that Strauss and Corbin's 1990 book was withdrawn from publication (Urquhart 2013). Major differences are evident in coding and surrounding the researcher's role within the analysis, resulting in the fall out between Glaser and Strauss. The major differences between the various versions of grounded theory predominately focus on the analytical procedure employed, and perhaps most importantly, on the researcher's positioning within the project (Walker & Myrick 2006). Such divides may potentially cause problems for researchers using grounded theory; however, given the post-positivist approach offered by the Straussian version, grounded theory may also be used to examine a wider research base.

Since their original text, Strauss and Corbin continued to develop and modify grounded theory, taking it into the post-positivism era. Strauss's early work shows clear connections with the work of Mead and Dewey (Bryant & Charmaz 2007). These influences may go some way to explaining the differences in opinion between Glaser and Strauss. The early 2000s saw them move further along the ontological scale towards constructivism. Meanwhile, developments in grounded theory continue to be driven by Charmaz for the main part (1995, 2000, 2006), but with other contributors (Bryant 2003; Mills *et al* 2006) playing their part. Glaser (2002) refers to Charmaz's take on grounded theory as 'Qualitative Data Analysis' or 'QDA', refusing to accept Charmaz's position as a constructivist approach. The work of Charmaz and contemporaries reflect the most recent adaptations to the original theory.

Constructivist grounded theory approach

The constructivist approach to grounded theory is championed by Charmaz (1995, 2000, 2006): 'Like other analytic approaches, the grounded theory method itself offers a way of constructing sociological reality; using the method fosters developing analytic and conceptual constructions of the data (1990: 1162).' The key emphasis on constructivist grounded theory is to reconstruct not only the experience but also the meaning of the participants (Mills *et al* 2006). Charmaz (1996: 35) continues: 'Unlike Glaser, I assume that the interaction between the researcher and the researched *produces* the data, and therefore the meanings that the researcher observes and defines.' Essentially, constructivist grounded theory articulates the views and experiences of the participants - unlike classic grounded theory, which simply aims to arrive at an understanding in social behaviour (Breckenridge *et al* 2012). As Charmaz (1996: 32) notes: 'From a constructionist, interpretative perspective, the grounded theory researcher must then study the meanings, intentions and actions of the research participants. This approach allows researchers to go beyond the original grounded theory as it enables the 'voice' of the participants to be examined.

Glaser describes constructivist grounded theory as a 'misnomer' (2002: 2). He responds: 'Her [Charmaz'] constructivist position is totally irrelevant to GT methodology, EXCEPT as it is allowed to remodel GT methodology by default. Do not let it (2002: 32).' Glaser continues to attack Charmaz's methods, but with ferocity rather than intellectual cohesion, which means the argument loses its academic credibility and translates as more of a gripe than a structured critique. In support of Charmaz, Bryant (2003: 2) comments:

As I read Glaser's response, however, my pleasure turned to dismay. Instead of a coherent response to a provocative and well-reasoned argument, I found an incoherent and inconsistent article formatted like a poor piece of tabloid journalism. (I have no reason to believe that Glaser did not endorse publication of the paper in its final version).

Glaser's main criticisms relate to Charmaz's positioning of the researcher in the study and to modifications made to the grounded theory procedure. The researcher's position in any study must be defined in order to maintain academic rigour. In this case, it is essential to highlight which facet of grounded theory is going to be used to test the concept of homophobia. In Charmaz's version of grounded theory, the

researcher is part of the research and therefore needs to reflect on their potential to affect data analysis. This dictates that the process of reflexivity should be followed.

Reflexivity

Researchers use reflexivity, noting that the researcher's presence inevitably affects the environment. He or she inevitably influences what is said - how information is read or questions framed - simply by virtue of his or her personality or life experience (McGhee *et al* 2007). Suddaby (2006: 640) explains the process of reflexivity for researchers: '...they must engage in ongoing self-reflection to ensure that they take personal biases, world-views, and assumptions into account while collecting, interpreting, and analysing data.' While some feel this concept is naïve, particularly where a researcher has already published in the field and therefore cannot maintain objectivity, researchers have shown it to be possible through effective reflexivity. Melton and Cunningham (2014a) acknowledge the fact they have both previously published in the field and that both identify as advocates of LGBT equality, yet they have used reflexivity effectively to ensure results are grounded in data. These authors demonstrate that despite having previously published in the topic area, they are able to effectively implement a grounded theory approach. In this study, aspects of grounded theory will be used to analyse the use of homophobia where applied to lesbian women participating in team sport.

Birks and Mills (2011: 52) provide a definition: 'We define reflexivity as an active process of systematically developing insight into your work as a researcher to guide your future actions.' Mruck and Mey (2007: 519) develop this definition: '...we understand reflexivity as a chance for researchers to rethink, ground, or justify their own decisions and to communicate the process of theory development.' Reflexivity allows researchers to revisit previous knowledge or experiences to examine if these have affected findings in the data (McGhee *et al* 2007). It is essential that researchers maintain a careful balance between retaining an open mind while still identifying (familiar) concepts (Birks & Mills 2011).

Some may remain unconvinced by the researcher's ability to distance themselves from their previous work, the work of others' and preconceived opinions. However,

this has clearly been shown to be achievable by Melton and Cunningham (2014a), who acknowledge their positioning and previous research, yet note the importance of the process of reflexivity. Starks and Trinidad (2007: 1376) explain the importance of distance: 'Even as the researcher immerses herself in the data, she must be honest and vigilant about her own perspectives, pre-existing thoughts and beliefs and developing hypothesis.' They suggest the use of memos to help author's distance themselves from their own thoughts and maintain results grounded in data (Starks & Trinidad 2007). The important of memoing is to ensure that codes are developed through relationship with the data. It also allows researchers to organise their ideas, in some cases focusing on particularly important quotes or key points (Douglas 2003). In grounded theory, the organisation of ideas occurs via the use of memos throughout the coding process.

Reflexivity is yet another point on which Glaser and Charmaz disagree. Glaser disregards the process of reflexivity suggesting that 'reflexivity paralysis' (2001: 47) will occur. Within constructivist grounded theory, the process of self-reflection is essential and this is achieved through the use of memo writing. Birks and Mill (2011: 53) explain the use of memos: 'Memos can provide a written record of reflexivity, if, as you write about your actions and feelings, the influences on your thinking, you incorporate an analysis of impact and outcome.' Charmaz (2006) refers to writing memos as a process that is fluid and does not follow any guidelines or rules. Therefore, memos are used purely for researchers' benefit and can be seen as a stream of consciousness. This process helps the researcher to maintain contact with the data and encourages data to be revisited throughout the process to ensure that the results are grounded in data (Ghezeljeh & Emami 2009). Memos allow researchers a period of time in which ideas can be bandied around and explored by the researcher (Charmaz 2006). Memos help with the development of categories from the data and allow the researcher to track how certain decisions were made (Starks & Trinidad 2007; Ghezeljeh & Emami 2009). Memoing is heavily connected to the process of coding as this process allows reflection and analysis to occur.

Coding

Coding provides the basis of analysis within grounded theory. The coding procedure varies according to the strand of grounded theory applied to the research. To add to the complexity of the coding procedure, each approach uses different key terms to describe the various levels of coding applied. Birks and Mills (2011: 116) highlight the major differences in coding in Table 1:

	Initial coding	Intermediate coding	Advanced coding
Glaser and Strauss (1967)	Coding and comparing incidents	Integrating categories and properties	Delimiting the theory
Glaser (1978)	Open coding	Selective coding	Theoretical coding
Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998)	Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding
Charmaz (2006)	Initial coding	Focused coding	Theoretical coding

Initial coding is defined by Charmaz (2006: 47) as follows: 'This initial step in coding moves us toward later decisions about defining our core conceptual categories.' Initial coding commences by using line-by-line coding, which through the process becomes redundant as researchers gain control of their work (Birks & Mill 2011). This approach allows analysis to occur down to the single word in an approach; Dey (1993) describe this as 'bit-by-bit approach' thus allowing different 'bits' to be considered, analysed and compared. The constant comparison of data ensures that any categories formed are not only grounded in data but can be adapted when data does not fit with previous formed categories (Gray 2009).

Questions are posed throughout initial coding in order to allow reflexivity - even in the initial stages. Questions were developed by Glaser (1978) and expanded upon by Charmaz (2006: 47), as seen in the next paragraph.

‘What is this data a study of?’ (Glaser 1978: 78; Glaser and Strauss 1967)

‘What does the data suggest? Pronounce? From whose point of view?’
(Glaser 1978)

‘What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate?’ (Glaser 1978)

The initial stages of coding relate strictly to the data collected, with no recourse to pre-existing categories (Charmaz 2006). This is where data is organised, providing the basis for more complex categories and finally theory development (Walker & Myrick 2006). The initial stages of coding happen until saturation occurs; saturation is reached when categories become confirmed by repetition (Suddaby 2006). Initial coding thus sees the researcher become submersed in data, leading to a theory grounded in data.

Having analysed data through initial coding, researchers using grounded theory then need to progress to intermediate coding, where they face a choice between selective, axial and focused coding, depending upon which form of grounded theory they are using. With selective coding, advocated by Glaser (1978), codes are developed around a core variable (Birks & Mills 2011). Axial coding has been criticized for requiring preconceptions coupled with being too prescriptive (Bryant & Charmaz 2007). Urquhart (2013: 25) endeavours to simplify the application of axial coding: ‘The way I tend to think about axial coding is that it combines selective coding with the use of a coding paradigm.’ Urquhart (2013) concludes that this process is complex; students find it particularly difficult and often struggle to cope. The Axial approach seems unnecessarily complex, especially considering the other options available.

Focused coding is the second phase of coding within a constructivist approach to grounded theory. Focused coding takes the most prevalent and noteworthy codes in order to work out their adequacy; this process is not necessarily linear as data may need to be re-examined (Charmaz 2006). What is essential during this process, is that any preconceived ideas of potential codes and categories are ignored and disregarded (Charmaz 2006). Charmaz’s (2006) coding procedure is systematic and

shows clear process, whereas original coding procedures by Glaser are difficult to follow and the process nowhere near as user-friendly. The most complex process is Strauss and Corbin's coding procedure, which uses different terminology. Here the process of axial coding is unnecessarily complex.

The final stage of coding is advanced coding; authors of the different approaches apply slightly different applications of this. Holton (2007: 283) provides a definition: 'Theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory. This coding procedure allows the 'story' of the research to be developed by making connections between codes (Charmaz 2006). Within a constructivist approach, this theoretical sampling occurs after key concepts have been defined, allowing a greater understanding of both the issues and realities within the research (Charmaz 1990). The key to successful theoretical coding is to leave it as long as possible and not to force the data. It must emerge from the data; preconceived theories and ideas must be avoided in order to ensure that the theory is grounded in data (Charmaz 2006; Holton 2007). All three levels of coding should occur within a grounded theory study in order to reach a theoretical end point; moving from one stage to another only occurs when theoretical saturation is reached, i.e. when no more new ideas or theories emerge. Here grounded theory is used to analyse the data *before* applying the results to a theoretical adaptation of homophobia, as outlined by Worthen in 2014.

Theoretical saturation

Saturation is defined simply by Stern (2007: 117): 'Most methodology authors advise learners that saturation is reached when the learner hears nothing new.' Holton (2007) simplifies this even further by stating that the researcher ceases data collection when no more data is needed. Importantly, this does not simply mean hearing the same events or stories; it is about the repetition of patterns within the research, although interestingly Glaser does not agree with this level of simplicity being applied to the concept of theoretical saturation¹² (Charmaz 2006).

¹² Glaser suggests it could lead to constraining data into categories and it not being applied at a conceptual level (Glaser 2004)

Saturation and its connection to sample size is another contentious point among grounded theorists (Charmaz 2006). Interestingly, Charmaz states that a small sample size may indeed have saturation but will lack credibility (Charmaz 2006). Saturation can be seen as a problem not only in terms of the sample size, but also in terms of the research time scale (Goulding 2005). This leads to a level of uncertainty for researchers, not only on the number of interviews and the length of time of the study, but also in terms of taking the decision to stop collecting data. It is difficult to predict when theoretical saturation is going to occur and therefore how many interviews to conduct. Suddaby (2006) warns against having rigid rules and on placing limits or specifying numbers when it comes to participant research. Stern (2007) notes the difficulties of entering into research without a clear end in sight, and therefore suggests a figure of twenty to thirty interviews. By contrast, Mills *et al* (2007) reached theoretical saturation after just nine interviews. Charmaz (2006: 114) notes: 'A study of 25 interviews may suffice for certain small projects but invites scepticism when the author's claims are about, say, human nature or contradict established research. The importance of theoretical saturation cannot be underestimated - without it, the coding process has the potential to unravel. If categories are developed before saturation is reached, the theory development faces serious problems further down the line (Charmaz 1990).

The challenges of a literature review

It is not just the coding procedure that leads to debate among grounded theorists; the literature review can be another source of contention. The timing of the literature review can vary according to which branch of grounded theory the researcher is following. However, it is not always that straightforward, as researchers face pressure from external bodies, especially when considering funding revenues and in following research protocol for research degrees. It is therefore essential to discuss the arguments both for and against an early literature review, as well as suggesting measures to counteract potential influences from the literature review 'contaminating' the data.

Glaser and Charmaz both advocate leaving the literature review until data collection, running the two concurrently, whereas Strauss and Corbin encourage an early

literature review (Charmaz 1996; Glaser 1998; McGhee *et al* 2007). The difficulty faced by research students is that they often have to provide a literature review as part of their requirements to be accepted onto a PhD. Additionally, students may base their choice of methodology on findings from the literature review, using previous research on their topic to guide them. Nathaniel (2006: 39) states that in the event of researchers having to complete a literature review first, they must do so with an 'objective perspective'. In this case, a literature review had to be completed in order to upgrade from MPhil to a PhD.

The literature review seems an incredibly problematic aspect of grounded research. Dunne (2011: 115) suggests that this is because, for most researchers, it is 'unworkable' to leave the literature review until after data collection. Glaser (1998: 67), however, is adamant that the literature review should not precede data collection and coding:

Grounded theory's very strong dicta are a) do not do a literature review in the substantive area and related areas where the research is to be done, and b) when the grounded theory is nearly completed during sorting and writing up, then the literature search in the substantive area can be accomplished and woven into the theory as more data for constant comparison.

Charmaz (2006: 165) provides a rationale for delaying the literature review: 'The intended purpose of delaying a literature review is to avoid importing preconceived ideas and imposing them on your work.' Melton and Cunningham (2014a) have shown that it is possible to work within the field and still use grounded theory effectively, as long as the process of reflexivity is strictly adhered to.

By contrast, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) approach suggests that the literature review can be used as a guide or starting point for data collection. Dey (1993: 63) adds an alternative view: 'there is a difference between an open mind and an empty head. Dunne (2011: 117) concurs with this alternative view:

...it would be both unfortunate and unconstructive to sacrifice the numerous advantages derived from conducting an early literature review based on a

concern about what impact extant ideas *might* have on the researcher. In this respect, the purist stance represents a disproportionate response to an uncertain and unsubstantiated risk.

In order to avoid compromising data via an early literature review, reflexivity via memoing and discussion are used by scholars to maintain a grounded approach (Dunne 2011; Melton & Cunningham 2014a).

It is therefore neither orthodox nor traditional to complete the literature review prior to data collection, a view held by both Glaser (1998) and Charmaz (1996), but it is sometimes necessary. Researchers who are required to complete a literature review before data collection must therefore ensure that appropriate reflexivity practices have been put in place, to avoid biased analysis of the data. Having discussed issues surrounding the timing of the literature review, it is important to highlight other difficulties and criticisms of its place and position within a grounded theory study.

Generation of theory

According to Hallberg (2006), grounded theory is a useful tool when considering aspects of society that are continually changing. While it is essential that the researcher ensures the results are grounded in data, the notion that researchers should or can be ignorant of previous work in the field is often misjudged. As Goulding (2005: 296) explains: 'A common misconception is that the researcher is expected to enter the field ignorant of any theory or associated literature relating to the phenomenon and wait for the theory to emerge purely from the data.' Indeed, Charmaz (1990) acknowledges that researchers do use previous literature, but only once the categories have been developed. In fact, theorists may use previously used concepts, so long as they can show that these concepts exist within their own data and can demonstrate links within their analysis (Glaser 1978). Therefore, so long as an open mind is kept throughout the coding process and the research is grounded in original data, previous concepts can be applied. In this study, the previous concept will be Anderson's (2009b) premise of homohysteria that has since been adapted by Worthen (2014).

The use of grounded theory is essential when considering a social institution with limited recent research, or indeed, when using an alternative approach to knowledge to that which has already been employed within the field (Goulding 1998). In this case, poststructuralist research has been conducted in the area of lesbians in team sports by multiple authors, but this has tended to focus on one sport (Caudwell 2002, 2006; Drury 2011; Roy 2013), rather than on lesbian women within a range of team sports.

This research therefore attempts to update the research from singular sports to a range of sports and from a social constructivist basis to a Charmaz grounded theory approach, to ensure that all findings are grounded in actual data. The benefit of using grounded theory is that the data creates the theory, rather than being made to fit an existing theory (Glaser 1978). The theory comes directly from the data. Wignall and McCormack (2015) have shown that an adaptation of Charmaz's approach can be beneficial when using pre-existing theoretical frameworks to analyse data from a hitherto under-researched field. The benefit of this is highlighted by Jeon (2004: 252): 'This gives a social theory its credibility or trustworthiness that can be understood fully only within the context of the social world from which it was derived.' An existing theory can therefore be corroborated and modified using direct data from the coding procedures of grounded theory. This data originates from the social world being investigated, which gives it its credibility.

While some may consider thematic analysis to be a viable alternative to grounded theory, this study seeks to analyse homophobia in women's sport in a society with declining homophobia. As Braun and Clarke explain (2006: 80): 'Grounded theory seek patterns in the data, but are theoretically bounded. They continue to note that scholars use a form of grounded theory that can be described as 'lite' and lends itself to being mistakenly labelled 'thematic analysis' but the difference lies in the use of theory (2006: 81). Similarly, it has been shown that an adapted form of Charmaz's theory can be used to ensure that findings are firmly grounded in collected data, while pre-existing frameworks (Braun & Clarke 2006; Wignall & McCormack 2015). Some believe that thematic analysis can only be used where researchers have

existing knowledge in the field, however, this has been shown to be unfounded (Melton & Cunningham 2014a).

Theory development

Within grounded theory, there are two applications relating to theory development: substantive and formal. Most forms of theory developed from grounded theory are substantive and relate to a specific area, whereas formal theory is a higher level theory relating to a number of substantive theories (Charmaz 2006; Birk & Mills 2011). Charmaz (2006) explains that substantive theories are most common because researchers have focused on a specific area; therefore, there is potential for creating stand-alone theories. In this case, the sample is specific, relating to lesbian identified women competing in team sports. However, there are dangers attached to developing stand-alone theories. As Goldkuhl and Cronholm (2010: 191) explain, 'As researchers we often build new knowledge on existing knowledge. An isolated theory development also means that there is a risk for noncumulative theory development. They suggest the use of existing theory within the grounded theory project in a process they term 'theory matching' (Goldkuhl & Cronholm 2010). They go on to explain, 'In theory matching we let deductivism take over. In the initial phases of data analysis and theory generation, we apply an inductive way of working, but now it is time to actively use other theories (2010: 198). However, they are not the only authors to consider the use of previous theories within grounded theory.

Snow and Trom (2002: 164) consider that between substantive and formal theory sits theoretical extension. Their definition is useful here: 'Theoretical extension rather than generating new theory, extends existing theoretical formulations to new or different social categories, contexts, or processes.' For example, this can be seen in the recent extension of the inclusive masculinities theory into working-class sixth form students, where previously the theory had only been applied to middle class students (Blanchard *et al* 2015).

Snow and Trom (2002: 165) also use the term theoretical refinement, which is defined as a 'modification of an existing theoretical perspective or aspects of it with new case material. This is where an initial theory may be adapted to fit new

information, for example, Tredway's (2014) adaptation of Butler's heterosexual matrix to fit openly lesbian athletes. Butler's (2006) initial theory fails to account for people being open about their sexuality and so Tredway (2014) modifies the matrix to account for this change. Therefore, grounded theory does not always have to produce a new theory, but can in fact adapt, extend or modify an existing theory. However, it is essential that any results are grounded in the initial data.

Criticism of grounded theory

Criticisms of grounded theory vary from logistical issues to potential theoretical problems. Authors have analysed grounded theory articles to discover if researchers had applied grounded theory appropriately (Weed 2009; Holt & Tamminen 2010). The results from these studies show that, in some cases, researchers had claimed to use grounded theory, yet on further analysis, have failed to meet its numerous criteria. As Bryman (2004: 407) notes: 'The term 'categories' is increasingly being employed rather than concepts, but such inconsistent use of key terms is not helpful to people trying to understand the overall process.'

A reason why researchers may not employ all aspects of grounded theory is easily explained. Isabella (1990) describes how time consuming the initial stages of coding can be for researchers and notes they may well feel overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of coding expected. Allan (2003) states that not only does initial coding take a great deal of time, but it can easily lead to confusion for the researcher.

Initial coding is the first step towards developing a theory within the study. As Bryman (2004: 407) notes, 'Moreover, in spite of the frequent lip-service paid to the generation of formal theory, most grounded theorists are substantive in character; in other words, they pertain to the specific social phenomenon being researched and not to a broader range of phenomena (though, of course, they *may* have such broader applicability. As Isabella (1990) acknowledges, the difficulties associated with scaling up research often dictate the dominance of low level theories. There are several explanations why a project may produce low level theory or no theory at all. If researchers proceed to the next step before theoretical saturation is reached, there is unlikely to be a higher level theoretical development. As Suddaby

(2006: 636) notes: 'Premature departure from the field may well result in data that are only partly analyzed and therefore fail to elevate obvious categorizations to a more abstract theoretical level.' While clearly a lack of formal theory can be a criticism against grounded theory, the development of substantive theory should not be overlooked. In fact, it would be naïve of researchers to assume that every grounded study is going to end in a formal theory or to ignore the fact that substantive theory may well add to formal theory at a later date.

Researcher's position and methodological framework

One subject that scholars are agreed on, is that researchers must clarify their ontological position prior to selecting a grounded theory approach (Annells 1996; Mills *et al* 2006). Within this context, Annells (1996: 279) explains the importance of the researcher's position: 'The understanding of grounded theory method is partly dependent on an awareness of the method's ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives.' It is therefore essential that researchers understand the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the three approaches to grounded theory. The differences between these ontological and epistemological perspectives have been identified graphically by Weed (2009: 508).

Weed (2009: 507) describes these differences in approach as follows:

On the right of the ontological continuum are assumptions that reality is neither objective nor singular, but that multiple realities are constructed by individuals. These assumptions are labelled constructivism...On the right of the epistemological continuum are assumptions that direct knowledge of phenomena is not possible, and that observations and accounts of the world provide indications of phenomena, and thus knowledge is developed through a process of interpretation. Such assumptions are labelled interpretivism.

Charmaz (2006: 10) summarises the differences in the approaches. She describes Glaser and Strauss's position as that of a '...scientific observer.' By contrast, Charmaz (2006) does not seek a discovery but rather a construction, which includes the researcher's interaction with participants.

The links between the ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods are identified by numerous authors (Blaikie 1993; Weed 2009; Grix 2010). These 'building blocks' of research help to develop the researcher's understanding of where they are on the research continuum (Weed 2009). This allows researchers not only to locate themselves on the ontological and epistemological continuums, but also to link their position to their methodology and methods following a simplified set of steps.

Weed's (2009) 'building blocks' of research allow researchers to develop a simplified version of their research. However, before this process can be considered, it is essential to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the three main grounded theory approaches. Having considered the approaches both in terms of ontology, epistemology and coding procedures, I have elected to use aspects of Charmaz's grounded theory in this study before testing the applicability of homophobia to the experiences of out lesbians in sport. My decision to choose this branch of grounded theory is based on the researcher's position with the study and the use of reflexivity. This form of grounded theory is not about discovery, but about exploring the reality faced by participants (Charmaz 2006). As Charmaz (2006: 11) summarises: 'As we learn how our research participants make sense of their experiences, we begin to make analytic sense of their meanings and actions.' This is particularly useful for analysing participants' perception of the environment they have been participating within.

Chapter 7: Methodological Literature

Introduction

Previous research on homophobia in women's sport has used a qualitative approach (Hargreaves 1994; Griffin 1998; Caudwell 2002, 2007; Drury 2011; Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). While some studies have used questionnaires in order to identify apologetic behaviour (Davis-Delano *et al* 2009), most studies have been based on interviews (Hargreaves 1994; Griffin 1998; Caudwell 2002, 2007; Drury 2011; Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). The majority of recent research carried out on lesbian participation in sport has been from a post-structuralist perspective (Caudwell 1999, 2002, 2006, 2007; Drury 2011; Roy 2013).

Initially this chapter will examine the types of interviews available to researchers. Once the type of interview has been selected and justified, the development of the interview structure is paramount, to ensure that participants are comfortable to share their experiences. How interviews are conducted is another feature that can be implemented in a variety of ways and therefore requires analysis. This chapter will also examine the validity and reliability of the study in relation to both the use of interviews and the employment of aspects of Charmaz's grounded theory. Finally, this chapter will outline essential ethical considerations.

Interviewing

Interviewing is a common tool for qualitative social scientists for the purposes of collecting data, particularly when using a grounded theory approach (Reiter *et al* 2011). Dimond *et al* (2012) explain that when analysing human behaviour, the interview is considered a critical research tool. Cook (2008: 176) concurs, noting that 'a significant proportion' of research carried out which requires data collection involves some form of interview. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) acknowledge that using interviews is a straightforward practice, as on closer scrutiny, it is simply a structured conversation carried out in order to achieve an objective. However, the type of interview and its administration can vary according to the research paradigm

and research type; within the interpretivist paradigm, the interview is a common tool used to collect qualitative data (Amis 2005).

There are numerous types of interview that a researcher may employ, depending on the nature of the research being conducted. Fontana and Frey (2000: 645) list three main types – ‘structured, semi structured, or unstructured’. Structured interviews, also occasionally referred to as closed interviews, take a rigid approach, using the same questions in the same order for every interview, allowing no space for extra questions to be asked (Amis 2005). Although structured interviews can and are used by qualitative researchers, they are more closely related to quantitative research (Bryman 2004). Qualitative researchers tend to use either semi-structured or unstructured interviews.

Unstructured interviews are located at the opposite end of the interviewing spectrum from structured interviews. Generally, questions are not pre-planned; instead the interviewer will have a topic in mind and an objective to guide the interview (Gray 2009). The interviewee would simply be able to ‘talk freely’ throughout the interview with questions posed purely to check understanding (Gray 2009: 373). There are some notable advantages of this sort of interview; a flexible conversation may be conducted between the researcher and the participant (Marvasti 2004). This type of interview is particularly useful for life history research, where respondents can simply talk through events with a simple starter question (Marvasti 2004). However, this research project aims to examine experiences of openly lesbian women in team sports, where particular themes require examination, therefore semi-structured interviews are the most appropriate. These types of interviews are discussed in the following paragraph.

Between the extremes of structured and unstructured interviews lie semi-structured interviews, although these have more similarities with unstructured interviews and therefore produce qualitative data (Arksey & Knight 1999). Bryman (2004) defines semi-structured interviewing as a way of being able to respond to the natural ebb and flow of conversation, whilst allowing researchers to probe answers to add depth to the interview. Semi-structured interviews have been used by numerous authors when analysing homophobia in sporting environments (Caudwell 2002, 2007; Griffin

1998; Anderson 2002, 2011a; Adams 2011; Drury 2011; Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013).

Semi-structured interviews allow more open questions to be asked than in a structured interview and this can be of great benefit when discussing human behaviour. The purpose of the open questions is to allow the participant to discuss the topic unreservedly about the topic being analysed (Arksey & Knight 1999). In order to ensure that the interviews stay on topic, interviewers use an interview guide. This guide contains the questions and topics which are being covered, but the exact ordering of questions asked will depend on the responses from the participant (Bryman 2004). An interview guide is developed from issues raised in the literature review with added questions aimed at achieving project aims.

The phases of the interview can be very important, as participants need to have the opportunity to answer questions fully and to feel comfortable enough to do so. Arksey and Knight (1999) suggest starting the interview by using straightforward questions relating to background and factual information. In this case, initial questions are asked surrounding the participant's sporting background, as well as logistical questions about their location and age. This allows participants to settle into the interview and reduces anxiety, as participants do not have to think about their answers and they can start to develop a conversation and rapport with the interviewer. Amis (2005) provides a word of caution, however, noting that although rapport is important for data collection, the interviewer must maintain neutrality throughout the interview process. Fontana and Frey (2000: 655) explain the importance of maintain neutrality: 'Losing his or her distance in objectivity, or may "go native" and become a member of a group and forgo his or her academic role.' Therefore maintaining a neutral standpoint is essential within an interview.

DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) advocate a more rigid approach to the structure of the interview, listing three key phases: initial apprehension phase, exploration phase and co-operative phase. However, their initial phase is described in similar terms to Arksey and Knight's technique outlined above, suggesting that initial questions should be simple and open, to allow the participant to talk freely (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). This again helps establish rapport between the interviewer

and the participant. Questions within this phase should be easy, to enable the participant to feel at ease.

The second phase, the exploration phase, forms the main body of the interview. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006: 317) describe it as the 'in-depth description,' where the participant discusses the topic(s) in detail. During this phase, questions are developed from issues raised in the literature review and provide the bulk of the data. However, it may not only be questions highlighted in the literature review that feature here, new questions may be asked which directly relate to the project's objectives.

Finally, the interview moves to the co-operation phase, where the rapport between interviewer and participant has been established so that the interviewer may ask more difficult and sensitive questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). This phase also provides an opportunity to return to areas from earlier in the interview that are unclear or require more detail (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). As Arksey and Knight (1999: 98) state: 'Once these more demanding areas have been discussed, it is important to return to more neutral ground so that the interviewee is not left in a state of personal disquiet.'

Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for researchers working from an interpretive standpoint (Amis 2005). Having considered the various types of interviews possible, the researcher must make his or her selection prior to structuring and conducting the interviews. Amis (2005) states that researchers should choose a technique that works not only with their epistemology, but also with their personality, to ensure that they are effective within the interview. As this study uses an interpretivist grounded theory approach, semi-structured interviews will be used to collect data. Having decided which type of interview is to be conducted, it is essential to consider the means by which the interview will be conducted – either by telephone, internet, or face-to-face.

Application of interview

Traditionally, interviews were carried out face-to-face, before the concept of telephone interviews was examined for merit. However, technological advancements and the widespread use of the internet have opened up the potential for email, instant messaging and Skype interviews to be conducted. The various types of interview all have their peculiar advantages and disadvantages that need to be considered.

Opdenakker (2006) states that face to face interviews are synchronous, as they are a form of communication carried out in one place at one time. The advantages of face to face interviews are well documented (Fontana & Frey 2000; Davis *et al* 2004; Opdenakker 2006) with the main advantage cited by authors being the added value of non-verbal communication. Gray (2009: 384) explains the importance of non-verbal cues: 'Observation of the respondent's body language, for example, is important, to detect important clues on the respondent's concentration level, motivation to continue with the interview and whether he or she is at ease.' All these observations can help a researcher judge when to proceed to more challenging questions within the interview.

Davis *et al* (2004) also point out the benefits of conversational and social cues when interviewing face to face, which enable dialogue to take place. Opdenakker (2006) concurs, stating that dialogue is instantaneous face to face, with none of the time delays experienced with other forms of interviews. However, face to face interviews do require the interviewer not only to be skilled at interviewing, but also to be considering the next question, whilst still focusing on the participant's response, requiring significant levels of concentration (Opdenakker 2006). This advantage could also be applied to online interviews such as Facetime or Skype providing that the picture quality is good enough and that the connection is consistent throughout the interview. Using this method of interview allows researchers to have in depth discussions on a variety of issues and experiences, but potential interactions with other teammates are not possible, which the focus group format does offer (Berg 2004).

Fontana and Frey (2000) point out that face to face interviews not only offer the benefit of non-verbal cues, but also communicate other aspects lost in online interviews. However, it is also possible that the interviewer may influence the participant in some way during interviews in person (Knox & Burkard 2009). This is of particular significance with regard to sexuality based research. Browne (2005: 50) notes that her sexuality positively affected the interview process when interviewing lesbian women: 'Participants may have trusted me because I am a non-heterosexual woman and I did have easier access than perhaps a 'straight' man would have been granted.' This is of relevance to this study, where participants may feel more at ease in a face to face situation, in the knowledge or presumption that the researcher herself identifies as lesbian.

The end of the interview is also more obvious in a face-to-face interview, allowing the participant an opportunity to add any further information, without the abrupt endings which sometimes occur in other interview formats (Opdenakker 2006). Despite the numerous advantages of face to face interviews, these may not always be possible. Some people may not want to be interviewed face to face (Hanna 2012), requiring alternative arrangements to be made. Additionally, face-to-face appointments may not always be feasible due to time, travel and financial constraints. However, due to advances in technology, interviews can now be conducted in a range of ways. Dimond *et al* (2012) note that interviews can be held over the telephone through various form of instant messaging, or alternatively by email. Additionally, Hanna (2012: 241) advocates the use of alternative online resources but notes there have been some 'technical hitches' with such software. There is much debate between scholars about use of different technologies, with their corresponding pros and cons (Davis *et al* 2004; Beck 2005; Hamilton & Bowers 2006; Hunt & McHale 2007; Ayling & Mewse 2009). Amis (2005) provides a damning conclusion of electronic interviews, proposing that they fail to encapsulate the emotional content of the event and should therefore only be used as a last resort.

Telephone interviews can be used for all forms of interview, but results are likely to be most effective when there is some degree of structure to the interview, either through structured questions or through use of interview schedules (Berg 2004). Amis (2005) states that telephone interviews are commonly used, since they are

straightforward to administer, however there is potential to lose some of the interaction automatically achieved in face to face interviews. There are a number of reasons why telephone interviews might be selected, including participant preference (Hanna 2012). In addition, travelling to meet interview participants may not be possible due to time or financial constraints (Berg 2004; Sturges & Hanrahan 2004). Telephone interviews allow the interviewers to make notes while interviewing without distracting the participant (Sturges & Hanrahan 2004). This has resulted in telephone interviews becoming more common, particularly within social research. However, the issue of telephone interviewing has been widely debated for the reasons outlined below.

The main criticism of telephone interviews is the lack of non-verbal cues such as body language (Berg 2004). However, Novick (2008: 395) argues that 'there is little research confirming these effects, and there is no clear understanding of how they might compromise qualitative data.' Trier-Bieniek (2012) suggests that a lack of non-verbal cues can be counteracted through paying attention to how the participant answers and by use of follow-up questions to clarify the response. In fact, Trier-Bieniek (2012) adds that nonverbal cues are only important if interpreted correctly, or indeed if the interviewer picks up on and uses these cues, which is not always the case. It can therefore be surmised that such limitations are not, in fact, as detrimental as scholars have suggested.

Non-verbal cues may also help develop rapport between the interviewer and the participant, rapport that may be lost in telephone interviews. However, Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) note that owing to the enhanced anonymity of telephone interviews, participants felt more relaxed and less anxious about taking part in the research. In fact, Sturges and Hanrahan note that they gain a wider participating field through offering both face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews (Sturges & Hanrahan 2004). Trier-Bieniek (2012) agrees with these findings, stating that the increased level of anonymity in telephone interviews leads participants to express more frank and honest opinions. Miller (1995) concludes that the debate surrounding face-to-face versus telephone interviews is irrelevant, because no one format is better or worse than the other. For this reason, participants within this study were given the opportunity to choose telephone or face-to-face interview. Geographical

location and participant choice were the deciding factors for the type of interview selected.

Validity

For studies to be academically rigorous, issues of validity and reliability must be addressed. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 246) provide a definition: 'Validity refers in ordinary language to the truth, the correctness, and the strength of a statement.' Validity can be divided into separate aspects, namely internal and external validity. Bryman (2004) explains that internal validity occurs when the theoretical ideas reflect the data that has been collected, whereas external validity is concerned with the generalisability of the study across social settings. For example can the findings be generalised to other sporting environments such as individual sports.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) provide an overview of validity within interviews, describing the seven stages as:

- thematizing
- designing
- interviewing
- transcribing
- analyzing
- validating
- reporting

This overview suggests that validation does not simply take place at the end of the interviewing process; the researcher should be ensuring validity is maintained and reinforced throughout the study (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). The first two aspects - thematizing and designing – should be addressed prior to interviewing. Thematizing relates to the basis of the study, including the research questions (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). In this case, all research aims and objectives, as well as an overview of the study, were considered by independent academics within a university setting.

It has been suggested that schedules should be developed on completion of the literature review, to ensure that the questions cover all of the aims and objectives of the research (Arksey & Knight 1999). This goes against the traditional concept of grounded theory research, which suggests collecting research and data collection concurrently (Charmaz 1996; Glaser 1998). However, it is essential to enhance validity at every available opportunity and therefore in this project, the literature review was conducted before formulating interview questions. On completion of this task, two academics who regularly conduct social research interviews were asked to check through the questions, to ensure they were relevant but not leading questions.

The interviews followed the three phases prescribed by the academics below in parentheses: initial apprehension, exploration and co-operation (Arksey & Knight 1999; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). The questions were developed from the previous literature on the topic and followed the structure above (see appendix). The initial apprehension stage covered questions on the participant, including straightforward questions such as age, location and sporting background. This was with the aim of building rapport and helping to relax the participant (Arksey & Knight 1999). The exploration phase was developed through prior research and included questions on team socials, changing room environments and support offered by other athletes. These questions were also developed from the literature review carried out prior to the interview design stage (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). The co-operative stage was used to pose more challenging and potentially sensitive questions on homophobia and coming out. Finally, the co-operative stage was used for clarification on previous points made by the participant. The interviews always ended with the participant having the opportunity to add anything to the interview that they felt they wanted to expand on, or areas that we had not covered.

Arksey and Knight (1999) put forward recommendations for increasing validity during interviews. One of these suggestions involves the interviewer ensuring they build trust with the participants, so that participants feel able to share their opinion. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) add to this, noting that it is not simply the participant's comfort which contributes to the validity of the data, but also the questioning technique and perhaps most importantly, the follow-up questions used by the interviewer to clarify the answers provided. Therefore, it is essential throughout the interviewing process

that the participant feels comfortable, enabling them to speak openly about the topics while the researcher continually checks and clarifies the responses by asking for specific examples (Arksey & Knight 1999; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Clarification of answers also helps add depth to the data, which may prove useful during the coding process.

The final aspects covered by Arksey and Knight (1999) relate to the transcribing, analyzing, validating and reporting of interviews. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) comment on the various issues surrounding transcribing, stating that no one way is better than the other, since the process of transferring spoken word to prose is notoriously fraught with difficulties anyway. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006: 318) also discuss this theme: 'People often speak in run-on sentences, transcribers are forced to make judgement calls. The insertion of a period or a comma can change the meaning of an entire sentence.' With this in mind, interviews were transcribed, then listened to for a second time with the typed transcription, to help to ensure that the correct meanings were transferred from verbal conversations to written transcriptions. Only then were these transcriptions analysed.

Grounded theory methods should ensure as a matter of course that internal validity takes place throughout the study. Given the coding procedures applied in grounded theory, particularly the initial line-by-line coding, any resulting theory should be organically grounded in the data collected and analysed. Therefore, internal validity should be a strength of this study, as grounded theory methodology has been followed. However, it is not only internal validity that is key; external validity is also important.

External validity concerns the generalisability of the study. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) state that external validity depends on the ability of the theory to be applied to other social groups. This is notoriously difficult with studies using snowball sampling (Bryman 2004; Cohen & Arieli 2011) within social settings. Snowball sampling is when initial contacts are used to help recruit further participants, this process continues throughout the research therefore creating a snowball effect (Bruening & Dixon 2008). While qualitative researchers need to consider the generalisability of their studies, especially where sample sizes are small, it is

essential to recognise the different objectives between qualitative and quantitative research. Merriam (1995) explains that the idea behind qualitative research is to gain an in-depth view of a particular entity, rather than suggesting that the findings can be applied to other social groupings. Although external validity may be regarded as limited in research projects based on small scale interviews, measures can be put in place to assist with generalisability (Gray 2009). At the same time, the collection of rich qualitative data is a strength of this particular project and should probably be considered of more significance here than any potential to generalise findings across social settings.

Reliability

LeCompte and Goetz provide a simple and concise explanation for the difference between validity and reliability. They note (1982: 32): 'While reliability is concerned with the replicability of scientific findings, validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings.' Although validity and reliability are inherently different, both are needed to ensure that research is academically sound. As Thomas and Nelson explain (2001: 185): 'Of course, a test can be reliable yet not valid, but it can never be valid if it is not reliable.' Without validity and reliability, the results of any study can be questioned and considered untrustworthy, therefore both must be examined in order to maintain academic rigour (Roberts *et al* 2006). It is essential that reliability is maintained throughout the research project.

However, reliability within qualitative research in a social setting is notoriously difficult as the social setting is always changing (Bryman 2004). LeCompte and Goetz (1982: 35) describe it as a 'herculean problem for researchers concerned with naturalist behavior or unique phenomena.' As Merriam (1995: 55) explains, 'human behaviour is never static;' not only can individuals change their opinions and their outlook on issues, but changes in society may also make this type of research challenging. However, as Allan (2003: 8) notes in defence of the interviewing format, 'Greater reliability can be placed on the data gathered in an interview.' This provides justification for the use of interviews within a social setting.

Measures may be put in place to strengthen reliability, particularly when incorporated within grounded theory procedures. Grounded theory advocates the use of memos which can be used throughout the research process and even revisited to allow additional notes to be added. Roberts *et al* (2006: 43) explain how this process can aid reliability: 'Additionally, keeping detailed notes on decisions made throughout the process will add to the project's auditability and, therefore, reliability.' As mentioned in the previous chapter on grounded theory, memo writing aids the process of reflexivity, allowing researchers to track back and see how they have arrived at interpretations of data. Memos can be revisited at any time as a self-checking mechanism (Birks & Mills 2011).

Peräkylä (2004: 285) highlights the importance of transcripts: '... the quality of recordings and transcripts has important implications for the reliability of conversation analytic research.' Roberts *et al* (2006: 43) agree with this statement, noting that, 'Other methods for increasing reliability include ensuring technical accuracy in recording and transcribing.' Indeed, the authors suggest that embracing the data collected is essential and researchers need to ensure they are regularly crossing between the data and their interpretations of it.

Merriam (1995) outlines three approaches to increasing the reliability of the study:

- triangulation
- peer examination
- audit trail

Triangulation involves employing a variety of methods for collecting data, which will not be used within this study. Peer examination involves using an additional researcher to check that data is being interpreted in a consistent and logical manner. Finally, the audit trail is achieved in this study through the aforementioned process of memoing.

Bryman (2004: 273) defines external reliability as, '...the degree to which a study can be replicated. This is clearly problematic when conducting research in social settings which are continuously changing. Merriam (1995) concurs, noting that even with a

repeat study involving human subjects, the results may remain inconclusive; simply repeating a research process does not guarantee 'truth' is found.

Ethics

Ethical research is essential to maintain the safety of both the participant and the researcher. Marvasti (2004: 133) summarises the importance of ethics, 'The ethics of social research have to do with the nature of the researcher's responsibilities in this relationship, or the things that should or should not be done regarding the people being observed and written about.' Ethics ensures that researchers provide all the key information to the participants so that they understand their role within the study. It is a code of conduct that allows researchers to examine areas of society, while maintaining a professional and courteous rapport with participants (Marvasti 2004). There are number of key aspects to ethical researching that need to be discussed. Fontana and Frey (2000: 662) provide an overview of ethical practice:

Traditionally, ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of *informed consent* (receiving consent by the subject after having carefully and truthfully informed him or her about the research), *right to privacy* (protecting the identity of the subject), and *protection from harm* (physical, emotional or any other kind).

Informed consent is required for participants to take part in the study. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 70) explain: 'Informed consent further involves obtaining the voluntary participation of the people involved, and informing them of their right to withdraw from the study.' However, informed consent also requires participants to be informed of the research aims and objectives so that they understand their role within the study (Arksey & Knight 1999; Fontana & Frey 2000; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

Another aspect of ethics relates to confidentiality, which should be maintained throughout the research project. Confidentiality is of key importance within any research, so that the participants and the clubs that they belong to are protected (Hamilton & Bowers 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Marvasti (2004) explains that it is not simply confidentiality that needs to be considered but also anonymity, to

ensure that participants maintain their right to privacy. Marvasti (2004) continues that anonymity within face-to-face research is impossible and therefore measures should be put in place to protect the participant – in this study, saving the data under the participant's pseudonym from the outset. In addition, different sampling groups are also coded to protect individuals within that particular sampling group. Finally, Marvasti (2004) asserts that using pseudonyms for participants from the outset aids anonymity, since by the end of the study it is unlikely that any real names will be remembered.

Ethics approval for this study was granted through the University of Winchester ethical procedures which form part of the PhD probation period. (Ethical procedures are also considered as part of the scrutinizing system for all new PhD students at the University.) This process took the entire first year to complete. The ethical procedures implicated were those followed by both the British Sociological Association and the University of Winchester itself.

Participants were given an ethics form to sign but also an information sheet, which provided an overview of the purpose of the research. This was given to participants prior to the interview and participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to ethical procedures. Only one participant asked for clarification of anonymity and confidentiality. All names of participants were changed and pseudonyms were used throughout the study. Additionally, club names, partner's names or anyone else named in the interview were all changed or removed completely. This process was carried out at the point of transcription to ensure anonymity and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of international athletes involved, their chosen sport was removed, as were any comments likely to disclose their participation in the study.

Participant's right to withdraw was highlighted to them in the informed consent form and they were all emailed after the study to thank them for their participation and to ensure they were given the opportunity to ask any further questions. Prior to interviewing, participants were asked whether they had any issues with the interview being recorded; all participants agreed to the interview being recorded and nobody

asked for a transcript to be sent on. The Data Protection Act 1998 was also adhered to throughout the entirety of the study.

Chapter 8: Methodological Framework

Introduction

Data from this study came from 31 semi-structured interviews with lesbian women competing in competitive team sports. Participants ranged in age, sport, experience, length of time with the club as well as by geographical region. Although snowball sampling recruited some participants via social networks of those who had already been interviewed, the majority were sourced from a range of advertisements on social media and in a lesbian magazine—hence the diversity between participants. Data collection took place between June 2014 and January 2015.

Participants

In this study, 31 participants took part in a semi-structured interview, either face-to-face or by telephone. Participants were all women who participated regularly in a team sport and the team competed within a league structure, either run by a national governing body or by the British University Sport Association. All participants within this study were found through use of social media (Twitter and Facebook), an advert in the UK's only lesbian magazine (DIVA), or via snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling was used to recruit more participants who identified as openly lesbian. Browne (2005) states that when discussing sexuality in particular, snowball sampling can be particularly effective. Sexuality is something that people may not advertise to others and therefore might be unlikely to reply to an advert, yet if trust social networks are used to recruit participants it may dissipate any concerns (Browne 2005). However, this study found its impact to be limited. Numerous participants were keen to bring acquaintances on board, but few contacts actually materialised. In all, only four different 'snowballs' started, with two participants gaining access to a further two participants and two gaining access to just one. Although the snowballs proved relatively ineffective in gaining participants for this particular study, a frequent criticism of snowball sampling is the limited variation and representation it brings to the population under study. The snowballs in this study can be seen in table 2.

In this study, social networking was found to be most successful in identifying participants. Numerous LGBT charities and organisations were sourced via Twitter, including Standup Foundation. Pride Sports retweeted an advert for participants, as did an openly gay celebrity. This led to 71 retweets and 16 people 'favouriting' the poster advertising the project on Twitter. On Facebook, the poster was shared on three separate occasions. In addition, numerous rugby, football and hockey clubs were contacted directly through social media or via email, none of which agreed to take part in the research. Governing bodies and their regional associations were contacted via email but again no participants were gained via this route. Higher level athletes proved difficult to interview, perhaps owing to a prevailing culture of silence or simply training commitments. It is likely that the latter is true, since the three international athletes interviewed were the only ones to rearrange their appointment more than once; in one case it took four attempts to fit in an hour's interview.

Participants had to meet certain criteria to be involved in the study: 1) they had to identify as an openly lesbian athlete; 2) they had to participate in a team sport; 3) they had to have been involved for at least one season; 4) they needed to be playing and/or training regularly, and their team needed to be involved in a league structure. Although some athletes had recently moved clubs, they had been involved in their chosen sport for more than the required length. Additionally, although all participants were, or had been, in a lesbian relationship, some failed to acknowledge the 'lesbian label;' indeed they did not want to subscribe to any label (this will be discussed in the results section).

Participants were aged from 18-40 with the average age being 30. Through advertising in a national magazine and through social networking, athletes were based throughout England, with one participant based in Scotland and one in Wales. Of the participants based in England, the following regions were represented: South West (11), West Midlands (3), South East (5), London (4), East (2), North East (2), East Midlands (1), and North West (1). All the participants identified their ethnicity as White British apart from one participant who described her ethnicity as Black Caribbean British.

Participants took part in a number of different team sports as shown in Table 2. Two participants competed regularly in two sports:- participant 12 'Jo' played rugby and cricket and participant H 'Bridget' competed in rowing and hockey. Although numerous other athletes had previously played a wide range of sports, at the point of interview, they were only involved in one sport competitively. The sports that the international athletes participate in have not been detailed in order to protect their identity.

Athletes played sports at a variety of levels. Three international athletes were interviewed, who are still currently competing at this level. In addition, one athlete (Sam) had recently retired from international sport but was still playing at a lower level in a different sport. The remaining participants were playing at various recreational levels. Two participants were competing in University based sports teams, which in England are organised by the students unlike the American Collegiate system of the NCAA, who employ sporting administrators and paid coaches.

Table 2: Overview of participants

Snow ball	Study Name	Sport	Highest Level played	Age	Ethnicity	Interview type
	Tamara	Roller-derby	Grassroots	34	White/ British	Phone
	Susan	Football	Grassroots	25	White/ British	Phone
	Yasmin	Rugby	Grassroots	27	White/ British	Phone
	Holly	Cheer-leading	University	21	White/ British	Phone
	Jennifer	Netball	Grassroots	30	White/ British	Phone
	Isabel	Rugby	Regional	31	White/	Phone

					British	
1	Lorna	Hockey	National league	30	White/ British	Phone
	Kerry		Inter-national	40	White/ British	Phone
1	Georgina	Hockey	County	31	White/ British	Phone
	Ruth	Cricket	Beginner	34	White/ British	Phone
1	Lily	Hockey	Grassroots	28	White/ British	Phone
	Mia	Cricket/ rugby	Regional	30	White/ British	Phone
	Angie		Inter-national	29	White/ British	Phone
	Claudia	Hockey	Grassroots	30	White/ British	Phone
2	Heather	Football	Grassroots	34	White/ British	Phone
	Joanna	Football	Regional	27	White/ British	Phone
	Angelica	Rugby	Regional	37	Black/Carb	Phone
	Sam	Hockey	County	30	White/ British	Phone
	Caroline	Hockey/ Cricket	Grassroots	40	White/ British	Phone
4	Annie	Rugby	Grassroots	25	White/ British	Ftf

4	Becky	Rugby	Grassroots	23	White/ British	FtF
3	Cathy	Hockey	Grassroots	35	White/ British	FtF
3	Denise	Hockey	Grassroots	24	White/ British	FtF
	Ellie	Football	Grassroots	33	White/ British	FtF
	Faye	Football	Grassroots	29	White/ British	FtF
	Grace	Netball	Grassroots	29	White/ British	FtF
	Bridget	Rowing	Grassroots	38	White/ British	FtF
2	Mel	Football	Grassroots	26	White/ British	FtF
	Brooke	Netball	County	32	White/ British	FtF
	Sally		Inter- national	33	White/ British	FtF
	Jasmine	Lacrosse	Grassroots	18	White/ British	FtF

Procedures

Participants made contact through email or direct (private) messaging on social media. Following initial contact, they were emailed the ethics form and the covering information sheet (see appendix). All participants were given time to read, acknowledge and answer questions about the study and their ethical rights prior to arranging the interview. Participants were then offered a face-to-face interview or a telephone interview. Only two participants who did not live within the vicinity of the

researcher chose to be interviewed face-to-face (both were international athletes); one was unable to find a suitable time in their schedule and elected to have a telephone interview instead. Other participants were given the choice but chose the telephone option as the easier one to fit around existing commitments.

All participants signed the ethics form and returned it before the interview started. At the start of the interview, they were again asked whether they had any objections to the interview being recorded and given a further chance to ask any questions regarding the study. No participants refused to be recorded during the interview and only one wished to be reminded of the anonymity and confidentiality provisions. Most participants were interviewed at their private residence, though some chose to be interviewed in the workplace, where the interview was conducted in a meeting room. Interviews were always recorded in a secure environment where the conversations could not be overheard by anyone. This was essential, as during telephone interviews the participant had to be on speaker phone to allow recording to take place. Again participants were asked to acknowledge that they were happy for this process to take place. After the interview, the participant's number was deleted from the device used to ensure that their identity was protected. After the interview, the recording was saved onto an encrypted password protected memory stick in line with data protection and ethical procedures.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format and were scheduled to last for 45 minutes. Interviews lasted from 25 minutes to 1 hour, but averaging 40 minutes. An interview schedule was developed from previous research and was added to after the first five initial interviews (see appendix). Questions started with the participant's background in terms of age, location and ethnicity and moved onto sporting background. Interviews ended with questions surrounding their current team. Other areas examined, although not always in the same order, were the athlete's environment, support from other athletes, athletic ability, coming out, stereotypes and their coaches' attitude to sexuality. Additional questions that were added after the first five interviews included language used to refer to their partner, the influence of men's teams within the club on support for women and whether girlfriends and boyfriends were both welcome within open and inclusive

environments. All interviews ended with two questions: 'Would you describe your experiences as wholly positive?' followed by an opportunity for the participants to add anything they thought might be prudent to bring to the study. Some participants took this opportunity to clarify points or add detail that they felt had not been covered. Throughout the interview, key aspects were checked by reframing questions, an example of good practice suggested by the methodological literature consulted prior to interviewing (see Chapter 7). Following the interview, participants were thanked for their participation and were sent details of the study to forward to any potential participants, to encourage snowball sampling. However, as previously mentioned, snowball sampling did not prove particularly successful.

All interviews were taped and transcribed Intelligent Verbatim. The transcriptions were then re-checked, by listening to the interview while reading the transcript, to ensure that correct punctuation was applied as well as pauses or laughter to help give context to the transcription. Any details that could be directly linked to the participant, for example club name, was then removed to protect the participant's identity. Having checked the transcription, it was then coded using a constructivist grounded theory approach.

Coding

Due to the ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher, this study uses Charmaz's (2006) constructivist grounded approach and therefore the coding stages involved initial, focused and theoretical coding. The initial coding used a line-by-line approach for all 31 interviews that had been transcribed verbatim (see appendix). This was done with every interview and some interviews that were coded early in the data collection process were revisited when saturation occurred. Categories began to emerge, but in the early stages were adapted regularly and this process was tracked through the use of memos (see appendix). This was especially evident with the early interviews, where originally suggested themes highlighted in memos began to change during the coding process. The initial coding process allowed for organisation of data and in depth analysis.

The process of initial coding continued until saturation was achieved. Once saturation was reached, early coding was revisited as codes changed throughout the research. These changes were tracked in memos. Saturation enabled categories to be confirmed and allowed intermediate, focused coding to start.

Stage two of coding within a constructivist approach is focused coding, which takes two forms. It not only highlights the most frequent codes, but also the most important within the study. As Charmaz (2006) suggests, this process was not linear, with examination occurring throughout this coding process. Memoing helped to process the various categories and various drafts of categories can be seen in the appendix. The re-examination of data allowed a re-analysis of earlier codes, which had potentially changed or needed to be disregarded. Throughout this process, clear themes began to emerge from the data collected. The themes within this research are identified in the results section of this thesis.

The third stage of coding within a constructivist approach is advanced coding. This was left until all the interviews had been conducted, transcribed and initial coding had been completed. This was to ensure that the results were grounded in data and pre-conceived ideas avoided. The use of grounded theory coding procedures and their connection to pre-existing theories has already been to good effect within research (Wignall & McCormack 2015). This study effectively used the coding procedures of Charmaz's grounded theory and then applied the results to the concept of homophobia.

Despite using grounded theory for a study of homophobia, there was an opportunity to use the process of theoretical extension (see chapter 6). While Worthen (2014) applies Anderson's (2009b) concept of homophobia to women, it is a theoretical adaptation without use of empirical data. Therefore, this study has applied Anderson's concepts within a culture of declining homophobia in a sporting context. In addition, a category of 'rejection of homophobic language' has been added to the concept of homophobia. The coding process in Charmaz's grounded theory approach allows the results to remain grounded in the data, whilst effectively testing an existing theoretical standpoint. The processes of reflexivity and memo-

writing were necessary to keep the data grounded, as explained in the following paragraph.

Reflexivity and memo writing

As part of a grounded theory approach, reflexivity was embedded within this study; this was deemed necessary as the method was semi-structured interviews coded by one researcher. Reflexivity is vital, since the researcher's presence and life experiences inevitably affect the environment (McGhee *et al* 2007). Whilst researching using grounded theory, it is essential that an open mind is maintained throughout the coding and that no previous experience or knowledge from the researcher disrupts the coding process. Reflexivity allows researchers to revisit previous knowledge or experiences to examine whether these have had an effect on the data (McGhee *et al* 2007). Melton and Cunningham (2014a) have shown that it is possible to be established in the field under study, but still use grounded theory, providing reflexivity is applied effectively. Suddaby (2006) states that reflexivity must be used by researchers, to ensure any potential bias caused by their views throughout the research process is acknowledged via the process of self-reflection. It is therefore essential that in developing their theory (in this case testing a theory), the researcher can engage in reflection in order to validate their findings and discuss how their theory has evolved (Mruck & Mey 2007). This reflective process can be tracked and evidenced through memos used throughout the coding procedure (see Appendix).

However, reflexivity varies according to the strand of grounded theory used by the researcher - in this case, constructivism. Within constructivist grounded theory, the process of self-reflection is essential and this was achieved through the practice of memo writing. Memos are used purely for the researcher's benefit and can be seen as a stream of consciousness. Memos were regularly written during the data collection and coding processes. Some memos were revisited and added to throughout the process and they were especially useful when developing new ideas and concepts (see appendix). Memos allow researchers a period of time during which ideas may be found and explored (Charmaz 2006). Memoing is heavily connected to the process of coding, as this process allows reflection and analysis to take place. The

memoing process within this study evidences how various decisions were made in the course of the project (see appendix).

Throughout the data collecting process, memos were written to ensure reflexivity in so far as possible. At times these memos may appear rambling, but grounded theorists are encouraged to write memos without too much thought. Being overtly self-conscious of the written style of such memos would detract from the experience and therefore threaten the process of reflexivity. Memo writing allowed me to reflect on the data collection and helped to develop the coding process that will be discussed within the next section. Memos were revisited throughout data collection and analysis to view the process that occurred at each stage. This allowed me to reflect not only on the actual data collected, but also to analyse why it was difficult to gain access to higher level athletes.

Chapter 9: Team Climates

Introduction

In this chapter, I show how my results regarding the current climate for lesbian athletes competing in team sports are significantly different from previous research carried out in the 1990s (Griffin 1998; Elling *et al* 2003; Lenskyj 2003). I propose that athletes are now competing not only in an open and inclusive environment, but moreover within a new climate that is welcoming and supportive for lesbian athletes. I show how this welcoming and inclusive climate has extended from acceptance from teammates, to inclusion of partners and a growing tolerance from male club members, which has not been documented before. I discuss how the idealised feminine image is displayed by some women, but I argue that this primarily occurs through agential choice rather than through apologetic behaviour, which previous research has suggested is the case.

Literature on climates for lesbian athletes

In 1998, Griffin list three different climates for lesbian athletes: hostile, conditionally tolerant, and open and inclusive. The hostile climate was particularly evident during the 1980s, a period of high homophobia. During this time, lesbian athletes had to remain hidden and actively deny their sexuality (Griffin 1998; Anderson 2002). Evidence of this was seen in the actions of Billie Jean King who, after being outed in the 1980s, proceeded to use publicity to reaffirm a heterosexual identity (Griffin 2014). The second climate was dubbed 'conditionally tolerant'; Anderson (2002) renames this a 'don't ask, don't tell' climate, where gay athletes were tolerated as long as they remained silent about their sexuality. Finally, Griffin (1998: 104) presents the most positive environment – a climate that is open and inclusive. As she explains, 'Lesbians in this climate can be more open about their sexual orientation without as much concern about the kinds of discrimination or harassment experienced by lesbians in hostile or conditionally tolerant climates.' Griffin (1998) concludes that there are not many open and inclusive environments within sport, owing to only a few athletes being open about their sexuality.

Previous research has suggested that 'don't ask, don't tell' is evident in sporting environments and that lesbian athletes do nothing to challenge this environment (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). For example, lesbian athletes have often faced exclusion from social events (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). However, it is essential to recognise that data used in this research was from the early 2000s.

More recently in the USA, it has been suggested that although teams and teammates may provide a supportive environment for lesbian athletes, the management of university sports is not inclusive (Fink *et al* 2012). It is also important to note potential difference in cultures between educational and social sporting settings. Fink *et al* (2012: 95) explain, 'The incredible support provided by our participants' teammates indicates not *all* aspects of the sport setting, even within intercollegiate athletics, are riddled with homophobia. Although the latest research carried out in the US collegiate system suggests that climates are improving for lesbian athletes (Fink *et al* 2012), the change is neither universal nor straightforward.

Female teammates (heterosexual and homosexual) have been shown to be supportive of athletes who have come out (Fink *et al* 2012). Female heterosexual teammates have provided a safe environment for athletes to come out and have allowed them to be themselves without restrictions (Fink *et al* 2012). This change in support was monitored in one study where researchers interviewed heterosexual male athletes before and after one of their teammates came out; they found total support (Adams & Anderson 2011). However, research of this kind for women is limited, as previous literature has only examined closeted athletes, athletes competing in a conditionally tolerant climate, or athletes competing in lesbian teams (Lenskyj 1986; Caudwell 2002, 2007; Griffin 1998).

Open and inclusive to welcoming and supportive

Hostile and conditionally tolerant climates for lesbian athletes have been studied in numerous Western countries (Hargreaves 2000; Kauer & Kane 2006; Anderson & Bullingham 2013; Davis-Delano 2014). Griffin's notion of an open and inclusive environment was proposed in 1998, but there was no evidence that it existed.

Instead, it was an abstract conception of progression. Yet Anderson (2011a) has clearly shown that open and inclusive climates do exist for gay men in sporting cultures.

Athletes in this study show that the open and inclusive environment is also present for openly lesbian women. Isabel describes the environment for lesbian athletes in her team by saying, 'The women's team is really thriving because it is that kind of inclusive atmosphere.' In a similar vein, speaking of her previous team Grace noted, 'We were all friends. Genuinely we were all friends. There were no outsiders.' Faye describes her sporting environment: 'We are not really divided in anyway...we are all quite integrated [gay and straight players] because we are all quite good mates.' These findings are similar to Fink and colleagues (2012), who found that supportive teammates helped promote positive change in US collegiate sport. This was arguably to be expected in an under 25s sporting environment, where cultural homophobia is typically challenged more than in older age groups (Anderson 2009b; McCormack & Anderson 2010a). Yet participants within this study play in open age groups and therefore evidence of such positive change was not necessarily to be expected.

In terms of these positive changes, it is tempting to surmise that the most positive climates were those with the highest number of open lesbians competing. However, Claudia's comment disproves this: 'It is the straightest club that I have ever been in, and one of the most welcoming.' Angelica made a similar point:

Out of all the rugby teams at our level locally we are probably one of the straightest. We're about half and half. We don't actually care. We are all in the state of being grown up enough to deal with that [sexuality].

Interestingly, Angelica attributes any negativity, or lack of acceptance, to immaturity rather than to cultural homophobia.

This positive ethos around diversity can be seen in other comments. Caroline states, 'It is a very open club, all the youngsters know who is open. For example, [if] two players are a couple, they just know it's not a big issue.' She concludes by stating that, 'It is probably one of the most open and accepting clubs.' Lily speaks of the

reaction of her the teammates [to her sexuality], who are predominately straight: 'I think people were actually interested...they are intrigued about my sexuality.'

The concept of an open and inclusive environment was proposed in the 1990s, however even academics such as Griffin (1998) were unsure what such an environment might look like, since none existed. Numerous athletes describe features of this community. Kerry explains, 'You have to talk about it [sexuality] a lot so that it becomes inclusive and then to the next generation it becomes an irrelevant factor.' Griffin (1998) describes ten 'unplayable lies' which she said were barriers to lesbian acceptance within sport. She claims that while sexuality remains contained as 'a private issue' not open to discussion, then institutionalised homophobia will continue. As long as sexuality remains a taboo subject, it can be silenced, which in turn, reinforces homophobia. The unplayable lies have all but dissolved within such welcoming and inclusive climates. The nature and ease of discussion around sexuality is shown by Susan who comment, 'Just being myself around the team, if I see a hot woman playing for another team I can quite happily say, 'Oh yeah – she's nice' and not having comments or anything like that.'

The open and inclusive definition provided by Griffin back in 1998 does not seem to accurately describe the environment that athletes were describing here. Griffin's description of lesbians being able to be '*more open*' and '*without as much concern*' (1998: 104) does not adequately portray the reality of team climates in this study. Cathy explains the warmth within this environment:

I count them, rather than just people I play hockey with on a Saturday, as my friends. They ask after my partner. They ask how I'm doing. They are caring. I think you just get to know the people, who are fully accepting, they become friends. Then those that don't know that do find out, they never change their opinion of you it just stays the same.

Isabel paints a similar picture, 'We really take care of each other. We really look after each other.' Grace (the only lesbian on her team) describes how she asked a teammate about her presence on the team:

I have had conversations with some of the girls on the netball team just to say, 'Oh I'm not sure how people feel about me [being a lesbian].' That was in my first season. They said, 'Just don't worry about it. Just carry on. You are you, and you're happy, so that's what you need to remember'.

I asked what prompted the conversation and she replied:

Nothing happened toward me or anything. I just wanted to test the water, just to see because you hear of some, you know some netball teams being a little bit bitchy; a little bit catty. So I just wanted to test the water with somebody, who had been part of the club for a few years, just to see you know what sort of club this is and that's what support I got.

This supportive aspect has not been documented before, especially concerning the support from both lesbian and heterosexual teammates. Previous literature has examined mutual support between lesbian teammates (Griffin 1998) but support from heterosexual teammates is a new entity for lesbian athletes and these findings mirror the research carried out on gay men in competing in men's sport (Adams & Anderson 2011).

'Straight' welcoming of lesbian teammates is not something that has been seen in literature before in any sport, yet this study shows it to exist in a range of sports. Lesbian athletes are not just included, they are actively encouraged to participate. As Tamara explains, 'I googled a lot of it [Roller Derby] and found out it was quite LGBT friendly, which I thought was really, really, good, so yeah I went along.' Similarly, Ruth describes how she found her team: 'I saw an advert saying players wanted for an LGBT friendly cricket team.' Neither of these teams, in both Tamara and Ruth's situations, were exclusively lesbian, yet they described themselves as LGBT friendly. These positive results are unique in terms of the context – i.e. climates containing non-exclusively lesbian athletes- but can still be compared to previous research on lesbian identified teams (Caudwell 2002, 2006; Travers 2006; Drury 2011).

Jennifer describes her experiences, which are in marked contrast to those outlined in previous research on homophobia in women's sport. In terms of whether she feels able to be herself in her team, she replies: 'Yeah actually and probably more so than

anywhere like work or anything else. I feel really comfortable being myself.’ Tamara shares a similar positive experience: ‘I don’t even bat an eyelid. Like at work you’d always think twice [about coming out].’ This was not uncommon, with a few of the participants describing themselves as openly lesbian within their sports teams, yet not out at work. The extent of the positive impact of sport for some is summarised by Annie: ‘Actually rugby was the thing that really pulled me back together. I think it is a very empowering sport in all the right ways.’

Acceptance from teammates

Traditionally, teammates have not always welcomed lesbian players. This is due to the homosexual suspicion that this brings to a team (Griffin 1992a; Griffin 1998; Anderson & Bullingham 2013; Davis-Delano 2014). With this in mind, I specifically asked participants how they knew they were accepted, as previous literature has suggested this is not the case.

Some participants struggled to concisely answer the question; they could not explain how acceptance felt as they had not experienced anything different. Angie responded, ‘I get treated like any other person I guess.’ Angelica agreed, commenting: ‘Everybody receives the equal amount of piss take banter...Nobody was treated differently, if that makes sense?’ Brooke simply stated: ‘I don’t think they see me as any different at all.’ Bridget commented: ‘I am invited to things. Not excluded.’ Grace agreed with this sentiment: ‘They don’t isolate you or make you feel that you can’t be involved with anything that they are planning.’

Others chose to discuss how everyone was treated the same, with no change in behaviours between heterosexual and homosexual athletes. Caroline noted, ‘... there’s no change in behaviours (between heterosexual and homosexual players),’ insinuating everyone is treated the same. Georgina shared similar thoughts: ‘... there has been no negative change in behaviour [between lesbian and heterosexual athletes].’ Both Georgina and Jennifer (who were not connected) discussed how their teammates had all come along to their respective engagement parties.

Sam explained how an absence of homophobia showed acceptance: 'Well they have never shown me that they don't [accept me]. I mean to be honest, no-one has never, not accepted me. No-one's ever made comments or anything about it.' Jasmine acknowledged: 'I'm quite naïve, and I would expect them to accept me.' This expectation of acceptance is the antithesis of Anderson's (2002) notion of reverse relative deprivation. Jasmine, who was the youngest participant, had no expectation of any animosity towards her as a lesbian athlete.

Acceptance of partners

Given that the participants interviewed all suggested that they had been fully accepted, I asked questions surrounding the acceptance of their partners. This was to confirm that the athletes were not simply showing signs of reverse relative deprivation. Anderson (2002) discovered reverse relative deprivation when he found that gay male athletes reported a positive story, yet when questioned further, this sense of a positive outcome was based on a comparison with those who had been violently assaulted or dropped from the team. Thus, they were competing in a climate of conditional tolerance. This did not appear to be the case here.

Holly outlined how her girlfriend has been welcomed by her teammates: 'She is really accepted. Everyone loves her...so I have had a lot of support from them I guess.'

Brooke (the only lesbian player on her team) recounted a story from tour:

When we were on tour, the people I shared a room with probably spoke to my girlfriend more than I did. Any time she rang they wanted to talk to her. They would run and answer the phone and talk her through what we'd done in the day and then pass me over when they'd had a chat with her.

I then asked how she felt about her teammates speaking to her girlfriend and if she found it strange:

No I liked it! Because it's a very, you know, not that I would have any reason for them not being OK with it. But, it is a very clear overt way of showing their support and, you know, their acceptance of it (the relationship).

This acceptance, and indeed welcoming of girlfriends, partners and wives by the team has not previously been examined. Kerry commented, 'They are all very supportive, they all welcome my partner in the same way that they would anybody's partner.' Holly described her feelings about this acceptance: 'I feel very lucky that people have warmed to my girlfriend so much.' Jennifer reported, 'They always ask after my partner if she is not there, but they all know her.' Likewise, Mia discussed her teammates' views of her girlfriend: 'They say that they like her.' Jasmine recounted the immediate acceptance she received: 'We had a tournament... I was like 'Oh my girlfriend is coming is that, ok?' and [the captain] she was like, 'Yeah sure being her along. We'd love to meet her.' Jasmine had only recently joined the team but her experience was still positive and her girlfriend was accepted. Heather expressed a similar experience to Jasmine: 'I mean my partner tends to come out with me even though she isn't on the team.' This shows that a number of the players (whose partners were not already on the team) felt they could take their partner to social events without any issues; indeed their partners were often actively welcomed by others.

This social environment had previously been used to reinforce a feminine image, for example dressing in a feminine appropriate way (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Hargreaves 2000) and in some cases there have even been incentives offered to bring boyfriends along to matches to help present a heterosexual image (Mennesson & Clément 2003). Within these social environments, where sportswomen have traditionally been expected to present a feminine heterosexual image, lesbian wives and girlfriends would not be welcome. However, the opposite was found in this study.

On discussing her wife's involvement, Mia commented, 'Oh yeah she comes to everything' and noted that boyfriends were also welcome. Angie and Caroline expressed a similar state of affairs at their respective clubs, where both girlfriends and boyfriends were welcome to club events and social nights out. Claudia described the social environment as 'quite open' and indicated that both girlfriends and boyfriends were welcome. She noted, 'My current girlfriend is more than welcome.' Heather also depicts an inclusive environment: 'It is very much that we are going out as a team but everyone is welcome.' Susan agreed: 'Partners are always welcome. There's never a problem.' Becky explained just how open the social environment in

her team was: 'Anyone is more than welcome to our socials. My dad has come to a few!' Yasmin explained how socials are used as a way to recruit new players: 'Yes our partners are more than welcome, friends are more than welcome...It is often how we recruit new players actually, by inviting friends, boyfriends, sisters or cousins or anything like that.'

Some athletes explained that girlfriends were seen at socials more than boyfriends because they can just fit in as 'one of the girls'. Holly elaborates on this idea: 'I think she [Holly's girlfriend] is more accepted just because she is a girl...whereas I think if someone brought a boyfriend it might be a little different just because they wouldn't necessarily fit in to the girly-ness.' Ruth elaborates on this: 'I'm thinking, you know, the straight women on the team may just want to hang out with the girls on the team rather than bring their boyfriends.' When explored more deeply, the heterosexual teammates actually preferred having the partners of lesbians at socials rather than the male partners of heterosexual teammates. This is because female partners could fit in with all-female conversations, behaviours and banter, enabling their teammates to feel more at ease than if a male partner was present at an event.

Joanna explained that her partner 'comes a lot' to social events but when asked about boyfriends attending events, she commented 'Boyfriends come to ...presentation evening... but I don't think anyone has brought their boyfriend on a night out.' Sam paints a similar picture: 'Boyfriends have been around but we tend to socialise as a girls' team.' Mel also confirms this trait with regard to socials: 'I think more often it is people bring their girlfriends along because they are more part of the social side of it.' From the interviews, it appears that teams are prepared to present an image that is not overtly heterosexual. This represents a significant shift from previous literature. Mennesson and Clément (2003) note how the team management went out of their way to encourage the participation of boyfriends in the team environment to present a heterosexual image for the football club. Previously, therefore, clubs have encouraged the portrayal of heterosexuality, whereas now this is not the case. These results show that not only are girlfriends of lesbian players welcomed to social events, they are often more welcome than their male counterparts. This marks a significant shift in attitude.

Acceptance from the club (men and women)

A number of the athletes that were interviewed played in clubs which also ran men's teams. It has been suggested by academics that sexism and homophobia are linked, women who challenge sexism get labelled as a lesbian, therefore the process of confronting sexism has been limited (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Griffin 1992a; Krane 1997; Pharr 1997; Wolter 2010). Participants in this research demonstrate positive experiences regarding acceptance from teammates, coaches, and the club management. However, these changes are not universal and the ongoing existence of sexism is covered in chapter 14.

At some clubs, the men's and women's teams are associated. As Mia explained: 'Like our prize giving is mixed, men and women all together as one club.' Lily comments that this is also the case with social events:

So it depends on which men's team you are paired up with, if there's like an overall theme like the movies, for example Grease. The boys will go as T birds it's like a connecting pair fancy dress.

This integration of social events has enabled women's teams to receive more support during their games. Kerry also commented that her club was 'wholly inclusive' and concluded, 'We are all in it together and we go and play, you know, watch them and encourage them and they come and watch us.' Sam simply replied, 'Yeah, it's a really supportive club.' Angelica was more circumspect. When asked if the men's teams come and watch them play, Angelica suggested that the support was there but that it was limited: 'It's not the entire team. We do get some good support from the men's teams as well.'

Yasmin noted that even some of the club's board members watched their games: 'Some of the older committee members will come and support us.' Mel also commented on the support of the male committee:

Oh no, definitely supportive. Yeah and we've got a Chairman as well who's quite proactive, he attends our games and the secretary, all male. They are all really open and supportive of the team. There have been incidents where

two girls have split up, so at our committee meeting and it will be raised as point. You know, 'what should we do for this? How can this person be supported?' Definitely the best club I've been in, in terms of support for the players.

The men's team associated with Mel's ladies team played in the Football League, but she even commented on support from the professional players: 'Last season two of the male players came to watch us. That was good. The men's team will tweet [about the team]; they are linked to our social media.' The level of support that Mel received was evident throughout her interview, and shows that in some cases, there have been positive changes for female players, both hetero- and homosexual.

Previously, scholars have noted the impact of homophobic coaches and administrators, especially when considering relationships within the team (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Griffin 1998; Krane 2001). Even the most up-to-date research, based on the US collegiate system, demonstrates a strict code of silence within sports administrations regarding LGBT policy and acknowledgement (Fink *et al* 2012). However, although the above example is clear evidence that change is not universal, results here show that the situation for lesbians at grass roots level is steadily improving for some athletes and teams.

Presenting a feminine image

Team socials have previously been identified as a means of reinforcing players' femininity through the use of feminine attire and make-up (Krane 1997; Hargreaves 2000; Pierman 2005; Kauer & Kane 2006; Fallon & Jome 2007; Osborne 2007). In fact, social occasions were used to reinforce the idealised feminine image when women were outside of the sporting arena (Felshin 1974; Lenskyj 2003). Athletes within this study were asked what they wear on team socials and what establishments their team frequents. The results from these interviews show significant differences from previous studies in this regard.

Kerry responded, 'I am completely relaxed... so we wear tracksuit or probably at best jeans,' explaining that socials tend to take place immediately after training. Annie comments with regard to casual clothes: 'No-one cares. I think that is the nice thing.'

Claudia described how social dress varies on her team: 'Most of the girls get dressed up, but I don't...it's quite nice, it's not that pressured environment where I have to...people don't look down on us wearing anything different.' Cathy shared similar thoughts: 'I'm not trying to fit into any stereotype. I just wear whatever I am comfortable in and nothing is ever said about it. It is not something I worry about.' Bridget comments jovially: 'I'd like to say full ball gown! No, just like, jeans and jeans and a tee shirt, or a jumper. I don't make a huge effort.' Caroline also suggests socials have recently become more casual: 'I think we are all pretty much the same and tend to wear jeans and nice shirts really. That's kind of how we dress normally anyway.' Yasmin uses labelling to describe the differences in her team:

Nobody really gets too dressed up. There's a couple of girls who are, what you might term lipstick lesbians, and they like to wear dresses and lipstick and stuff, but the majority of us will just wear nice tops, jeans, pumps.

Similar responses of 'jeans with a nice top' also came from Denise, Heather, Mia, Susan and Georgina.

Grace differentiated between socials, 'If it's a relaxed social, jeans and a top or if it is a bit more of a night out I wear a dress and some [smart] shoes.' Joanna links her dress style with stereotypes:

I've got quite gay style, if that makes sense. I don't like to dress up or anything like that I prefer more casual. I prefer jeans and converse and a top or something like that. But it's a mixture on the teams some of the straight friends do like to get really, really dressed up.

Sam also described how there is vast difference on her team from 'tops and tee-shirts' girls to 'really girly girls that are on the team will wear dresses and heels and get dolled up to the nines.' Ruth's response showed gendered stereotypes, too:

We don't wear dresses! Probably, I think I would say jeans. I'm just trying to think. I mean everyone would wear jeans and either tee shirt or the girly ones would have a top. I am not that girly, to be honest, probably just jeans, tee shirt.

However, there were variations in responses. Becky, a rugby player, commented:

Last night I went out in a dress – no one else was – a dress because we were going to bars and stuff. When we go down the pub I sometimes wear flip flops, shorts and T shirt or wear a nice top...well we have got an awards dinner so I'm wearing a dress for that but I wouldn't wear a suit or anything. I would always wear something girly-ish.

Likewise, as Lorna explained: 'It depends, in the summer it would be skirts, dresses, whatever. Jeans, trousers I probably just wear, jeans, sometimes a dress and tights.' Mel described how it depended on the occasion: 'I don't know it depends. Skinnies and a blouse or I will crack on a dress, depends where I'm going. You know I'll dress up for the occasion. I will dress quite girly sometimes.'

Ellie explained that although she likes to dress in more feminine clothing, there is no expectation from the club, team or coaches. She said, 'I tend to be in casual clothes. Skinny jeans, pumps or flip-flops or something and a nice top, could be a scarf.' When asked if others are casual, she replied, 'Yes, there will be women in hoodies and T-shirts. It is kind of like free for whatever you want.'

Although some of the athletes suggested that they are conforming to gendered stereotypes to reinforce a feminine image, numerous participants discussed the lack of expectation on them to conform to a certain image. This supports recent findings in Roller Derby, where women are not conforming to traditional gender expectations (Finley 2010). The lack of expectation on them to do so was highlighted. Although a number of participants insinuated that other players presented an overtly feminine image, they personally felt no pressure to conform. Previously, social environments had been used to express and reinforce femininity and there was an expectation that female athletes should conform to this image (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Hargreaves 2000). Only one response showed signs of image conformity; Faye noted how the lesbian players on her team have recently changed what they wear on socials:

Normally the straight girls would wear dresses, but now it has become more that we all kind of wear like the same outfit like skirts, tops, whatever...

generally either trousers and a top, or I would get a skirt and top out, depending on what the occasion is.

I questioned her about the change in appearance:

We [lesbian players] are more like becoming more interested in the way we look and ensuring that we have got nails done and hair done and things like that... I think because we want to be more presentable and it is not influenced from the straight girls. I think it is just the culture I suppose changing us. [Not] Looking like gay, not having short hair - spiky, baggy jeans and whatever when you go out... you put a bit of effort in, I think. I think it is to be more comfortable and look... I suppose really it is more looking more the part, instead of being looking like a lezzer going out – you want to look straighter.

Faye stated that this was a significant shift since university, where she had worn more casual clothing and she later suggested that the change in appearance could simply be maturing. Carlson (2010) notes that players in sports who are physical and masculine often seek to reinforce their femininity through their clothing choices outside the sporting arena. It could be argued that the athletes choosing to wear more feminine attire are demonstrating apologetic behaviour. Davis-Delano and colleagues (2009) discuss how looking feminine and presenting a heterosexual image can serve as demonstrations of apologetic behaviour. It could be argued on the other hand, that there is no longer any need to promote a queer image in a culture of declining homophobia - therefore athletes are assimilating their image to the heterosexual norm. However, despite desiring to present a more heterosexual image, Faye did not suggest that there was any expectation to do so. Unlike the findings of Blinde and Taub (1992a), there was no suggestion from the coach or management of the teams represented in these interviews that their lesbian athletes should perform or dress in a certain way to gain acceptance at individual and group level. In fact, those wanting to dress in a more feminine way suggested that they were happy to be casual, often choosing comfort over appearance.

Conclusion

Research has previously showed lesbian athletes to be competing in an environment of hostility or conditional tolerance (Burroughs *et al* 1995; Griffin 1998; Ianotta & Kane 2002; Hemphill & Symons 2009; Mennesson & Clément 2003; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Even within conditionally tolerant environments, sports administrations appeared to be experiencing a cultural delay in their acceptance of lesbian athletes (Fink *et al* 2012). Only more recently have scholars found small samples of open and inclusive environments (Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Part of the hostility previously faced by lesbian players was caused by heterosexual players distancing themselves from their homosexual teammates so as to remove any suspicion regarding their own sexual orientation (Griffin 1998; Lenskyj 2003). In some incidences, teams have displayed completely different social frameworks based on sexuality labels (Mennesson & Clément 2003).

This chapter demonstrates that the athletes interviewed within this study are unanimously competing in an open and inclusive environment. In some cases, though, the attributes of the open and inclusive environment, as set out initially by Griffin in 1998, did not conform to the reality expressed by the athletes. This could well be due to the fact that initial concepts of what an open and inclusive environment might look like were outlined in a period of high homophobia (Anderson 2009b). Furthermore, such projections were obviously not informed by the shared experience of athletes at that time, so there would always be a degree of guesswork involved. Athletes within this study spoke not only of openness and inclusivity within the team but also expressed overwhelming support and friendships. Griffin's suggestion that athletes can be 'more open' and exist 'without much concern' (1998: 104) appears outdated now and falls short of the proactively positive environment in which my athletes compete. Griffin (1998) speaks of a lack of discrimination plus a fair and tolerant treatment of athletes within an open and inclusive climate, but again this description falls short of the reality. I therefore propose a new climate: welcoming and supportive. A welcoming and supportive environment is one where LGBT athletes are encouraged to come out and where athletes are actively supported in this process, through personal, sporting or even professional difficulties.

Any suggestion of reverse relative deprivation was dismissed by the positive inclusion, not only of teammates, but also of 'WAGS' at social events. The welcoming and supportive environment was evident not only to the athletes concerned, but also to their significant others. In some cases, the partners were more welcome to social events than boyfriends or husbands. This is a stark contrast to previous studies, where athletes have covered up the very existence of girlfriends by referring to them as simply 'roommates' (Cahn 1994a). In this study, athletes were not only open about their sexuality, but were happy to invite their partners along to social events.

Although Fink and colleagues (2012) recently uncovered some positive findings regarding inclusion of lesbian athletes, they also acknowledged the lack of change from within sporting bodies. Whilst it is necessary to take into account differences between collegiate sport in the US and grassroots sport in the UK, in terms of financial and competitive pressures, comparisons can still be made nevertheless. Athletes in this study have shown that administrations, even when run by men, are starting to support women in sport, including those where lesbians are on the team. It is also pertinent to note at this juncture that international sport appears to have experienced the same cultural lag uncovered within the US collegiate system and this will be covered in Chapter 15.

This chapter also considered the inclusivity of social events run by the various clubs and teams. As previously mentioned, heterosexual players have historically endeavoured to distance themselves from lesbian athletes, to limit the effect of the potentially damaging lesbian label (Griffin 1998; Hargreaves 2000). However, as the results from this study have shown, which is located within a culture of declining homophobia, the presence of female partners at social events was actively welcomed by clubs, teams and players. In fact, on some occasions female partners were more welcome than (their) male counterparts, owing to their ability to fit in as 'one of the girls'. This indicates that heterosexual and homosexual athletes are no longer subscribing to the sort of apologetic behaviour found in previous surveys.

Finally, this chapter considered social events held within the club setting. Previously athletes were documented to have been 'encouraged' to wear feminine clothing

either by coaches, or the sporting administration (Kane & Lenskyj 1998; Hargreaves 2000; Krane & Barber 2003; Mennesson & Clément 2003). The presentation of a feminine image was also a feature of the apologetic behaviour demonstrated by some athletes (Felshin 1974; Griffin 1998; Davis-Delano *et al* 2009; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). However, with just one exception, athletes within this study wore clothing that they felt comfortable in and could therefore not be said to be exhibiting overtly apologetic behaviour. Those athletes who presented a feminine image when attending social events did not do so out of fear, or to counteract their participation in sport with its historical questioning of sportswomen's sexuality. This is in significant contrast to previously documented research. In addition, numerous participants commented that there was a wide range of different styles on the team, though perhaps more significantly, that all were equally accepted, however they chose to dress. Importantly, neither coaches nor administrators had any impact on what players wore to social events. According to these findings, it is clear that team environments have become welcoming and inclusive.

Chapter 10: Declining Homophobia

Introduction

This chapter examines the effect on athletes competing in a culture of low homophobia. This marks the first time that homophobia has been used to examine lesbian athletes' experiences within sport in the United Kingdom. Anderson defines homophobia in its simplest form as 'the fear of being homosexualized' (2011b: 568). He explains:

It incorporates three variables: 1) cultural awareness that homosexuality exists as a sexual orientation; 2) high levels of homophobia within a culture and 3) the conflation of feminine behaviours in men with same-sex desire.

Only recently has homophobia been applied to women, using data from 2002. This study showed that athletes were still competing in a climate of homophobia (Anderson & Bullingham 2013).

Worthen (2014) has also discussed how the decline of homophobia affects women. This chapter will focus on two aspects of Worthen's 2014 study, 'Social inclusion of *lesbian and bisexual women peers*' and '*Sexualization* and the 'party-time rule' of homosexuality' (Worthen *et al* 2014: 141). Indications of declining homophobia are also evident in the use of pro-gay language and positive banter. I will show how banter has helped to counteract the culture of silence and denial that prevailed in the homophobic 1980s and 1990s. However, it is not only language that has changed; behaviour at social events has also been shown to be more inclusive. Participants acknowledged that this change to full inclusion was present in the younger generations – in essence, change is occurring from the bottom upwards.

Literature on homophobia

Displaying a feminised image, or openly discussing boyfriends or husbands, are tactics traditionally used by female athletes to fend off the lesbian label (Hargreaves 1994; Griffin 1998, Krane 2001; Davis-Delano *et al* 2009). In this way, social events provided the setting for demonstrations of heterosexual behaviour. Recent research

on heterosexual men has shown more inclusive behaviours being expressed, for example, increased levels of physical and emotional tactility, such as kissing and even the development of bromances (Anderson 2009b; Adams *et al* 2010; McCormack & Anderson 2010; Adams 2011; Adams & Anderson 2011; Anderson 2011a; Anderson *et al* 2012). This behaviour is only possible due to declining homophobia and lack of fear that such behaviour will lead to cultural homosexualisation (Anderson 2009b). While Worthen's (2014) findings on the inclusive clothing styles for women are useful, she does not acknowledge a characteristic expression of homophobia, namely the form and development of language and banter in sports settings.

Language is a key indicator of the type of environment that athletes are competing in. Hargreaves (2000) explains that jokes can be used as a method to reinforce heterosexual discourse, but still can be damaging for lesbian athletes. Banter is part of the culture of team sports and as such, merits further attention to examine its effect on athletes. Harris (2005) comments that there is often very little distinction between what could be deemed as homophobic and what can be passed off simply as banter. However, research has shown that gay men are able to differentiate between banter and real homophobic discourse (Jones & McCarthy 2010). However, banter can also be used in positive ways. Positive banter is something that McCormack (2011a) terms 'pro-gay language' and this is a feature identified by McCormack and Anderson (2010b) in male sport settings. McCormack (2011a) has subsequently developed a model of what he terms 'homosexually-themed language.' This enables academics to analyse actual language used for homophobic content, to discover if it is in fact homophobic, depending on the environment and intent behind the verbal communication.

Fear of the lesbian label within women's sport has been highlighted by several academics (Griffin 1992a, 1998; Cahn 1994a; Hargreaves 1994, 2000; Veri 1999). This fear dictates that heterosexual athletes will go to great lengths to distance themselves from any suggestion of homosexuality. However, the research on this was carried out in a cultural zeitgeist of homophobia, where anxiety surrounding the lesbian label and its implied threat to femininity was rife. This supports Worthen's (2014) assertion that such behaviour is in decline.

Changes in society

Numerous athletes interviewed for this study recognised, from reflecting on their experiences, changes in cultural homophobia, both in day to day life and within the sporting environment. As Cathy explained, 'I think the stigma attached to sport, especially hockey, has changed over the last ten years.' She continued, 'I don't think it [hockey] is seen as a typically 'gay' sport, as it might have been seen in the past.' She observed that male dominated sports '...have gone through a change of people, before people thought these sports were dominated by lesbians.' Lily noted that the increased media coverage has helped change stereotypes: 'I don't think you can box what lesbians look like anymore.' She acknowledged, 'I think we are very lucky to live in the age that we do.' Claudia explained how the process of coming out to parents has also changed: 'It is actually the minority nowadays that actually have a bad experience.'

Participants admitted that this positive change was not universal. Jasmine noted the differences between her friends and their parents:

It is a generational thing I suppose. I was at an independent school [and] my friends who came from those sorts of backgrounds were fine. But when I was around their parents, it was suggested I didn't bring it [sexuality] up.

Heather said, 'I guess that, personally, the younger people of today are probably more accepting of it than older generations.' Sam also discussed the generational difference: 'If it is an older person asking about the boys, because I get stopped a lot now because I've got twins, and if I ever have to talk about her I say 'my partner.' Sam used 'partner' rather than girlfriend as the word is ambiguous, and while not denying that she had a girlfriend, she used a gender neutral term. Sam, a secondary school teacher, elaborated on this:

I do think the perception of female sports people has changed for the positive. You know, for example, if someone at school in Year 9 played football now for a girls' team, they wouldn't get half the abuse or the grief I got when I was in Year 9 from boys. You know it would just be accepted...I do

think women's football gets better press and people appreciate it a lot more ...I just think there is a little bit more of a positive approach.

She went on to note the differences between male and female sports:

I still think a lot more work has to be done about homophobia in sport. I don't think it will change until the male side of sport has become more accepting. Obviously, it is easier for females to be out and be gay in sport, but I think until it's out...until it is dealt with in a proper way in male sport I still think it's going to be a big issue.

The age at which players come out represents another cultural shift. As Mel explained, 'I think even young girls coming up know, because they probably have it [lesbian players] in their Under 14's and Under 15's teams. They are starting to come out earlier and earlier.' Caroline also noted this change, 'I think from my experience, the guys [girls] that are coming up kind of from junior into senior, it's not they don't see it as so much an issue, as the guys [girls] that are already playing at senior international level.' Although numerous participants suggested reasons for these changes, Isabel summarised it most eloquently:

It's a different system to years ago. When you were a kid coming out, during Section 28, made it a lot harder. People now are more visible, in terms of television. Homophobia and charities in schools help, too. There's still a long way to go now, but society is a lot more open to different sexualities, families, you know. Although there are still issues, it is not as bad as it was.

The visibility of both LGBT athletes and celebrities is acknowledged as being a factor in positive change. Griffin (1998) suggests that increased visibility can be one of the ways in which sport can be transformed and homophobia challenged. Similarly, Krane and Barber (2005: 77) note with regard to their study: 'The openly lesbian coach hoped that by being visible she could effect change and enlighten her athletes and colleagues.' Participants within this study show that this change has indeed occurred, although perhaps not universally. Anderson (2011b) states that even

though there is clear evidence that homophobia is in steady decline, it is an uneven process due to numerous demographic factors such as age, religion and geography.

Positive banter and pro-gay language

Throughout the interviews, athletes were asked about the use of banter in the changing rooms, on the field and during social events. Dean (2013) acknowledges that non-participation in derogatory banter may be damaging in homophobic environments and can call one's (hetero)sexuality into question. However, McCormack (2011a) has examined the use of homosexually themed language and explains that language has changed in a culture of declining homophobia. This chapter will only focus on banter surrounding sexual behaviour, sexuality and athletes' bodies.

Athletes discussed how banter was used to indicate inclusion within the team. Kerry explained that if she misses a shot, her team respond with banter: '[You] should have been concentrating on the ball not the oppositions' chest!' She added, 'You know you've got inclusion when your sexual orientation is normalised in the same way that everything else is.' Meanwhile, Holly explained that cheerleading is a very strong contact sport and this can lead to banter:

I have a friend, a couple of years older than me, who in one of my first sessions actually fell down and sat on my face. She introduces me to people saying that sometimes, if I am meeting one of her new friends 'Oh this is Holly, in the first week that I met her I sat on her face!' That's an on-going joke, but when you are in the sport it is so accepted just because you have to get so physical with each other.

Jennifer explained that the physicality and closeness of netball often becomes a source of banter. She said, 'Probably out of everyone in the team, I feel most uncomfortable being in other people's spaces.' She added, 'I don't necessarily think that it is because I'm gay, I think that's just a personal thing.' Jennifer's teammates talked openly about the amount of physical contact in the sport, 'We do drills where you have to bounce up and down and we like we talk about rubbing each other, like

your breasts rubbing on someone else...the other girls talk about that kind of thing really openly.'

Discussions about people's bodies have also been identified as source of banter. Annie explained the effect of this, 'If anything it's really embracing. It kind of bonds us [together] even more.' Becky, who plays on the same team, elaborated on these type of conversations, saying, 'It could be talking about boobs or bums or anything...dropping the soap kind of joke...if anything, the jokes are more directed at everyone.' Cathy took showering as an opportunity for banter. She explained:

When we used to shower properly as a team, they would steal your underwear or steal your towel. They would come into the shower behind you and poke you or stick shampoo up your bum. That's in the past but they are a bit better now! But you know that they are joking!

Cathy commented on the banter, 'You know they are only joking, so it's okay. It's funny.' Yasmin explained that it has taken time to create a relaxed atmosphere in the changing rooms because initially, 'People were reluctant to talk to each other in the changing room...I used to hate being naked in the changing rooms but I'm not that bothered anymore.' She explained that banter occasionally occurs in situations such as the following: 'If some people are having a chat and someone is half dressed it might be 'Oh, watch out! She's got her eye on a girl!' something like that.' The relaxed atmosphere built up by the players through such banter has helped eliminate any awkwardness when changing. Again, this supports the idea of inclusion and acceptance of lesbian athletes.

Becky noted that banter leads to other conversations where heterosexual athletes make statements such as: 'It wouldn't bother me sleeping with a girl. It wouldn't bother me being gay.' Brooke explained how the banter is often initiated by her heterosexual teammates: 'Yeah they talk at length about attractive women, if we are about to play a team they will eye them up.' She elaborated that her teammates sometimes make explicit comments, such as 'Oh make sure you give her some contact'...These are all women in relationships with men and they will talk about having netball crushes.' These same players sometimes even tell the player concerned that they have a crush on them, which is met with laughter. Isabel recalls

an incident such as this: 'One of the girls said... 'You're looking really trim.' I said, 'I know, I've lost three stone,' and she said, 'I know, I was checking you out!''

Relationships are also a topic of banter used within teams. As Cathy explained:

There was this Facebook incident where it got completely out of hand. Then it was printed off and shown to people around the changing room and then they made it a sort of wager. If I played well that must mean that I had had sex before the game and if that was the case I must do that every match. It was just a continuation of joking about my personal sexual life with my girlfriend!

Cathy is not the only athlete to demonstrate that relationships can be used as a topic of banter. Faye noted that this sort of banter happens regardless of sexuality. She explained that on a social, '[She] pulled this guy and it resembled her kissing a washing machine and that was quite a joke for a while!' Angelica noted that banter can happen between teams as well:

Actually, last match we were teasing... well, it was actually the opposition. We were teasing the opposition because she used to go out with a couple of our girls. We were making jokes about her, very crude jokes on the pitch about her being used to having [team name] face between her legs. That's the type of thing we comment on!

She concluded 'nothing is sacred!' when it comes to banter. Mel stated that banter took place between heterosexual and homosexual teammates:

There's people that we joke around with, you know they'll come out one day. Applying peer pressure and they'll turn gay. Sometimes the straight girls will say to us, 'who haven't you slept with?' or links within the team stuff like that really.

She discussed the Stonewall Rainbow Laces campaign developed by the 'Kick It Out' campaign, where players at all levels were encouraged to don rainbow laces to show their support for the campaign. Such actions serve as further proof of LGBT inclusion within sports.

There was a joke made [when] they did the rainbow laces for football boots, and some of the players had them on, I had them on. One of the straight girls was like, 'I'm keeping my plain laces on. Straight people need more support in this game than gay people', so there was jokes around that. I don't think there's any animosity.

This was the first time that Mel had considered the kind of banter that occurred in her team. She found it interesting to note that the team environment was more accepting of LGBT people than mainstream society. Mel commented: 'I think it is a form of acceptance but to the outsider it might not seem like that.' This theme was also identified by Angie: 'The straight girls take the mickey out of us but it is very above board really. It is quite funny and then equally we give it back.' She went to explain that they warm up by playing 'Straights versus gays' but added 'It is a joke!' When asked whether such banter was a form of acceptance, she concluded:

Yes, without a doubt. There's a level because we know each other so well. I think if someone came in and started bantering about it that we didn't know so well, it would be taken completely differently than if it was a close mate of mine doing it.

The fact that athletes are openly discussing sexuality in a jovial way shows a level of acceptance within the team and wider sporting community.

Some athletes discussed how banter was used as a way of breaking down potential barriers for athletes who were still closeted. As Becky explained:

One girl is straight but she has tendencies and says, 'Oh I'm not sure [about my sexuality].' Her nickname is Tumnus off Narnia because she needs to climb out of the closet. That is just an on-going joke, but she is a bit like, 'I don't know, I don't know. My Mum thinks I'm gay, but I don't think I am'. It is never pushed too far so she gets upset, it is just kind of an on-going joke that she's says, 'Oh I don't really care.'

Such discussions of sexuality stand in direct contrast to the homophobic environments of the 1990s, shrouded in silence and denial (Hargreaves 1994; Griffin

1998). Yet here discussions of sexuality are relaxed with clear evidence of accepting attitudes among their peers. The lesbian label being used as a 'weapon' (Griffin 1998: 259) appears to be a feature of the past, having all but lost its impact.

Faye spoke of a situation where one player was dating men and women interchangeably. She recounted how one of the players lead the banter: 'She refers to that pretty much every game, 'Which one do you want? Do you want this or that?' When asked how the player responded, Faye replied: 'She smiles about it but I think inside she's embarrassed...she's the captain, she doesn't want to be seen as someone who's not sure of herself, but the player knows how to wind her up, which is funny.' However, there is potential that she is bisexual, rather than being in denial, in which case she might have been upset by the comments. Heather explained that away from the context of the team environment, the use of banter 'sounds awful' but went onto explain that, 'If we suspected one of the younger players was gay or not, I think the banter side would get that out of them.' She justified this behaviour by adding, 'It sounded horrible to say that, but I think by being kind of jovial about it, I think they would probably find it easier to come out.' This again shows how banter can be used to create an environment where sexuality can be discussed openly and without prejudice. Both of these experiences have the potential to be perceived as offensive or potentially damaging but during the interviews they both acknowledged a positive, welcoming, inclusive environment where players are happy to come out.

Athletes also felt comfortable enough to be self-deprecating, make themselves the subject of banter. As Claudia explained: 'I am quite open. I probably say the odd thing, to let people know it's ok, taking the piss out of myself.' Here, the use of banter demonstrates how relaxed and open lesbians can be within their sporting environment; in this case, Claudia was the only lesbian on her team. Likewise, Angelica noted how the younger players were sometimes shocked by her use of banter: '...they are just getting used to it when I make comments about line outs being as straight as I am.' Angelica was making reference here to younger team members, mostly freshers at university experiencing life away from home for the first time. In this scenario, she would use banter to show younger athletes that humour around sexuality was accepted on the team. Holly (the trailblazer on her team) also commented on her use of humour:

Sometimes I make, not a joke of myself, but I will make comments calling out my own sexuality; I guess to make other people more comfortable with it. I don't do that often. I tend to do it around people that I am better friends with...I mean one of my friends once came to practice wearing a vest over a sports bra. She spilled a drink down it so she took it off and was just training in a sports bra. As she took it off, somebody else in the club kind of said, 'Ooh watch out, she's undressing' and I said, 'Oh, I can't possibly front with you! I'll become overwhelmed with desire! Stay away from me!' and then everyone laughed and then we stunted together and everything was fine.

Again, this shows athletes using banter as a means of negating homophobia by talking openly about their sexuality and sexual desire. However, it is essential to note that discussing sexuality in this way is only possible where athletes are competing in an open/inclusive or welcoming/supportive environment (McCormack 2011a).

The athletes acknowledged that banter was only suitable at certain times. As previously discussed, some athletes noted that anyone outside the team could easily misinterpret the language and banter used as homophobic, rude or harmful. Indeed, a form of self-censorship was implemented around the youth players. As Heather explained, although everyone contributed to the banter, as a club, 'We are conscious of our responsibilities in terms of the welfare of younger players.' She continued, 'We don't mention sexuality, because at the end of the day... if they [younger players] want to come out, then hopefully we've got an environment where they can.' Claudia explained where the line was drawn in terms of banter: 'It is a good laugh, but like I said, we have got quite a few youngsters in the team so we all know there is a line.' Caroline explained that her team banter occurred away from the junior players, so as not to undermine the captain's authority:

Our captain will be at the butt of some of the banter that's going on between the adults, because she is always flitting from one person to another. She's a bit of a player...so we give her a bit of grief over that, but it's nothing that she doesn't give back. We'll do that kind of out of the earshot of the youngsters; so there is a kind of a time and a place.

Likewise, Yasmin stated that on team socials they split into groups, so that the topics of conversation did not embarrass the junior players. She explained:

I mean some of the older girls on our team are more free about jokes, about sex and stuff like that, that might make maybe the younger ones a bit uncomfortable. So I guess on nights out we tend to pod off in little groups sometimes.

It appears that the athletes were very aware of their responsibility over the junior players and while they discussed sexuality, they also limited their behaviour, so as not to make junior players feel uncomfortable. This potentially prevented or limited the stereotyping of lesbian athletes and, in turn, may have helped ease potential concerns of parents regarding their children's welfare.

The use of banter shows an increasing acceptance of lesbian athletes. Banter is used to speak openly about sexuality, rather than to maintain a culture of silence and denial. Only Jasmine felt side-lined by the banter about/on nights out, although she acknowledged that this was probably due to her being tee-total in an environment where alcohol played a central role in social gatherings (i.e. British Universities). She concluded: 'I think it's more because I don't drink, but also because I don't get included in the chat about guys. I don't want to and it doesn't bother me.'

Throughout the interview, Jasmine expressed that the social side of university culture was childish, immature and highly sexualised, through the use of fancy dress.

Homosexually-themed language

Kerry and Bridget have both challenged the use of the phrase 'That's so gay,' which can be perceived as homophobic in certain environments. This phrase has recently been central to a campaign initiated by the LGBT charity Stonewall, which seeks to eliminate its use from schools, regardless of the context and environment (Tallon 2011). Kerry explained how she felt about the phrase:

In its inference, it is homophobic, even if the intention isn't, and I certainly dealt with that with you know a bit of banter and a bit of honest reflection.

You know I said, to them 'every time you talk about something negative in saying that it's gay what are you saying about me?' They had never even thought about it like that because to them it is just a saying.

Bridget commented:

I challenged the women's captain at the time at rowing, last year this was, because she'd used the term 'gay.' She'd called something, 'Oh that's so gay' so I challenged her language about it.

Holly explained that she challenged 'casual homophobic comments' including 'gay' but also 'sissy.' She confronted others over such use of language, even if intended as a 'joke' or uttered with sarcasm. She chose to do this not only in her capacity as a gay athlete but also as someone holding a position of responsibility within the University club.

Cultural lag may account for the reactions of these participants in particular, who were the two eldest in the study and were brought up in a culture of high homophobia. This is shown by Grace's very different response:

Oh, 'that's so gay' - that's rubbish. I don't take offence to that. It's seen to be socially accepted that it's gay. I mean only at school are we trying to battle that but nowadays 'Oh it's gay;' I even use that term!

Tamara explained a rather strange situation at a previous club, where she was the only lesbian athlete. She described what happened when she initially came out:

Then the coach, just shouted 'yes we are a real team now!' but then she got a bit silly with it and started calling me 'Gaybo', like 'Hey Gaybo, come over here' but it wasn't done in a mean way, it was done in a really immature kind of way; like they had nicknames for people. It wasn't ever done in a nasty way, I didn't particularly like it, but she would say things to her little boy like 'Come on say hello to Auntie Gaybo' but she thought she was really funny but she wasn't.

It appeared that the coach was genuinely pleased to have an openly lesbian athlete on the team, but did not know how to deal with this in a mature manner. Tamara went on to explain:

It was just like picking up on the characteristic of someone, like calling somebody else 'short arse' or something. It wasn't like in a nasty way; it was just a girl who had never met any gay people before. She never said anything mean, even though she wasn't a very nice girl, she never did anything about my sexuality.

So although Tamara was nicknamed 'Gaybo,' she did not deem this to be homophobic. McCormack's (2011a) model of homosexual themed language can be utilised here. Since the athlete in question was competing in a gay friendly environment with no malicious intent, this utterance was not felt to be homophobic. However, she objected when the coach used her nickname 'Gaybo' on Facebook, as this environment was not inclusive for Tamara as her mum and work colleagues would have access to such comments (she is not out at work). Again, though, she did not describe this as homophobic, but rather 'cringe-worthy' and 'kinda silly.' In an environment of hostile and conditional tolerance, such a nickname would be viewed as homophobic under 'pernicious intent' or 'wide range of intent' according to McCormack's model (2011a: 674).

Decreasing homophobia as demonstrated by behaviour

Anderson and colleagues (2010) have shown that a decline in homophobia has led to more tactile behaviour in young men. Additionally, university sports clubs' initiation ceremonies have also been shown to involve increased tactility, including kissing. While these behaviours have been evident within university sporting culture for some years, interpretations of such behaviours have changed due to the decline in homophobia and increasing inclusivity among men. However, very little research has been conducted on the effect of declining homophobia on women (Bullingham *et al* 2014; Worthen 2014). Worthen (2014) adapts the concept of homophobia and effectively applies it to heterosexual women. The behaviour demonstrated by women supports Worthen's third aspect relating to 'sexualisation' and the 'party-

time rule' of homosexuality (2014: 141). This is where heterosexual women engage in tactile activities when out socially with other women, including kissing.

Despite Worthen's findings, it appears that heterosexual women do not always perform homosexual acts for the pleasure or attention of men. Becky explained how her teammates felt physically comfortable with each other: 'They embrace, they'll welcome everyone with a hug, a kiss and it's perfectly normal.' She added, 'We all shower together.' Annie (on the same team) also reflected on showering and how initially the team were apprehensive about the environment. However, '...now, it's just boobs out, no-one cares!' Isabel explained that when participating in football, she never showered, but in rugby, 'Everyone gets naked and there's no issue.' Angelica acknowledged that this change was not universal, noting that the younger players (usually first years at University), 'Go in the shower in their shorts and bra.' She explained how she used banter to try and maintain a relaxed environment: 'I am like 'you're not going to get the mud off that way! Seriously, you'll find mud in weird places for evermore!' Such comments show how banter can be used to help create a welcoming and supportive environment in which all players can feel comfortable.

Behaviour has also changed at social events. Susan explained that when her teammates go to gay bars, 'They are grinding with women, but they don't care, they are having fun dancing.' Mel told how some of her friends dance provocatively with her. She commented, 'You are not going to hit on them or anything. They actually don't do it for attention.' She concluded, 'I think they feel quite comfortable to do it.' This supports Worthen's (2014) argument of 'the party time rule', although here their behaviour is not linked to gaining male attention and therefore social rewards. Annie discussed the response of her heterosexual teammates if they got labelled as lesbian:

It depends who gets labelled as lesbian. Some will go 'well yeah I am' and they will obviously lead the other people on. They'll be quite funny with it and almost turn it into a joke and others they just don't care, they really don't care at all...If anything they either use me or my girlfriend to act as their girlfriend! Which is fine, I don't mind, it's a good laugh.

It is clear from such examples that there has been a change in culture and that the lesbian label can no longer be used as a means of controlling the behaviour of women.

Interestingly, all the quotes relating to changing room etiquette came from rugby players, where showering is deemed a part of the team culture. Although the results concerning this are limited to one sport and are therefore not of general application, some significant conclusions can be drawn from these findings. Hargreaves (1994, 2000) previously found that the threat of the lesbian label was feared to the extent that some athletes actually halted friendships on the basis of sexual orientation. However, the reality of heterosexual and homosexual athletes showering together clearly demonstrates that the inherent fear of the lesbian label has diminished.

Inclusive socials – gay bars

Athletes were asked about the type of social establishments they frequented when out with their teammates. Two trends were apparent from the data. Firstly, heterosexual teammates were happy to accompany their lesbian colleagues to gay and lesbian bars. This supports Worthen's (2014) theories on shifts in homophobia, where she states that heterosexual women can enjoy friendships with lesbian women without fear of the associated lesbian label. Athletes discussed how their heterosexual teammates enjoyed visiting bars and were not afraid of any resulting association.

Susan explained the changes she has observed in her sporting career:

When I started playing football and first started going out, I would only go to a gay bar. It has only been in the last three or four years that I have actually gone into straight bars because people are more accepting and people nowadays don't care as long as you are having a good time.

She went on to say that her team still attend a gay night in a local club and when asked how the heterosexual players enjoy this experience, she exclaimed, 'They love it! They love it!' Similarly, Isabel commented, 'I can remember the time when I was

young, that I wouldn't even contemplate walking into a straight bar.' She stated that her team go to gay bars at the end of the evening. When asked if the heterosexual players minded going to the gay bar, she simply replied, 'No.' Heather noted, 'I'd say probably 10 years ago we'd definitely go to a gay bar.' However, she also acknowledged a change in social habits: 'I think now people just tend to go where the majority of people want to go, so that might be a gay bar, it might be a straight bar. It doesn't really matter too much.' She contended that this change might be due to the closure of gay bars in the town. When asked about heterosexual teammates in gay bars, she replied, 'I've heard people say before that they kind of like it better in the gay bars because they don't get hit on by sleazy guys.'

Denise's recollection was based on her time at University and not on her current club. She expressed similar views on her heterosexual teammates attending gay bars: 'They loved it; well, not all of them, but some of them. They said, they liked it because there weren't any guys hassling them and the girls could tend to tell who was straight and who was not.' Joanna also noted how heterosexual teammates enjoyed going to gay bars: 'Yeah, they love it, so they don't mind at all. They love it and get fully into it!' Jennifer shared similar views: 'I think they [her heterosexual teammates] wanted to go there more than I did!' For these women, being with friends is more important than the type of social establishment attended by the team. It is interesting that the players picked up on this change in social patterns in recent years.

The only athlete who mentioned different social settings for different groups of friends was Jasmine. She acknowledged that she faced two kinds of social situations playing University lacrosse, in terms of going out with friends. She explained, 'If I'm heading out with a smaller group of people, I'm looking to like meet new people, so I will go to the queer bar. When I am going out with the lacrosse team we go to straight bars.' This might be explained by the fact that she is the only open lesbian on her team, plus the fact that social evenings with her teammates were predominately based within the University at student bars.

The second trend that emerged from the interviews was the lack of gay bars *per se* (Ghanziani 2014). Sam noted, 'I don't think that there are any gay bars.' Claudia also

acknowledged the lack of venues: 'There aren't any gay bars in town – well, not that I know of.' Brooke, the only gay player on her team, also discussed venues: 'There aren't any [gay bars] in town so I don't know whether we would go if there were. I can't imagine they would mind.'

Grace had a positive outlook on the local gay bar shutting:

I'm not sure what it is; I think actually what it was the closure of the gay bar. You know there were gay bars in [town name] and that meant that everybody flocked there, so when we went to straight bars it felt like, you know, isolating. But now that that bar has closed down, I feel that everybody can go everywhere, because it is a bit more accepted.

Faye noted that historically the team used to split, with the lesbian athletes going on to the gay bar and heterosexual players taking themselves off to a different bar. She stated: 'It is generally all straight bars now.' Georgina said that her socials takes place 'almost exclusively, well in fact exclusively' in straight bars now. Lily acknowledged that the venue is no longer important: 'If you rock up to a gay bar [or] club, it would be a bit random I think...it is just about being with your friends, really.' Similarly, Cathy reflected that there used to be a split between the gay and straight players, but that times had changed: 'It is about socialising together...I think when you go out especially on a team social you should be together.' However, Mel shared a more negative view of gay bars shutting:

We used to go to a gay bar but obviously there is nowhere to go now, so we do go to straight bars and mingle in. I prefer going gay clubbing...I think you feel more comfortable there. I think, you know, not that I would act differently in a straight club. If I am with loads of straight people then it's fine, but say you're going out with football girls, I think it is nice for everyone to feel a bit more comfortable. I personally don't mind that there are some girls in the team that might wear certain clothes or you know dress a bit more butch or whatever, and they would feel more comfortable in a gay bar.

This opinion may differ from some of the views expressed by others, as Mel is the captain of her team. Throughout the interview she referred to helping and supporting others, so feels the added burden of ensuring the whole team is happy with the choice of social settings on nights out.

Conclusion

While it is clear that the situation for lesbian athletes competing in sport is improving, in terms of acceptance of lesbian sexuality, there is limited research in the United Kingdom to confirm this assumption (Bullingham *et al* 2014). This chapter has shown, via the use of pro-gay language, that athletes are no longer subscribing to a label of compulsory heterosexuality, as previous researchers have suggested (Rich 1980; Anderson 2011a). The use of positive language around (homo)sexuality is an additional feature worth noting over and beyond Worthen's application of homophobia to heterosexual women (2014). Whilst the public have always arguably been aware of the existence of homosexuality both within and outside of sport, it is no longer considered inappropriate to be a lesbian. Therefore, women do not have to portray an ultra feminised image or conform to certain feminine behaviour types in order to promote heterosexuality. In fact, this research shows that both heterosexual and homosexual athletes openly discuss sexuality. It appears that Griffin's (1998) categories of homophobia are in decline, if indeed they exist at all. Griffin presents silence and denial as forms of homophobia (Griffin 1998) but I did not find evidence of these behaviours in this research.

Anderson and Bullingham assert that athletes who choose to be open about their sexuality only gain 'partial inclusion' (2013: 11). This is no longer the case. Social events have become fully inclusive and athletes are more concerned with being together than with the establishment frequented. This research has also shown that heterosexual athletes do not simply attend gay and lesbian friendly bars; they actually enjoy themselves within these environments. This supports aspects of Worthen's adaptation of homophobia to heterosexual women (2014). Women can now enjoy friendships with gay women without any fear of lesbian association. This challenges one of Griffin's categories of homophobia (1998), since those women desiring to present a feminine, and therefore heterosexual image, would not enter gay and lesbian friendly establishments in the first place.

Positive language and the use of banter serve as further indicators of a decline in homophobia. McCormack (2011a) notes the existence of a cultural time lag in relation to language, yet the athletes' responses in this particular study demonstrate that this lag may also be subject to attitude, i.e. what is deemed homophobic discourse by one athlete may be seen as simple banter by another. The athletes here demonstrate that positive change has also occurred for lesbian athletes, although the change may not be as straightforward or universal as it is for men.

Chapter 11: Coming out of the Glass Closet

Introduction

This chapter examines the coming out experiences of lesbian athletes. The results differ significantly from the last major investigation of lesbian athletes in the 1990s (Griffin 1998). Whereas Griffin used the concept of 'the glass closet' to describe the experiences of her participants in the homohysterical 1990s, my results show that circumstances have changed for lesbian athletes. Key to this finding is the changing degree of athletic capital required to come out - something Anderson (2011a) has also documented with gay male athletes. Previously, only athletes who were integral to the team's success had been able to come out (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). However, the lesbians in this research could not be described as being better athletes than their heterosexual counterparts. These results therefore demonstrate a decline in the importance of athletic capital for athletes competing in team sports. I conclude with two points that might sound controversial to some. First of all, I contend that it is psychologically easier to come out of the closet in sport today, than it is to remain closeted. Secondly - and perhaps most controversially - the need for and significance of the lesbian label appears to be dissipating.

Previous literature on coming out

Lesbian athletes were significantly researched in the 1990s (Lenskyj 1991; Cahn 1994a; Griffin 1998; Hekma 1998). A product of their culture, the authors of these investigations almost used the results as a warning to other athletes thinking of coming out of the closet. Coming out was thought to be so fraught with difficulty that it was actually described as an act of heroism (Hargreaves 2000).

Previous literature on athletes coming out has shown athletic capital to be important, not only in the athlete's initial decision to come out, but also had bearing on their acceptance (Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Essentially, the research demonstrated that the ethos of winning enables high quality and important homosexual players to gain acceptance, as they are essential to the success of the team, whereas those who are fringe players are not tolerated, as they lack

importance to the team's success (Anderson 2002, 2011a; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Anderson's results show that, as homophobia continues to decrease, the correlation between athletes' abilities and their acceptance has diminished in men's sport (Anderson 2011a). However, lesbian athletes have historically shared different experiences to gay athletes; lesbian athletes often find a supportive community among other closeted athletes within sport (Griffin 1998).

A 'coming out' story, male or female, used to be a significant event: athletes came out by wearing gay pride jewellery or making statements, like shouting out in the middle of a movie (Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Regardless of the circumstances, it was clearly an event that athletes could vividly recall. However, since previous research was conducted, there has been a significant cultural shift in terms of decreasing homophobia (Clements & Field 2014). This decline has been linked to increased access to the internet, increased visibility of gay athletes and celebrities and more athletes choosing to come out, which have led to a more open and inclusive environment (Anderson 2011a).

In Anderson's initial study on gay male athletes (2002), he found that athletes remained closeted owing to the homophobia demonstrated by their teammates. Women faced the lesbian label. Such fears not only secure the closet doors; they also saw female athletes idealise and assume feminine characteristics, in order to distance themselves from lesbian suspicion (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Griffin 1998; Wright & Clarke 1999; Lenskyj 2003). In this way, labels have historically been used as a political tool for controlling female athletes (Griffin 1998). Cahn (1994a) describes how numerous participants refused to subscribe to either the 'gay' or 'lesbian' label. Instead, they hid their relationships by suggesting they had a 'roommate.' This process is described as survival strategy (Cahn 1994a). However, the more recent dismissal of binary labels has changed matters. As Better (2014: 32) explains, 'Sexuality for women today is fluid and evolving.' Correspondingly, athletes define their sexuality in a number of different ways.

Griffin also notes that open athletes are 'out and proud' (1998: 152), wearing symbols of their sexual identity, whilst at the same time actively advocating their position in teams and society. However, with more people publically owning their

sexual identity, combined with decreasing cultural homophobia, it may be that coming out has become a non-event. Athletes can now come out quietly, without the need to make a big political statement. Most participants stated that their own coming out was deemed insignificant, with no party or pre-planning required. In fact, some did not even know when, or indeed how, their teammates found out.

Athletic capital as a non-issue

In climates of conditional tolerance, athletic capital has been shown to assist with homosexual athletes' acceptance (Anderson 2002, 2011a; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). However, in open and inclusive (or indeed welcoming and supportive) contexts, athletic capital has become a non-issue. Some athletes in this study were total novices within their sport, yet still received acceptance from their team.

Susan explained her team's philosophy: 'It helps to be a good player. But win or not, we are not bothered.' When probed about her own acceptance and whether this was due to athletic capital, she replied, 'No, I'd say it is my personality; my, 'I don't give a shit attitude.'" Personality was brought up by Ruth as a mitigating factor, too: 'I was quite accepted anyway, just through personality and things.' Annie felt that it was not ability, but attitude, that influenced whether a player was accepted or not: 'I don't think it matters if you are the best on the team, or the worst on the team. I think it just depends on your attitude.' Heather suggested that ability, attitude and commitment could all help, but again explained the philosophy of the team: 'We are about giving women and girls the chance to play football.' Tamara summed up: 'There doesn't seem to be a correlation between talent and sexuality or the way you are treated. Everyone is just welcomed.' Faye stated, 'I don't consider myself a first team player, but whenever I played for them, I was always accepted and spoken to in the same way as all the other players.'

Angie expressed a different theory for her acceptance on the team: 'I would say it was because I knew people, rather than my ability made it easier.' Heather commented: 'Obviously ability is kind of part of it...but I think having friends...helped me being accepted onto the team.' Lily also cited the influence of friends, '... my friends being on the team... was quite handy.' Mel mentioned pre-existing

friendships on the team as a key factor in the coming out process: 'I already had friends there, so straight away people knew.' Knowing people on the team seemed to be far more of a factor in helping gain acceptance as a lesbian, than possessing athletic capital.

Other participants acknowledged that although ability was important, it was not the most important factor in fitting into a team. Jasmine and Mel described athletic capital as 'just one factor'" whereas others acknowledged that their ability may have helped initially. As Joanna explained, 'I think it is easier to originally fit in if you're good' but then added, 'It is definitely not the main thing.' Bridget suggested that high athletic capital 'makes you feel like you fit in.' She continued that it had proved particularly helpful for her when she was selected above an established team member to play, as she then became valued by the team. These assertions support the conclusions of previous research undertaken by Anderson & Bullingham (2013: 8) in terms of athletic capital and acceptance within sports teams, where high athletic capital 'Is not, however, an all-influencing factor.'

Some athletes were more straightforward when it came to discussing the potential influence of athletic capital. For example, when asked whether their acceptance on the team was based on their athletic ability (athletic capital), Grace just stated, 'I think that they have accepted me.' Lorna and Sam simply replied, 'No' whereas, Brooke expanded on her answer: 'I don't think so to be honest. I don't think it has made any odds to them.' Angelica elaborated a little more:

One of our lasses, she's been playing for a while [but] the coach has not managed to get her to improve beyond a point. She's gay and she's equally accepted. So it's not about starting ability, it's what you do on the pitch. [The team] Don't really care what you get up to in the bedroom. Unless of course it is ripe and ready for torment!

This example suggests that lower level athletes are also able to come out, now that the importance of athletic capital has diminished. There appears to be parity between the experiences of lesbian and gay male athletes (Anderson 2011a) in relation to athletic capital, which is a unique finding of this research.

Isabel noted the differences between her experiences in other clubs: 'I think we are one of those teams that accept everyone. Unlike, [names local rivals] where if you are not good enough, you are not playing. You become excluded.' Cathy also noted differences, but this time within the same club. She explained: 'I play in the seconds, they welcome players of any ability. They encourage and motivate you. However, when I played in the first team, that was based on ability and it wasn't very nice.' This shows that athletic capital may still hold sway in higher level sport, where winning is more important. This premise is supported by Kerry, an international athlete: 'The reality is, when you are good at a sport, every club will make themselves inclusive to accommodate you, because you are valuable.' She recalled regarding another sport she had played (also at international level), 'I definitely think the fact that you were good at it meant that people were nicer to you. People wanted to include you, and wanted you to be part of the team.' However, it should be noted that Kerry was referring here to experiences that happened over ten years ago.

Coming out quietly

Previous research has suggested that openly lesbian athletes make a statement when they come out (Griffin 1998; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). This study shows that this is no longer the case for lesbian athletes competing in team sport. All participants were asked about their coming out experiences, both inside and outside of their team. Responses included: 'I didn't really come out' (Jennifer); 'I don't think I did' (Cathy); 'I didn't really' (Bridget), 'I didn't need to say anything' (Susan); 'I kind of didn't come out, I just assumed everyone knew, or guessed' (Ruth); 'I think it just happened by osmosis!' (Caroline). These responses show that coming out is no longer a performance, but in fact something of a non-event. Kerry commented, 'I never felt the need to tell any new member of the team; I never thought, I must tell them I am gay.' Although academics could see such avoidance of public disclosure as indicative of a homophobic, lesbian label averse environment, I have conceptualised this climate as 'welcoming and supportive', in order to contextualise this cultural change (see chapter nine).

Previous studies have shown that athletes have remained in the closet by changing pronouns relating to their partners, or by avoiding non-sporting conversation full

stop, so not to arouse suspicion (Griffin 1998; Kauer & Kane 2006). Within this study, some athletes did come out via conversation. Yasmin recalled how a conversation concerning a female celebrity was probably the first time her sexuality arose as a subject. She had commented, 'Ah yeah, she's pretty fit' when discussing celebrities with teammates. Participants within this study were not hindered by traditional feminine boundaries. Holly also used regular conversation to clarify her sexuality: 'Literally, I just mentioned it in passing.' She continued, 'I didn't really make a thing of announcing it.' Ruth described a relaxed environment when she came out to her teammates: 'It's a nice hot sunny day [and] we were all sat out on deck chairs and were all just talking. It [her sexuality] inevitably came out through conversation really.' Coming out through general conversation was common among participants. It can therefore be suggested that coming out has become a non-event. This was made explicit by some athletes referring to a lack of coming out parties, or indeed any form of celebration.

There was a level of sarcasm from some participants about their coming out experiences. Georgina said, 'I didn't sit everyone down and organise a party,' although she did admit that her coming out was 'messy' because of the length of time she had remained closeted. Grace replied, 'I didn't make a statement. I didn't have to sit anyone down and say, 'Look I'm gay.' Unlike other participants, Grace provided an explanation: 'It was fully accepted by them [her teammates].' When asked if her coming out could be described as an event, she replied, 'Oh no, God no! No way.' She then sarcastically replied, 'Get out the fireworks!' Mel responded in similar fashion: 'I don't think I ever stood up and said, 'right I'm gay.' When asked if there was a particular celebratory event or occasion that she could recall, she replied, 'I didn't have a coming out party, with balloons or anything!' Brooke also made reference to a coming out party, or rather the lack of one: 'I think I basically told some of my friends [at netball]. I think my mate then said, 'Oh Brooke's girlfriend is coming to watch.' She concluded, 'That was how it was, I didn't kind of have a big coming out party!'

Angie commented that she had been out for a long time, but could not recollect an initial event. She replied, 'I don't particularly remember ever officially coming out. I don't think it ever came about like that, it was never a tapping of glasses, or an

announcing it moment.’ Claudia had a similar story: ‘I can’t remember it ever being an event or party poppers going off. It was just always accepted that I was [a lesbian].’ These results show significant differences from previous studies, where athletes had made bold statements about their sexuality (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). By contrast, athletes in this study show that making a statement is no longer required. No political statement was needed, as these athletes are no longer trailblazers competing in a hostile environment.

Becky described the difference between potentially coming out to her team, and coming out at school when she ‘snogged on the dance floor.’ However, she did not make a statement when she joined her current team. She stated, ‘I think everyone guessed!’ In a similar vein, Heather described how coming out within a sporting environment was actually easier than coming out to her friends: ‘Coming out on the football team was easier than coming out to my closest friends that didn’t play football.’ She then suggested a reason for this: ‘I guess it was accepted...because at the time the majority of the people were gay.’ This reasoning was also given by Isabel, who contrasted her sporting environment to society: ‘There are probably only a handful of straight people on the team, so it is the opposite dynamic.’ Likewise, Ruth commented, ‘There are so many lesbian athletes, there’s not really much debate about it.’ She continued, ‘You know people are quite comfortable with themselves, they don’t need to feel to talk about their sexuality.’ Mia stated, ‘I’m quite nonchalant about it. I don’t see myself as different to anyone else.’ Denise said quite simply, ‘It is just accepted and fine’ and concluded:

You don’t have to sign anything, when you join saying ‘by the way I’m straight’ or ‘by the way I’m not.’ It is just if people are then, if they are straight then fine, and if they are gay then fine.’

Similarly, Faye explained, ‘I think it was just dropped in with all of us.’ She continued, ‘We didn’t openly say ‘right, okay, line us up; this is who’s gay, this is who’s straight’ and added ‘it wasn’t an issue in any way.’ It appeared for some that coming out in sport was actually easier than in other aspects of their lives.

Kerry and Sally, who are both elite athletes, had gone through the process of coming out to the media. Kerry described her experience:

For me, that was the most natural conversation in the world. I had no idea I would be one of those few [who came out]. I just hadn't given it any thought; it was a real shock to me that that put me in that position. I didn't think I was bucking a trend I thought I was just being normal and myself.

This could indicate either potential naivety on Kerry's part, or simply serve as proof that homophobia is in decline to such an extent that coming out is a non-issue for athletes, even in front of the media. Sally was more wary of the media, stating that, 'I wanted to be in control of it.' Although she stated, 'There wasn't a story for the media,' her other answers suggested she had given the coming out process serious thought:

It's a dilemma because you just want to live your life, how you want to live your life. If you don't say something, if you don't make it really public knowledge, you could be deemed as hiding it. I didn't want that because I'm not ashamed of it [being a lesbian]. If you do say something, then you get the 'Oh why is it a big deal?' And it's not, it's not a big deal - it's just how it is.

Even though Sally had always been open on social media about her sexuality, she initially found the media attention difficult. Although the media has treated gay male athletes kindly with regard to their coming out stories (Kian & Anderson 2009; McDonald & Eagles 2012; Cleland 2014; Kian *et al* 2015), there is limited up-to-date research to suggest this is the case for female athletes (Wright & Clarke 1999; Chawansky & Francombe 2011). However, it is fair to say that elite lesbian athletes have been positively received on the whole.

Only one athlete, Lorna, struggled with the coming out process. She had battled with her sexuality, resulting in her remaining closeted for a significant period of time. Her coming out was therefore more traditional: 'Some of them asked me...others I just sat down and told them.' When asked if any of her friends or teammates had brought it up, she replied, 'No, I always had to have the conversation. I would have loved it if it just came up, it would have been easier.' Lorna had actively hidden her sexual

identity from all of her friends and family. This was possibly due to the cloak of secrecy Lorna had created around her relationship; while her friends may have suspected the relationship, they did not broach the subject, as she made it clear that the subject was off limits. She created her own glass closet that others did not want to shatter. The other 30 athletes interviewed were comfortable with their sexuality, showing significant improvements in self-acceptance among lesbian athletes.

Easier out than in

Previous research has suggested that lesbian athletes remain closeted and ensure use of appropriate language to keep their lesbian identity secret, for example changing pronouns from she to he (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Cahn 1994a; Griffin 1998; Wright & Clarke 1999; Lenskyj 2003). However, participants in this study suggested their lives had changed for the better since coming out.

Annie described her experiences as follows: 'I went through quite a lot of feeling ashamed about who I was. So to come through that, and then be okay with everything, is quite nice.' Joanna described how her personality changed in the process of coming out: 'I would say, I completely changed as a person.' She specified these changes: 'I went through not being very nice, drinking, and a bit angry all the time.' After coming out, she depicted a clear difference: 'I was sort of comfortable with myself, and that completely changed things for the better.' This was despite her parents' very negative reaction to her disclosure, which led to her being made homeless, as her parents were unable to cope with her sexuality. Her friends responded much more positively and allowed Joanna to live with them, providing help and support.

Lorna shared how her friends were disappointed with her for hiding her sexuality: 'You have to manage their disappointment...fundamentally, nothing has changed. If anything, I got my friends back, because I had spent so long trying to distance myself from them.' Georgina stated that remaining closeted had affected her friendships, suggesting that 'it was actually a bit awkward.' Since coming out, she noted the change: 'We can all be happy for each other.' I asked if hiding her relationship was

worse than her coming out experience and she replied, 'Absolutely 100%.' These findings are similar to those uncovered by Anderson (2011a), who found that coming out brought gay male teammates closer to their straight peers, because they no longer had to hide their sexuality.

Holly reflected on not coming out in her first year at university: 'Looking back on it now I feel like, maybe, the reasons I didn't come out are not so valid. Although it worked out well for me, it's almost a bit of a shame that I wasn't fully open about myself for a whole year.' Cathy described similar reasons for remaining closeted:

I guess, I grew up trying to hide who I was, and cover it up. Not really to protect myself, but to protect what other people thought of me and to protect the perception that others had of me.

She went onto say, 'I don't even think about it now.' She had previously described how growing up in a small town had caused her initial anxiety about coming out.

Ruth, who came out at the age of 27, spoke of her 'frustration' at being in the closet: 'I wanted to sort of, you know, tell everyone!' Ruth probably experienced the biggest life changes in coming out, as she went from closeted to becoming '...politically aware of the importance of visibility.' She concluded that her coming out experience was 'very liberating.' By way of contrast, Lily initially enjoyed the secrecy of the closet: 'It was good fun...not telling people.' However, this did not last; when she came out she noted, 'It was just a bit easier...not having to think about an excuse to go around [to her girlfriend's house].' It was '... a relief just not to have to lie.' She continued, 'I suppose it was just a bit easier when people knew.' It seems from these interviews that the closet is no longer a place of safety, but rather a place of restriction.

Kerry described how she perceived closeted athletes must feel: 'It must be horrendous. I don't know how you can possibly achieve in that environment.' She continued, 'I know, categorically, that if I had to hide that part of my life, and keep secrets about my life, I would never have survived in sport, never.' As she reflected on her life in elite sport, she struggled to comprehend how other athletes remained

closeted yet still achieved success. Likewise, Sally (also an elite athlete) commented, when asked if life had improved since coming out, 'Oh yeah definitely!' This is the first time that elite athletes have been asked about the change from being closeted to being open. There are therefore no direct comparisons to be made with previous literature, as these athletes are not only out to teammates and families, but also to the public via the media.

These findings show distinct differences from previous research, which suggested the closet was used for safety and comfort (Griffin 1998; Wright & Clarke 1999).

Participants now felt relieved, shedding any semblance of guilt or shame, as a result of coming out to teammates, friends and family. Some athletes did not have to go through this process, as they came out at a young age and therefore had not experienced the restrictions of the closet.

Dismissing labels

Athletes within this study were originally asked to identify as 'openly lesbian athletes.' However, throughout the data collection athletes showed that while society labels their relationships as 'lesbian,' some did not subscribe to the lesbian label. On the contrary, these athletes wanted to be recognised as individuals, eschewing sexuality-based identifiers.

Some athletes described how their sexuality was fluid and that to subscribe to one label or group was an over simplification of the situation. Sally explained that although she is proud to have come out, she is hesitant to take up a label, 'I don't like to put myself in a box.' She continued, 'I see people on a continuum - a continuum of men and women,' suggesting that sexuality is more flexible. She concluded, 'You can do what you want. I don't like how society has been constructed.' Lorna stated, 'No, I would never label...I'm not a massive fan of that [labelling].' She suggested that this could have been the reason behind her delayed coming out. She went on to say, 'Everyone seems to love to put you in a box.' She explained her frustration with this process: 'The only thing that changed for me is who I love, if that makes sense?' Georgina also expressed this sentiment: 'It is a completely grey area, so I wouldn't actually want to put a label on anything.' This suggestion of a continuum or fluid

sexuality and labelling was also described by Lily: 'I'm obviously more gay than straight but I still find men attractive.' These participants are therefore challenging the binary notion of sexuality, suggesting that human sexuality is more complex than the simple categories of heterosexuality or homosexuality allow. This supports findings of recent research (Better 2014; Davis-Delano 2014), suggesting women's sexuality is more fluid today. This rejection of binary sexuality was also discovered within men's soccer (Anderson & Adams 2011) and this study has found similar results for women.

Kerry explained the frustration of some athletes: 'People tend to think of people of homogenous groups; some people talk about the LGBT community as if there is one type.' Brooke takes this idea further:

If you say the terms of gay and lesbian and things, there is like almost like a category, you know, lots of different qualities that can be attributed to them. I just believe in people being individuals.

Sam shared similar thoughts, 'I don't really see people as labels. I just see people as people.' It appears that these athletes look beyond the label of sexuality and consider the person as an individual rather than a label.

It could be suggested that this desire to distance themselves from any form of labelling harks back to the historically damaging associations with the lesbian label, and there are grounds to think there is some mileage in this argument. As Sam comments: 'There are so many nasty derogatory names that come from [lesbian] whereas, gay just seems so simple, it just does the job.' Caroline agreed: 'Gay rather than lesbian.' Isabel explained the complexity of labelling: 'There's one girl on the team that's probably straight but doesn't define herself either way.' Therefore, it is not just the lesbian players who are dismissive of labels.

The participants rejected a dichotomous view of sexuality, which suggests individuals should conform to certain traits, behaviours and appearances, based on whether they are heterosexual or homosexual. Caroline explained, 'Being a lesbian doesn't define me, it is just who I'm with.' All the athletes were asked what being openly lesbian meant to them. Sally had that most straightforward answer, 'Nothing! I think

I probably feel stronger about being a woman than I do being gay.’ Similarly, Brooke, who was particularly outspoken about labelling, replied when asked if she subscribed to the lesbian label, ‘Definitely not.’ It can therefore be deduced that athletes saw their sexuality as a part of their larger identity, rather than as a defining entity. Melton and Cunningham (2014a) found a similar trend in sporting employees. They noted that participants who worked in sport wanted to be seen holistically rather than as a sexual orientation (Melton & Cunningham 2014a).

Ruth was the only athlete who actively encouraged labelling. She commented:

I don’t like people just assuming I’m straight; I’ve got a son as well. So people know I’ve got a son before they know I’m gay and then people automatically assume I’m straight, despite me giving off various signals or hints. So I find that I have got to be quite blatant about it, which I don’t know, I do feel quite conscious of.

While a decrease in cultural homophobia was evident throughout the interviewing process, the assumption of heterosexuality based on parenthood could suggest that heteronormativity still exists. The difference in Ruth’s approach could be explained by her coming out later in life than most of the athletes interviewed. She explained how, after coming out, she immediately felt the need to be political and visible, launching herself into the LGBT community by joining local groups. Political subscription to the lesbian label was prominent in the 1980s and 1990s, during a climate of heightened homophobia. However, I have shown that some athletes are dismissing the boundaries that such labels imply, in order to be seen as an individual.

Conclusion

Research on lesbian athletes competing in team sports has previously shown high levels of homophobia from teammates, coaches and administration (Griffin 1998; Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). However, the majority of the research was carried out in an era of homophobia (Anderson 2009b). Athletes interviewed within this study have mirrored findings from men’s team sports, indicating decreasing levels of homophobia. This has in turn resulted in increased numbers of athletes coming out the closet.

Athletic capital had previously been shown to be important for both gay and lesbian athletes coming out within a sporting environment (Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Although Anderson's (2011a) updated study demonstrates a significant decline in the importance of athletic capital for men, it was nevertheless still evident. This study concludes that athletic capital is only relevant for international athletes. It could be argued that athletic capital will always remain essential for those competing at the highest level of sport; within international sport, ability is ascribed a higher value, since sporting success is the only acceptable outcome. But this does not mean that high athletic capital is required to come out in highly supportive environments such as I found in this study. In support of these findings, it should be noted that 17 openly lesbian women competed in the semi-finals of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup. While some athletes acknowledged the benefits of being a good player in terms of social inclusion within the team, they stated that acceptance was not solely dependent on ability.

Although academics have studied the coming out process for male athletes (Anderson 2002, 2011a; Adams & Anderson 2011), little research has been conducted on the process for lesbian athletes. Anderson and Bullingham (2013), describe how athletes coming out over a decade ago sought to make some form of statement or declaration when coming out to their team. The present study, however, shows significant change, with athletes coming out quietly, even describing it as a 'non-event.' This shows a clear shift in acceptance of homosexuality, expressed by those participants who noted that life had become easier for them since coming out. It can therefore be concluded that sexuality within women's sport has become a non-issue.

Finally, this chapter examines the use of identity labels. Griffin (1998) notes that the lesbian label had traditionally been used as a method of maintaining expectations and behaviours among sportswomen. She explains that women have been historically fearful of this label, due to the stigmatization that accompanied it. However, the results of my interviewed painted a more complex picture. Some women wanted to be referred to as 'gay,' some as 'lesbian,' whereas others did not subscribe to any label regarding their sexuality. The results show that athletes are no

longer fearful of the label, but rather, that they want to be seen as individuals.

Athletes commented that it was no longer appropriate to classify their own sexuality using certain labels; they saw their sexuality as more fluid.

Chapter 12: Homophobia in Women's Sport

Introduction

This chapter examines women's sport within a culture of declining homophobia. Participants acknowledged historic homophobic behaviour; however, the overall picture is considerably more positive than previous research found (Cahn 1994a; Griffin 1998; Hargreaves 2000; Caudwell 2002). Interestingly, if athletes have faced homophobia, either on or off the sporting field, they have actively challenged the behaviour that they have faced. Positive changes can also be seen in the behaviour, attitude and language used by coaches.

Literature on topic

Homophobia in women's sport is well documented by academics in a variety of different sports and Western countries (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Griffin 1992a 1998; Cahn 1994a; Hargreaves 1994, 2000; Burroughs *et al* 1995; Iannotta & Kane 2002; Elling *et al* 2003; Lenskyj 2003; Mennesson & Clément 2003; Hemphill & Symons 2009; Drury 2011; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Griffin (1998: 66) has outlined several categories of homophobia:

- Silence
- Denial
- Promotion of a feminine (heterosexual image)
- Promotion of a heterosexy image
- Search for a heterosexual only-space
- Attacks on lesbians
- Preference for male coaches
- Acknowledgement by disassociation from lesbians

Griffin (1992, 1998) developed these categories in a period of high cultural homophobia that was very different from today's culture. However, that is not to say that these categories could not be applied to other cultures in times of high homophobia. Research on gay men participating in sport has shown that the

homophobic 1980s and 1990s have been replaced by a culture of declining homophobia, leading to the acceptance of openly gay male athletes (Anderson 2005a, 2009b, 2011a, 2014; Adams 2011; Anderson & McGuire 2010; Adams & Anderson 2011; Cashmore & Cleland 2012; Cleland 2014).

Women playing sport challenge gender norms and, unlike their male counterparts, often face the assumption that they are lesbian (Burton Nelson 1994; Cahn 1994a; Veri 1999, Cox & Thompson 2001). Homophobia has therefore been historically used as a strategy to ensure that women perform and present themselves according to a specific feminine ideal, to stave off any assumption of lesbianism (Griffin 1998). The stigma of homosexuality affects all athletes, both heterosexual and homosexual, and therefore causes conflict between women in sport, as lesbians may be blamed for a lack of acceptance of individuals, teams and women playing sport in general (Hargreaves 1994; Griffin 1998; McDonagh & Pappona 1998). Accordingly, this may well result in a lack of heterosexual allies for lesbian athletes, as heterosexual athletes perceive the need to maintain a safe distance to prevent suspicion being cast on their own sexuality (Griffin 1992a; Hargreaves 2000). Homophobia has previously been found between teammates, but also among support staff - for example, coaches.

Homophobia in sports coaches has been well documented (Mennesson & Clément 2003; Griffin 1998; Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Anderson and McGuire (2010) note the use of homophobic language by male coaches, but interestingly observe how the athletes themselves do not resort to such language to express their masculinity. In women's sport, coaches have not only demonstrated homophobia, but also endeavoured to enforce conformity to a feminine image (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Kane & Lenskyj; 1998; Mennesson & Clément 2003; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Perhaps the most famous and outspoken coach, Rene Portland, instilled a team ethos of 'No drinking, no drugs, no lesbians' (Osborne 2007: 481). Griffin (1998) comments that the attitude of a coach can impact the climate and thereby also the experience of lesbian athletes. This has been conceptualised by Anderson (2005b), who defines it as the 'top down' effect.

Research has shown that lesbian athletes either face a hostile or conditionally tolerant environment (Griffin 1998; Cox & Thompson 2001; Hargreaves 2000; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Only more recent research has shown a shift towards a more open and inclusive environment (Fink *et al* 2012). Although the athletes in this study were uniformly positive concerning their current sporting environments, some had experienced homophobia either during social events or from the sporting opposition. When athletes faced discrimination they did not remain silent, nor did they provide an apologetic response, again showing a clear shift from older research findings (Griffin 1998). Fink and colleagues (2012) show that actively challenging homophobia, rather than remaining silent or being apologetic, can provide the impetus for social change.

Historic homophobia

Some athletes recalled episodes of homophobia in their own lives, but these were historic incidents, occurring around a decade before. Caroline explained how teammates gossiping about lesbian athletes kept her closeted for longer. She stated, 'There was...talk behind their backs I was kind of like 'oh I don't know about this' and it stopped me coming out.' Although Grace had never experienced homophobia while playing netball (her current sport), she spoke of negative experiences from her University football days: 'Oh you know, you get called 'swear word lesbian' and you get called 'oh, she's just a dyke' or 'look at her with short hair, she must be [a lesbian].'' She went on to explain that there had been a significant divide between the heterosexual and lesbian teammates, but this had admittedly been nearly ten years ago. Kerry recalled how her school mates had reacted to her taking up rugby at the time:

Most of my school friends didn't know I was questioning my sexuality at that point, and I got a lot of homophobia about 'why are you joining rugby? You must be a lesbian' and all of this and of course people had no real understanding of how close they were to the mark.

This was over 20 years ago, during a period of high homophobia, and Grace's experience was totally in line with research conducted at the time. However, when

asked if her experiences had been positive in her current sport, she replied, 'It has been a journey...yes.'

Although Annie acknowledged one incident while playing rugby, her most negative experiences had come on the football field in the past. She commented, 'Just the usual lesbo, dyke everything like that.' She continued, 'Back then it was quite intense and especially when I was on the cusp of coming out.' Becky also experienced homophobia during her football career. She suggested that it had come from the opposition and supporters using homophobic language, 'You fat dyke' and, 'Fucking rug muncher.' Again, this was a historic event, as Becky no longer played football. Despite these homophobic comments it did not result in her changing sports, her decision to move to rugby was purely looking for a new challenge. Cathy disclosed she had previously experienced homophobia while at University. She admitted that, 'There was a lot of friction between the hockey girls and the netball girls.' She described one incident of severe homophobia between the two groups, but noted that this incident took place in 1997 or 1998.

All these incidents were historic and occurred during a period of high cultural homophobia. Previous research by academics note that this homophobic experience is not uncommon (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Griffin 1992a, 1998; Cahn 1994a; Hargreaves 1994, 2000; Burroughs *et al* 1995; Cox & Thompson 2001; Iannotta & Kane 2002; Elling *et al* 2003; Lenskyj 2003; Mennesson & Clément 2003; Hemphill & Symons 2009; Drury 2011; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). However, existing research in the United Kingdom has taken a poststructuralist approach on predominantly lesbian identified teams (Caudwell 2002, 2007; Drury 2011), or was carried out in a period of high homophobia (Hargreaves 1994). Though the experiences highlighted above are all historic, they clearly demonstrate that the athletes concerned are aware of, and can identify, homophobic behaviour and language. This is essential, as it allows athletes to compare their previous, homophobic experiences to the more positive and inclusive environments in which they compete today.

Reduction in homophobia

Previously women's sport has been an arena of high homophobia and therefore a hostile environment for lesbian athletes (Griffin 1992a, 1998; Hargreaves 1994, 2000; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). However, as I show in Chapter 8, the women in this study were competing in an environment that I have conceptualised as welcoming and supportive, which represents a significant shift from previous studies. I asked the athletes within this study if they had experienced homophobia from teammates, coaches, outsiders or within a social environment and the results represent, again, a marked change from the historic data collected within homohysterical cultures.

When I questioned athletes about their experiences of homophobia, their responses were universally positive. Tamara described a distinct lack of homophobic language: 'Absolutely none. I'd love to tell you some really juicy stories but there really are none!' Likewise, Grace commented, 'No I have never experienced anything negative, because of my sexual orientation.' Susan gave a similar response, 'Not in women's sport. I can't say I have ever had anything nasty said against me.' Even within a university sporting environment, Holly had experienced a universally positive response: 'I literally never have had anybody make any comment.' Ruth said, 'No, I can't say I have [heard homophobia], I have never heard a spectator or anything.' Denise commented on her positive experience: 'Hockey is definitely brilliant and I am really glad I started playing when I did.' Ellie stated, '... my experience has been great...I haven't experienced anything horrific.' Heather also stated that she had not experienced homophobia from either teammates or outsiders: 'I would say not that I have overheard or that has been directed at me in any way. No.'

Angie acknowledged that she had not experienced any homophobia. However, she did comment that 'a couple of girls had some Twitter trolls, but other than that no.' Sally commented, 'No I've not had anything negative...Yeah not one thing. Not direct to me on Twitter.' The replies from Isabel, Lorna Georgina, Lily, Sam, Brooke, Angelica, Caroline and Bridget was simply, 'No.'

Some athletes commented that although they had never heard homophobia from their teammates, that they had heard some from spectators. Mia stated, 'You hear

the odd thing...you know if someone makes a big tackle or something like that they go 'what a bloke.'" However, she did concede that this had only happened 'a handful of times' in eight seasons of her competing in the sport. Joanna had not heard homophobia from teammates or supporters, but her team had been warned about their conduct (by the professional men's club that they are linked to):

Well there was an incident that they [the men's club] complained about as sexual inappropriate behaviour on the premises. Nobody knows what that means, apart from possibly two of the girls having a little kiss - they were a couple and not even a full on snog; just like a just a kiss on the lips after the game. But they [the club] never elaborated on it, so we assume it was that because we can't think of what else it could have been. We don't know for definite, but if that's true that's then I would say that's the only negative but other than that it has been fine.

When asked if the team had asked for clarity on the issue of sexual propriety, Joanna replied that they had not sought clarification. Therefore, it is not clear what the actual incident alluded to was. Further questions were asked about this incident, but no further information was known about what actually happened.

The lack of homophobia experienced by athletes can be explained by the welcoming and supportive environment in which they are competing, coupled with a decline in cultural homophobia. Ellie commented, 'You know, I haven't really experienced homophobia in football, and I just don't think our sexuality is a huge thing. I think it is just part of you.' Becky said with reference to her sport, 'I think rugby seems to be a lot more inclusive. Anyone from no matter what size, shape, gender, sexuality, ethnicity – anything, anyone is accepted in rugby.' Joanna, who plays football, offered an alternative suggestion for the lack of homophobia in her sport:

I think because it is such a lesbian dominated sport. I think even if people thought it, I don't think they'd dare, because they would be well outnumbered by gay people. I don't think I have ever heard any sort of homophobic language at all aimed anyone on the team.

Unlike previous research, which suggested that women perceived the need to prove their heterosexuality, Holly noted that she had, in fact, experienced the opposite during social events:

I don't think I have ever had anybody make an insult towards me as such. I have definitely had people question me, 'How do you know?' 'Are you sure?' 'Have you been with a guy?' 'You don't look like a lesbian, prove it.' that kind of thing. I mean I find that quite offensive but it's not so much people you know being abusive, it is kind of just interrogative questions, that you know you would never get if you were straight.

It can be seen here - in direct contrast to previous research - that Holly had to actually prove her homosexuality. However, this incident could be linked to Holly's choice of sport – cheerleading - which is perceived as feminine and socially acceptable (Grindstaff & West 2011). Meanwhile, Heather had a pint of beer thrown over her head and faced abusive language. She explained, "She [the girl who threw the drink] got thrown out. I got to stay so I think bouncers knew what was going on." She noted that this was an event that took place eight or nine years ago. These findings are thus antithesis to the research conducted in the 1990s, which described how women competing were automatically assumed to be a lesbian (Cox & Thompson 2001). Claudia perhaps best demonstrates the shift that has taken place in sport when asked whether she has experienced homophobia: 'Not playing sport no. I have external to sport but definitely not in sport.' This supports recent findings from the US collegiate system (Fink *et al* 2012). However, this research is still limited in scope and this issue needs to be examined within a wider context – for example, within individual sports and sampling a wider range of international athletes.

Agents of change

The only person who had experienced a certain degree of homophobia from her teammates was Kerry, an international athlete. Although describing her overall experience as positive, Kerry had challenged some homophobia during her self-described 'journey.' She commented that when she had to share a bed with a teammate, 'her husband was quite, not nervous, but I think that he had some anxieties.' She went on to describe how she dealt with the situation: 'We were able

to talk about and get over [it] – once you've experienced something that normalises it.' She concluded, 'He now will proudly tell everyone his wife shared a bed with a lesbian one night a week for two years!' She openly acknowledged that she had personally 'broken down a lot of the myths and stereotypes they [teammates] had about lesbians.' This shows the impact of speaking out and challenging preconceived stereotypes, creating a welcoming and supportive environment. Mia explained a situation at a previous club some time ago:

Someone said something to me about being a dyke. I took the piss out of her and I said 'Are you calling me a water system that protects Holland from being flooded?!' and she went 'Err what?' because it was a bit too intelligent for her!

Mia outlined another incident where she had challenged homophobia with the same team mate, this time on a social network site, where she again confronted her colleague's use of language: 'I nipped it in the bud and just let them know that it was unacceptable.' Again, this shows athletes challenging homophobia, rather than maintaining a culture of silence and denial.

Where supporters have used homophobic language, this has also been confronted head on. Faye discussed a historic event that occurred when she was at university:

The lads were walking past...they used to walk past and give a bit of gob to the girls. Our captain just stopped the game, went over and had a word. She said, 'Look you need to be a bit more respectful to my players because they are here to play football. They are not here to be hollered at by you. We don't do it to you.' I think that was taken a bit higher at university because it obviously wasn't nice.

As Griffin (1998) notes, such incidents can have positive outcomes, as they require the administrative body of the institution in question to step in, as part of their commitment to equality, which in turn reduces homophobia on the sports field. Yasmin also recounts an occasion when her administration supported her. She explained what happened when comments were made by the spectators: 'They kind of shut up after a while, so they either got bored, or one of the club officials said,

‘Lads just tone it down a bit.’” She highlighted the importance of a supportive environment to keep the club ‘family friendly.’

Annie stated that she had experienced homophobic language from an opposition player:

I have experienced [homophobic language] once...I overheard one of the opposition who had been tackled. The girl who tackled on our team was quite butch...and I heard the opposition call her a, ‘fucking dyke cunt.’ Which I thought was just, it was just hideous and it really, it really got my back up. I thought there’s no need for that type of language. I felt it necessary, after I had thrown the ball out... so when she got up I said ‘there is no need for that language at all.’ It wasn’t more of standing up for my fellow teammate or anything like that, it was more as a sporting person there’s just no need for it.

Here Annie stopped playing the game in order to challenge homophobic language that was not directed at her.

Heterosexual allies have not historically adopted a supporting role, owing to the suspicion that accompanied supportive behaviour (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). However, Becky explained what happened in a bar when men persisted to make unwanted sexual advances: ‘My teammates just pulled him off and said he’s an idiot.’ Likewise, Holly spoke of support received from female teammates:

When it came to them [male members of the team] some made joking comments, ‘Oh obviously that’s why you joined cheerleading’ but that was very much from guys. I think any girls that were present called them out on it and said it was a really weird comment to make.

This serves as evidence that Holly was competing within a welcoming and supportive environment where teammates actively supported her against homophobic comments. Susan shared a similar experience:

I think it has only happened once, and that was a guy getting in one of the girl’s face, ‘Ah come dance with me come dance with me. I can change you. I

can turn you' and all that. So me and three others just went up to him, picked him up by his armpits and dragged him away and said, 'Don't bother coming there because if you do you will be flat on the floor.'

She continued that if she ever faced issues in bars or clubs, her teammates would 'Rally round you. They will stand with you and make sure that it is not getting out of hand.' She conceded, 'They are the first ones in there to say 'Look mate, back off, leave us alone, we are enjoying our night.'" There are occasions when an athlete has perceived and challenged homophobia in another environment. Claudia stated that she had felt obliged to challenge homophobic language in the armed forces, making comments such as: 'I didn't like that language. Can you use a different word' and people go, 'Oh shit sorry, didn't realise.'" She stated that on a couple of occasions she had received a less positive response: 'I've had...'Well piss off. I do what I want'" but interestingly, that did not discourage her from challenging the language on subsequent occasions.

The only athlete that did not challenge homophobic comments was Ruth. In her first season's prize giving, her captain (who identifies as a lesbian), made derogatory comments about players on another team. It could be that Ruth felt unable to confront this behaviour due to her rookie status on the team, coupled with the comments being made by an individual in a position of responsibility. She reflected on the event:

I was quite taken aback actually because I just didn't expect it from her because it's not my views at all...I just sort of was quiet underneath and I should have said something. I think because the captain is quite outspoken and speaks her mind anyway you know people maybe just go along with it. I don't know. Although, I definitely sort of entirely didn't agree with her.

She went onto explain her lack of challenge:

I think one of the reasons I didn't challenge her was because I am quite aware that I am more politically aware. You know, lesbian visibility and gender presentation, and I don't feel that other players on the team necessarily share my view. So I don't feel I have got an ally in that sense, who

would you know may be challenge those views with me. So I suppose I felt in the minority, that's why I didn't challenge her... like I say it was on my mind to challenge her but I didn't challenge her. I regret not doing that but it's finding the words at the time.

Only one athlete did not actively challenge homophobia and this was due to her lower status on the team. Anderson (2005b) describes how a 'top-down' effect is evident on some teams and how the environment that athletes compete in can be determined by either older, more experienced players, or the coach (Anderson 2009b). In this case, the athlete did not challenge the homophobia being displayed by the captain and the top-down effect was evident. Interestingly, on reflection, she claimed she would challenge such behaviour in future, thought this decision could well have been affected by her winning the top prize available in the whole league, thereby raising her athletic capital.

Whether athletes heard homophobic language on the sporting field, or in bars and clubs, they actively challenged the behaviour being demonstrated. As Hargreaves (2000: 146) notes, 'Speaking out is an essential start for any change in people's perceptions of lesbian women in sport.' The women interviewed in this study have shown that standing in the shadows and remaining silent is no longer an expectation.

Positive coaching

When asked if their coach ever used homophobic language 25 of the athletes simply replied, 'No' or 'Never.' One athlete, Ruth, did not have a coach. Others went into more detail. Mia commented: 'No. No they'd be out the door. If you know anything about rugby, no-one would accept anything like that; you'd be done. Your name would be mud.' Likewise, Tamara replied, 'Never. It wouldn't have acceptance...like we have a Charter and everyone must treat everyone equally.' Mel acknowledged the complexities of language, 'Not that I can think of, like no. I guess it depends on what homophobic language is! No, nothing that I have been offended with.' Annie explained how things had changed for her - although her rugby coach had never used homophobic language, her previous football coach had done so. In fact, some coaches had actively engaged with their athletes in challenging homophobic language by seeking the advice of their players. Kerry stated:

I am afraid the woman wasn't very comfortable with it, but actually she came to me and said, 'I really don't know much about, you know, what being gay means. Can I ask you a whole range of questions? I want to understand and I want to be able to support you better. So what language should I use?' So I think she was very honest about the fact that she had never thought about it before.

Kerry went on to say that she also had a conversation with her male coach, who took longer to address her sexuality: 'We knew we had to have that conversation.' She felt that he was unsure as how to best acknowledge and address her sexuality. She told him, 'Don't assume because I am gay, I don't have periods, or because I'm gay, I don't worry about what my hair looks like!' She indicated that having these conversations was necessary, because the coaches had not previously had contact with openly gay or lesbian athletes. Kerry's example shows how sometimes athletes need to actively seek and resolve potential issues, rather than simply remain silent.

Perhaps the most substantial change revealed by this research has been the attitude of coaches, contributing hugely to the welcoming and supportive climate experienced by athletes. As Mel explained: 'When my manager first joined...he literally took me for a drink ... and said, 'I need to know all the politics, I need to know who's been out with who so I don't put my foot in it!'' Additionally, the coach often attended social events with the players to help develop positive working relationships.

Some athletes discussed the relaxed relationship they enjoyed with their coaches, where again, banter played an important role. Sam commented, 'I am very, very close to [him] and I can have banter with him.' This banter often has sexuality-themed content: 'I might say 'well I've got a better chance of pulling her than you have!' and stuff like that.' Faye explained how their male coach had created a relaxed atmosphere, allowing for banter:

You know we banter at our coach because he's coaching a load of girls, but he brings it on himself a little bit. He doesn't wear underwear so when he's got shorts on like one of the girls commented about him having like a semi

on and everything. It was painful to try and tell him because he wasn't aware, but he said, 'oh well I had better buy some pants then girls hadn't I!'

Again, banter is used as a method of creating a welcoming and supportive attitude between coaches and players.

Yasmin showed the 'top down effect' at work, describing her (male) coach as 'Absolutely fantastic. He's really encouraging and supportive.' This level of acceptance and support from a male coach was also acknowledged by Becky: 'The head coach refers to me and my girlfriend as his 'little daughters' and his 'little babbies.'" Some academics may see this as demeaning and belittling the athletes, but Becky concluded that she felt 'completely accepted.' Joanna described her coach as 'very professional' and that 'it's more about football basically.' Angelica stated that 'Our coaches are quite good' and she was jovial about their attitude: 'They are mainly despairing because of my ability to sleep through alarms and be very late for training!' All these players felt that their coaches used positive language and created a relaxed environment for the team.

Perhaps the only exception to this rule is mentioned by Sally, an international athlete. Sally explained that her coach had used the word 'gay' twice in a derogatory way, until she challenged him on it. As McCormack explains, if there is 'pernicious intent' (2011a: 670), then such language can be deemed homophobic. Although the team environment that Sally was competing in was positive, she sensed negativity from the sporting administration. She comments with respect to the behaviour of two different international coaches: 'Well, it is quite remarkable when you speak to people who try to convince you that they are not homophobic, because they know someone gay.' Administrative homophobia mirrors the findings of Fink and colleagues (2012), who depict a similar pattern of supportive teams within homophobic institutions. However, in this study, this was only evident with elite performers.

Conclusion

Research has shown that openly lesbian athletes participating in team sports are subject to homophobia, either outwardly or covertly (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Griffin

1992a, 1998; Boxhill 1993; Hargreaves 1994, 2000; Cahn 1994a; Burroughs *et al* 1995; Iannotta & Kane 2002; Elling *et al* 2003; Lenskyj 2003; Mennesson & Clément 2003; Hemphill & Symons 2009; Drury 2011; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Recent research has shown an improvement for lesbian athletes competing in the US collegiate system, but even that study showed that these changes are not universal (Fink *et al* 2012).

This chapter confirms that athletes in this study have faced homophobia. However, the language and behaviour that they faced has been predominately identified as historic. Athletes acknowledged that more recently, they had faced little, if any, homophobia. Furthermore, numerous participants have shown how sport is in fact more inclusive than other aspects of society. These findings are similar to the more recent research conducted in both men's and women's sport on openly gay athletes (Adams & Anderson 2011, Anderson 2011a, Fink *et al* 2012).

Although some participants have encountered homophobia, either on or off the sports field, they have never faced homophobia from teammates within their current clubs. When faced with homophobia, athletes have shown a willingness to challenge discrimination. This demonstrates that female athletes are no longer afraid of the lesbian label, a fear that academics have shown existed during periods of high cultural homophobia (Griffin 1998; Hargreaves 2000). Not only have these athletes challenged homophobia, but they have also been supported by their teammates in so doing. Griffin (1998) asserts that heterosexual allies are essential to bring about a decline of homophobia in women's sport, which has been shown to be the case here.

Finally, I examined the role of the coach as part of the sporting institution. Fink *et al*, (2012) show a decline in homophobia for lesbian athletes in all areas, apart from within sporting administrations. This chapter has shown that athletes have been supported by their coaches. Athletes expressed that coaches have been pro-active in understanding the politics and the culture of the club that they are entering. Additionally, athletes have shown that homophobic language and behaviour would not be tolerated in the sporting environment. The only athletes who needed to challenge or discuss their sexuality with their coaches were the international athletes.

This chapter has also revealed an improvement in the experiences of lesbian athletes since research from the 1980s. Athletes within this study have reported that they are no longer facing regular, sustained homophobia within the sporting arena. Athletes are now participating in an environment that is positive, where they are supported by both their teammates and their coach.

Chapter 13: The Declining Effect of Trailblazers and Supporting Torchbearers

Chapter introduction

Lesbian athletes have historically faced either a hostile or conditionally tolerant environment after coming out in organized, competitive teamsport (Griffin 1998; Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). As a result, few athletes have elected to come out publicly (Griffin 1998; Anderson 2002). However, when an athlete does take that step, she provides a unique opportunity for closeted athletes to gauge the potential reception they might receive if they follow suit (Anderson 2002, 2011a; Fink *et al* 2012). Those athletes who have bravely stepped out of the closet first in their prospective sports are referred to as trailblazers (Fink *et al* 2012).

This chapter examines the impact of trailblazers on the coming out experiences of lesbian athletes competing in team sports. Within this chapter, I conceptualise the role of a torchbearer (effectively a second and third generation trailblazer), identifying how they pass on advice and support to those who need it.

Literature on trailblazers is somewhat limited, since there have been few studies of openly lesbian athletes (Fink *et al* 2012), let alone lesbian trailblazers. Trailblazers are less common today, as homophobia has decreased and more athletes are out. Thus, this chapter also shows how a decline in cultural homophobia has affected the role of openly lesbian athlete trailblazers. Traditionally, trailblazers showed closeted athletes the potential environment within which they would be competing, whereas now a new generation of torchbearers provide support and advice, but only to those who need it.

Trailblazers

Lesbian athletes have historically been seen as negative role models for younger athletes (Griffin 1998). These negative connotations were linked to the perceived immorality of lesbian athletes who, in spite of acts of kindness and charity, were still very much seen as morally abhorrent (Griffin 1998). This stands in stark contrast to

male athletes, who may act scandalously or violently without having their morality or ethics questioned (Griffin 1998). However, as Hargreaves (2000) notes, openly lesbian athletes not only challenge traditional stereotypes of lesbians in sport, but simultaneously become role models for those aspiring to positive change. Arguably the most notable trailblazer in women's sport has been Martina Navratilova, who since coming out, has become an inspirational figure of resistance to heteropatriarchal dominance in sport. Only recently have lesbian athletes and celebrities come out to more positive media coverage.

In hostile or conditionally tolerant environments, lesbian athletes created clandestine support groups for one another, while still remaining closeted. In 1998, Griffin revealed how lesbians formed secret clubs to provide a sanctuary from overtly hostile athletic departments. Here the influence of the trailblazing athlete extended beyond mere acceptance of the player; they also actively supported athletes wishing to come out through the provision of advice and support, serving as gatekeepers for a secret network of lesbian athletes.

Trailblazers have been shown to be exceptionally important during the coming out process (Fink *et al* 2012). As Fink *et al* (2012: 90) summarise: 'In essence, these trailblazers provided a window into what would be on the other side (after they had come 'out').' Where openly lesbian athletes were supported by their team, closeted athletes would know that the conditions were safe to come out (Fink *et al* 2012). Conversely, where trailblazers were subjected to homophobic abuse or dropped from the team, closeted athletes knew to remain safely in the closet.

Reflecting on the role of trailblazers proved difficult for some participants, who had come out many years previously. Some struggled to remember their initial experiences and the impact that a trailblazer may or may not have had on them. Nevertheless, there was a recognition by some participants of the importance of having *someone* open about their sexuality on the team; it is these participants that this chapter addresses.

Trailblazers paving the way

Participants' reflections on trailblazers varied across this study. Some, like Angie, suggested having openly lesbian players on the team 'probably made it a little bit easier to come out.' Angie was asked if trailblazers on the team were accepted and whether they had had any effect on her decision to come out. She replied, 'I think if I had seen that people were victimised or not accepted because of it, I think it would have made me think twice about being open.' Other participants were equally influenced by openly lesbian players, with Kerry describing them as 'massively helpful' throughout her journey of coming out. She commented, 'I met a diversity of gay women and that was hugely beneficial to me.' These results confirm existing studies, which show how the reception of trailblazers can positively affect closeted athletes' decision to come out (Fink *et al* 2012). In essence, trailblazers are the canary in the coal mine; they alert closeted athletes to the conditions. They have also been described as providing a window effect (Fink *et al* 2012). The window effect allows closeted athletes to see through to what an environment would look like if they chose to come out (Fink *et al* 2012).

Evidence of the 'window effect' in this study came from Heather: 'The fact that I could see that lesbians were being accepted by other players on the team made it a lot easier for me.' Similarly, Caroline commented, 'It was the fact that you knew it was (a) safe environment for lesbian athletes.' Angelica described it as a 'comfort thing,' adding, 'I knew there were openly gay players and it wouldn't be an issue to come out.' The trailblazer effect was epitomised by Mel, who stated, 'Having other openly lesbians just makes it easier.' How the trailblazing athlete was received was important for some participants; others simply found it comforting to know they were not alone.

Angelica described the effect of trailblazers on her experience of coming out: 'I knew that somebody else thinks like me; that I won't be the only gay in the village!' Cathy commented: 'It 100% made it easier...because there were people in the same boat as you.' Isabel said, 'I think it was a positive thing as a young gay person. As (a) young gay person, all you want do is meet somebody else like you.' The potential fear of isolation, mentioned by Isabel, is significant; keeping gay athletes isolated has been

acknowledged in previous studies as a key weapon used within homophobic environments to keep athletes in the closet (Blinde & Taub 1992a; Norman 2008). These participants suggested that having trailblazers on their teams allowed any fears of being isolated to dissipate. In this way, the trailblazer can pave the way towards total inclusivity. Grace confirms this:

You can sometimes feel if you are the only lesbian, and that there weren't any lesbians before you. You can feel that because of the society that we are in, that you are going to get judged and that people will not accept you. Whereas, if you have already got somebody who is openly gay on the team, there is that underlying feeling that being gay is accepted.

Denise expresses similar sentiments:

I was still not really sure what was going on inside my own head, it was nice to see some older people who were OK with everything. They had (a) girlfriend, they were accepted and it was fine. So I suppose it made the whole thing a little bit less scary.

Although no athletes used terms such as 'pave the way' or 'lead the way' as Fink and colleagues found (2012: 91), the importance of 'out' athletes for some players was clear; trailblazers were credited with creating a more inclusive environment for others coming out.

The suggestion that trailblazers simply enable other athletes to come out would be an over-simplification, however. The presence of sexual minority athletes on a team does not necessarily mean others will follow out of the closet (Anderson 2005a); the process is more complex than that. Despite having an 'out' athlete on her team, Sally had still struggled with coming out: 'I knew, intellectually, that it would be OK; but even so, it is still hard to do it.' It does appear that some of the athletes interviewed did study trailblazers before making the step of coming out. They did this, not only to discover how these trailblazers navigated team sport, but also to see how these individuals were received more generally by society, beyond the sporting arena. Brooke described how she weighed up her decision to come out:

I suppose it was seeing how normal their life was... I kind of used them [trailblazers] to work out what I thought about being a lesbian. Whether I thought it was odd, or whether I thought it was OK... Learning vicariously through them, like how other people treated them, when they are talking about their girlfriends. Working out what consequences there are watching what happens to them and then you weigh up whether it is safe or not.

Brooke's comments show that coming out is rarely isolated to just the team (Griffin 1998; Fink *et al* 2012). Hence, trailblazers are viewed not just for their athletic experience, but also in terms of their life experience as an openly lesbian person.

Managing multiple sexual identities is fraught with difficulty, therefore identity management ('coming out') should not be considered as linear, but rather a continual process taking place at different times within different environments (Griffin 1992b; Sykes 1996). However, keeping identities separate is more problematic in the digital age. The rise of social media means that others can unwillingly tag you into photos, make comments on Facebook, or tweet about the good time they had with you at the lesbian bar.

Bridget commented on the effect of negative comments made about trailblazing athletes: 'One of my best friends was quite homophobic (about the trailblazer in question) and I think that put me off coming out for quite a long time.' Although these reflections were historic (more than 10 years old), this shows the negative effect a hostile reception for trailblazers can have on an athlete pondering the decision to come out. She continued, 'That sort of makes you want to hide it I suppose, even though it was just a throw away comment.' Therefore, it seems that for some participants, small comments can make a lasting impression. This is particularly true in periods of high homophobia, when athletes are debating if it is safe to come out or not.

Decreasing importance of trailblazers

This research not only examines the influence that a trailblazing athlete has others' decision to come out, but it also considers the experiences of trailblazers themselves. Four athletes in this study were trailblazers within their teams. When asked about

being the only lesbian on her team, Jennifer replied, 'It does not affect me at all.' Jasmine, another trailblazer, described how her coming out had affected others. During her time at an independent girls' school, numerous girls came out in her wake. She commented, 'So many came out at school, it was great actually.' When asked about the trailblazer effect, she continued, 'This isn't just my perception, it happened, and it was good.' Jasmine stated that while the same effect had not been seen on her university sports team, she had provided support for athletes on her current team. Jasmine seemed proud of her trailblazing effect at school, and while she had not seen the same effect at university, she was only in her first year at the time of interview. With university degrees typically lasting three years, she still had another two years to have a trailblazing effect on the team. Coupled with an increase in athletic capital as she becomes more senior within the club, her impact could well be yet to come.

However, the trailblazer effect is less pronounced owing to the increasing number of openly lesbian athletes on sports teams. For example, Susan stated: 'I don't think it [having trailblazers] necessarily plays a huge factor in coming out.' Likewise, when Joanna was asked if openly lesbian players had influenced her decision to come out, she replied, 'I don't know...I am not too sure.' Perhaps acceptance of trailblazers is no longer of relevance to gay and lesbian players in a society where homophobia is in decline and they are increasingly welcome.

In fact, for some athletes, the importance of trailblazers was not evident at all. Lily suggested that trailblazers had 'no effect' on her decision to come out. When asked whether having trailblazers on the team had an impact on her coming out, Maria replied, 'No, not in the slightest.' Sam responded similarly: 'I don't think it did to be honest.' Lorna simply replied, "No."

This suggests that closeted lesbian athletes may no longer require the advice and support of openly lesbian athletes on their teams. As previously mentioned, it is potentially the case that the decline in importance of trailblazers could be linked to the social decrease in homophobia being replicated in the sporting arena; alternatively, it could be due to the sheer number of lesbian athletes competing openly, making the trailblazer role redundant. Trailblazers have traditionally been

those individual athletes who were the first to come out of the closet within their sporting environment. With the number of openly lesbian athletes increasing, the emphasis has shifted away from individuals. Acceptance has become commonplace, with more players coming out on sports teams; consequently, homosexuality has become less of an issue within women's sport. It could be argued that the initial trailblazers were so successful that they are no longer required to provide a 'window to the other side,' as the positive reception afforded lesbian athletes is self-evident. However, this is only the case in teams with a number of openly lesbian athletes.

Protecting their master identity

It has previously been suggested that lesbians will remain closeted where a trailblazer receives a negative response from teammates (Griffin 1998; Hargreaves 2000). Within this study, however, it was not the acceptance of a trailblazer that deterred some from coming out, rather it was the negative behaviour displayed by the original trailblazing athlete that caused players to remain closeted. The trailblazers were accepted by the team, but sometimes demonstrated behaviours, such as promiscuity, from which closeted players sought to distance themselves. Thus some athletes remained closeted to avoid association with certain labels, for example the lesbian slut label, which was attached to openly lesbian athletes. Anderson (2009) discusses how men who devote years to sport slowly change their master identity to become an 'athlete.' This concept can be adapted for the lesbian label in women's sport. Before coming out women would have a master identity of an 'athlete'. However historically, when women have come out, their master identity has changed from an 'athlete' to that of a 'lesbian'. Effectively their sexuality becomes their defining characteristic.

Holly, for example, described how she remained closeted during her first year at university. She did so because an older student's behaviour had put her off coming out:

There was a girl a year older than me who was out as bi...she never had relationships with girls. It was just that she just always got with girls and it was seen as a little bit of a joke. Which is another reason why, when I first

joined, I was a little bit uncomfortable with coming out. She was the only person in the club who did not identify as straight, and seemed to get with all the girls. I really didn't want to be seen as that because she was seen as a little bit predatory.

Holly made it clear that she did not want to be associated with the predatory lesbian slut label and therefore waited until her second year to come out to the club. Perhaps, most interestingly, she waited until she had a girlfriend to come out to the club, so that she could fully distance herself from the predatory lesbian slut label. Despite her trepidation, however, her experiences since coming out have been exceptionally positive.

Georgina explained that the only openly lesbian athlete on her team previously was described as 'an aggressive lesbian.' She expressed some discomfort with this type of labelling, but noted that that the player was still well liked by the team. She suggested that the 'aggressive lesbian' descriptor was used 'in a jokey way.' Georgina commented: 'She was 100% accepted on the team - it would never have come down to her sexuality, she was just a bit of a character.' She acknowledged that this type of lesbian labelling may have impacted on her decision to come out: 'It may have had some influence on the fact that I was feeling uncomfortable to tell everyone.' In this example, it was not the openly lesbian player's acceptance within the team that influenced the participant's decision to come out, but rather the label that had been applied to this athlete by her team.

The issue of labels was also discussed by Brooke when speaking of her initial experiences on a university team, over 10 years ago. She explained how coming out caused one player to be continuously labelled by their sexuality, so that it became part of their master identity:

When people came out, rather than anything about them as a person, it became, 'She is gay, she plays centre forward.' Rather than, 'They study at university and she has a girlfriend.' So, it put me off slightly...I perceived that was the main thing about them. So, I filtered it to just be the main attribute

people talked about was their sexuality. Maybe that's my perception, not what actually happened, but to me it felt like 'it's a massive thing.'

It was not that the player in question was not accepted, just that their sexuality had become their master identity. Brooke clearly saw that trailblazers were accepted, yet she herself did not want to be defined by her sexuality. She concluded, 'Although, they were accepted, they were also, completely defined by their sexuality. Whereas now I don't feel like that at all.' Anderson (2009b) describes how male athletes who drop out of sport can negatively affect their masculine capital, as they lose their master identity of 'athlete.' In similar way, Brooke did not want her athletic identity and social capital to be negatively affected by the lesbian label. However, she acknowledged that this labelling happened over 10 years ago, when homophobia in women's sport was evident and environments were potentially hostile. Interestingly, she noted that in today's climate of acceptance, being open about her sexuality no longer affected her master identity; she was now happy to be open to her teammates in the security she would not be defined by her orientation.

Likewise, Claudia recounted experiences from her time in military sport, prior to coming out. She disclosed her initial homophobic thoughts:

I didn't realise I was gay. So it was quite interesting looking back now, sitting in an environment with all these girls, who were being quite thuggish. After a rugby match and getting drunk and stuff, I sat there thinking 'bloody hell, fucking lesbians.'

She later noted that she could understand their behaviour in relation to the sport, but that initially, she had not wanted to be associated with their actions.

While these three athletes expressed some negative sentiments regarding trailblazers on the team, these were based purely on the behaviour of the trailblazer, rather than any issues surrounding hostility or acceptance. Moreover, Claudia and Brooke's experiences were historic, occurring around 10 years ago. However, these were isolated events, and as noted earlier in this chapter, numerous athletes saw the importance of trailblazers. Even athletes that did not specifically acknowledge

trailblazers as important in their decision to come out, did mention the support received from lesbian teammates.

Support from lesbian teammates

Results from this study show extensive support from lesbian teammates during the coming out process for many players. For some the support was emotional, for others, this support took the form of providing a gateway to the LGBT community. Mel acknowledged the support that athletes received when they came out. She commented, 'I think it's hard, whatever time in your life that you come out. Being on a team means people might have a support network instantly around them.' Mel recognised the support that one teammate in particular had given her when she chose to come out. Naming the athlete, she stated, 'She has always been a sort of role model.' Joanna also spoke of the support she received from teammates:

They were all great. They all knew I was gay, even before I told them. I think they knew that I was struggling and why I was behaving like I was, and that there was obviously something wrong. I think they all knew but they were all really, really supportive. They were all brilliant.

Joanna's experience of support extended beyond the sporting arena; when she became homeless after coming out, her teammates took her in. She recalled, 'We all sort of relied on each other.' Similarly, Brooke commented:

They [teammates] would talk to me about it, because I think they thought I was in a bit of conflict. So, they would come and speak to me and try and kind of reassure me. I wasn't in a place to really want to hear, so I didn't really listen or really take on board or anything. But they were there for me.

Although she had the support of her teammates, Brooke remained closeted until late into her twenties. Cathy also spoke of the level of support received from teammates, when she came out to her parents:

The two that I spoke to don't play for that team any more, but I am still in contact with them. They were really, really supportive...I had that sort of

regular contact with them and built up that friendship, from there it was really important.

Faye recollected, 'They kind of show you a little bit, like take you to certain bars in the town.' She discussed how going out allowed her to talk about her sexuality for the first time:

It was more about just being lesbian. I think they would say to me 'you shouldn't be hiding who you are. Just be honest.' I said, 'Well it's quite difficult because I don't know. I don't know myself, so what do you suggest I do?' They said, 'Just go and be who you are, and if you want any more advice come and see me'. It was more chats when we were out in clubs.

Faye noted how older players would not only provide support, but also check up on her after social events. This sense of protection was also communicated by Kerry, who was also taken to clubs by older players. She reported:

I was the only juvenile in the team...they were quite protective over me and were quite keen that I wasn't just falling into the trap of being in relationships with women because they were or because we went to gay clubs. I think they were quite keen to protect me and make sure I was doing what was right for me. That was really beneficial. I mean, I learnt so much from those women.

Lorna, who hid her relationship for around three years, spoke of the support that her partner had given her: 'I didn't talk to anyone but my partner. I didn't want to talk to anyone.' Of all the athletes interviewed, Lorna appeared to have had the most difficult coming out experience, waiting around three years to take the step. However, this was not through either lack of support or a hostile environment. As she explained, 'I wasn't necessarily expecting myself to be with another girl, at all. So, I guess I had to get my head around it before I told anyone else.'

Like Lorna, some athletes did not acknowledge the support of lesbian teammates. This could be the case because the support they received came from outside the sporting arena or from heterosexual teammates. Claudia recounted the time when she was questioning her sexuality: 'I had a chat to a friend who is still my best mate.'

Sally shared a similar experience: 'I remember having a conversation with one of my best friends at the time and actually telling them.' In Chapter 9, I outlined the support and welcoming environment offered by many clubs these days and this could also explain why fewer athletes are turning to their lesbian teammates in an individual capacity. Sexuality is no longer a topic shrouded in secrecy, but a topic that can be discussed openly with peers.

Torchbearers

Though not all of the participants had sought the support of lesbian teammates, or indirectly received support through the presence of trailblazers, it was clear that open lesbians on the team were improving the environment for closeted athletes. Only four of the athletes interviewed were trailblazers in the sense of being the only openly lesbian players on their respective teams. The vast majority could not be termed as trailblazers, as people on their team had come out before them. However, they could be described as second or even third generation trailblazers, in the sense that they still offered support to closeted lesbians. The term torchbearer has been devised as a symbolic term to refer to these second or third generation trailblazers who continue to have the positive impact of their predecessors, albeit playing a slightly different role in a very different environment.

The influence of torchbearers is similar to trailblazers in the sense that they provide advice and support. However, these roles differ slightly, as torchbearers have less immediate impact than trailblazers, since they are not the first on their team to come out. Trailblazers have traditionally set a trend within their team or sport and been placed on a pedestal above all others, whereas torchbearers simply offer support and advice. They are no longer required to provide a window of acceptance as the trailblazers have already smoothed the path and opened up the conversation.

Participants recalled experiences of advising players who had spoken to them in confidence. As Kerry explained, 'I think one of the things about being out, is that people know they can talk to you about it.' She recounted a time when a member of the team approached her: '... one of my team came to see me... she'd met someone and didn't know what to do.' Kerry continued, 'She went through telling her family

and telling us as a team and all of those things and that was all fine.’ Likewise, Annie commented with regard to a similar approach from a player, ‘It’s not just because my girlfriend and I are together, but it’s because that she felt that she could trust us. I think that’s quite nice.’ Becky (who plays on the same team) described the same event:

She was straight when we met her. She was with - that’s the girl who was the coach – but she kind of kept it on the down-low. She wasn’t sure if she was bi or what...She doesn’t necessarily talk openly about it...But because she sees a kind of connection she knows I’d be fine with it, no matter, who she wants to be with or what she’s confused about.

Becky showed that being open about her sexuality has helped develop a connection between herself and a closeted teammate, enabling her to provide support and advice. Meanwhile, Cathy spoke of how one of her teammates, could not even bring herself to talk about her sexuality ten years ago; so she wrote a letter. She recalled:

I was giving her a lift, she was getting a train and we’d been playing hockey. I said, ‘I will give you a lift to the station’ and she threw me a letter just as she got out of the car. She said, ‘Please can you read that and then text me’ and it was literally a coming out letter. ‘I’m gay, I don’t know what to do. Who do I tell? You’ve done this’ – those sort of questions.

Cathy explained, ‘I phoned her, we had a conversation about it,’ and she concluded:

I think she could have asked anyone, but because she knew me, and she knew that I was gay... I think she just needed somebody just to say to her ‘Yeah this is OK. It’s fine. You can do this. People are going to be there to support you’.

Likewise, Faye recalled her time as captain of the team at university, when she would regularly help players out. She highlighted one event in particular that showed her influence on others: ‘One girl was a twin and she didn’t want to let her sister down, but she thought she was gay. The advice I gave her was, you can’t let anyone down

for being gay.’ More recently, Holly described how she had provided support for a couple on the team, as well as for a first year student. She recounted their conversation, saying, ‘They actually both said to me on a couple of occasions that they probably wouldn’t have felt that they could have explored that between themselves, if they hadn’t seen me being accepted in the club before them.’ The advice that she gave them was met with such gratitude, that one of them wrote a letter thanking Holly for her support. Heather described how younger players used to talk to her, although not openly about sexuality. It was only on reflection that she made the connection. She said, ‘I suppose it was their way of kind of asking questions about coming out.’ She continued, ‘I think for them it was obviously an environment where they felt comfortable to do that.’ Claudia had provided support for friends, both in and outside of sport. She explained how she enjoyed helping others: ‘I think it is quite a nice thing actually, when people come to you for advice and I can say ‘don’t worry, it’s all going to be OK.’”

Some participants had noticed players struggling and had offered support. Mel noted how banter often enabled people to discuss events:

It has come through banter again. She’s straight but she kissed a girl on a night out and people were joking with her about that. You could tell that although she was laughing, there was something there. So I just texted saying, ‘if you want to speak to me’ and she said, ‘Oh I need to be drunk to have this conversation.

Bridget explained how she looked out for one of the younger players, providing what she termed a ‘mothering role’ when a younger player was going through ‘a bit of a rebellion.’ It is clear that the torchbearer effect can extend beyond a player’s lifetime at the club; Caroline described how she supported a player coming out to (initially) unsupportive parents: ‘That was after I finished playing for them, but it was as a result of playing for them.’ It appears that friendship and support extends beyond the sports field. Although older, more established players had come out on her team, Joanna was the first of the younger age group of players to come out and in this way, became a torchbearer. Having been supported by older trailblazers, she made the decision to come out:

I did it, it was fine, and then literally within about six months they had all come out. So I sort of started it off with the younger ones and a lot of them found it difficult. Then one by one they all just ended up coming out themselves.

Joanna's decision to come out served as a catalyst for other players and she was able to provide advice and support to her peers.

Elite athletes in the public domain also provide support in their capacity as role models. Kerry noted, 'I know that lots of people, and lots of lesbians have joined...I suppose I have been that role model to say that this sport is a safe place to be.' She added:

I do get emails and Facebook messages from young women who have said that they have come out because, you know, I have given them inspiration. I don't really know how I've done that! But if it works for them, then that's great. If I have helped somebody find something that they are good at and that makes them feel good about themselves, if it gives them a social network then hoorah!

Sally shared similar anecdotes, which she described as 'very positive stuff.' She noted that she had '... even got a letter from just some random women who said it was great that I had come out and really helpful for a lot of people.' Like Kerry, she described how social media has connected her to others: 'There were a few of those positive messages on Facebook.' The significance of being a role model was not lost on Sally, who commented that she 'didn't want to shy away from coming out.' Her reasoning was clear: 'I was aware of that there was potential to be a role model and help people.' This shows that even when individuals do not personally know openly lesbian athletes, the latter offer a level of support for them, even appearing as heroic in their eyes. Correspondingly, the elite athletes demonstrated an awareness of their responsibility to serve as role models to others.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has examined the effect of trailblazers on the athletes interviewed and how they have, in turn, provided support for younger, closeted athletes. While the presence of trailblazers was clearly comforting for some athletes, others did not seem to need this support. The latter phenomenon could be attributed to declining homophobia within society, coupled with a wider acceptance of gay and lesbian athletes. In contrast to the experiences of lesbian athletes competing in the homophobic 1980s, they had no expectation of negative reactions to any decision to come out. This clearly differs from previous research, which suggested that the existence of an openly lesbian teammate was a key factor in encouraging others to come out (Krane 1997; Griffin 1998; Ravel & Rail 2007). This study shows that for some, it was of no relevance at all. These changes suggest the impact of a welcoming and supportive environment in tandem with a decline in cultural homophobia.

There is evidence that participants had become second and third generation trailblazers, which I have conceptualised as torchbearers. During interviews, athletes discussed how they had helped and supported others through the coming out process. Torchbearers continue the work of trailblazers, by speaking out and maintaining visibility for lesbian athletes, as well as offering advice and support. This helps provide a positive environment in which others may compete, as well as challenging any potential homophobia (Griffin 1998; Ravel & Rail 2007; Fink *et al* 2012).

The role of the torchbearer is to provide support and advice to teammates, but only to those who require it. It is clear that lesbian athletes still provide protection for each other, although not in the same way that previous research has suggested, as not all athletes interviewed for this study required such protection. Previously, social groups in sport centred on sexuality existed to provide protection and support (Ravel & Rail 2007). While the athletes in this study offered support to others making the decision to come out, the protective element is no longer required. Therefore, there has been a shift in the role of the openly lesbian athlete, from trailblazer to torchbearer, as cultural homophobia has declined.

Chapter 14: Room for Improvement

Introduction

This chapter examines the negativity that still surrounds lesbian participation in women's sport. Although the majority of the findings in this study are progressive, especially when compared with previous dated literature, the change is neither complete nor universal. Within this chapter, I examine some of the negative aspects outlined by participants, from elite (international) athletes to those competing at lower level (grassroots) competition. I show that lesbians are still subject to stereotyping, such as the portrayal of lesbians as predators, or homophobic cultural beliefs, such as participation in sport turns young girls into lesbians. Finally, this chapter examines the process of social lesbianisation, which occurs when one lesbian on the team causes the entire team to be labelled lesbian (Anderson & Bullingham 2013).

Elite problems

During data collection, I interviewed three current elite athletes, who faced additional problems during participation. Kerry explained the fear of some elite athletes was related to sponsorship:

I think what happens at the moment is an unspoken thing. A lot of people say, 'Oh you know, I'm at risk of losing my sponsorship deals if I come out', but they've never had that conversation with the company that they have got the sponsorship with. The sponsorship company could well be absolutely fine with that, but are never actively saying you know, 'If you wanted to come out that would be great' or, 'If you are LGBT, we don't know if you are, but if you are, we would fully support you coming out' so that becomes like an unspoken myth.

Kerry has worked with a range of athletes, to help and support them in their coming out process. This has been possible because Kerry has been open with the sporting media. Interestingly, male athletes who have come out have not lost their

sponsorship in the same way that Martina Navratilova did in the 1980s. However, Sally noted that her administration and sponsors were still promoting a feminine image, despite progress made elsewhere: 'I think they also want to push a certain type of person.'

It is not just sponsors that elite athletes need to consider; it is also the media. Angie explained how, in a media briefing, athletes were actually told to 'dismiss' any questions regarding sexuality:

She [the team's media manger] directed us to dismiss any questions on sexuality. Essentially, an 'I don't want to talk about it' approach, but one of girls actually said, 'Well you know if I get asked I'm going to say, because I'm happy in my relationship and I'm not going to hide it.' There are a couple of people that are like that, but the majority I would say are similar to me.

She went onto to describe the tension in the meeting and that, 'It was a little bit odd.' Although Angie, by her own admission, would have followed protocol in any case, she felt, 'It's not really her position to say this is what you'd say about your sexuality, because essentially if a player wants to tell someone they can.' She described how she would not want the publicity: 'Not to say that I am ashamed of it [being a lesbian], it's just not something I particularly like to have written about me.' This is perhaps not unsurprising, as she refers to herself as 'quiet' in her interview and commented that she was not particularly outspoken about anything.

Sally spoke of a similar experience with her sporting administration:

I don't feel like they [the administration] want to necessarily accept, promote, or be proud of the demographic they have... I think they could do more. I think it is something they deliberately don't publicise, that there are gay people in their sport.

Despite describing her experience as positive, Sally acknowledged that coming out to the team 'was a really shit time.' This was purely related to timing; the announcement took place during an important competition, potentially distracting

the team from their goal to win the event. These findings relating to sporting administrations are similar to results from the US collegiate system. Thus, even though teammates are supportive, administrations are not supporting athletes to come out and be visible (Fink *et al* 2012). While these findings clearly demonstrate that there is still room for improvement for elite athletes, significant positive changes have been identified in Chapters 8 to 12 for athletes competing in lower level (grassroots) sport.

Lesbian predators

The predatory lesbian image has been discussed previously in studies on women in sport (Hargreaves 2000; Caudwell 2002; Fink 2012). Caudwell (2002) describes the predatory lesbian as an individual who forcibly coerces a heterosexual into a sexual relationship. One participant, Becky, had witnessed some predatory behaviour, but in a historical context. She commented that 'It was an expectation to be gay' when she toured with a football team aged 14. She added: 'I think I would have felt pressured to try and conform a little bit' if she had not already known she was gay. However, Becky also acknowledged that this environment had given her 'opportunities to explore, 'which she noted '...is probably a healthy thing.' However, she commented that she would deal with younger players in a very different way. These events took place over ten years ago, but it demonstrates that the players concerned were affected by the actions of older lesbians on their teams.

However, it appears that the perception of lesbian predators may still be very much alive. Faye expressed her concerns:

We've got quite a lot of younger players coming up now - 16 year olds that are in the team - so we have to be a bit more wary of how we act in front of them but we don't want to hide it [sexuality]. I suppose nobody wants to be scared off by a group of lesbians playing football, but we want them to come and play for their ability.

Faye and other players were so concerned with the lesbian predator perception, that they brought the issue before their committee. She explained, 'I think it is the parents that we are worried about more than anything' because she had heard

stories of parents making their children move clubs due to the presence of lesbian players on the team. However, no participants mentioned predatory behaviour from current players; only Faye spoke of it within an existing climate. All other references to predatory behaviour were historic. Interestingly, both comments on the subject came from footballers, demonstrating the need for further research in this area, since this sample is too small to draw any substantial conclusions from.

Promotion of the lesbian image

The idea that sport promotes lesbianism, or even causes athletes to become lesbians, was mentioned by some of the participants. Kerry explained, 'I mean it caused my parents a massive panic after they worked it out [that she was a lesbian], and my parents blamed my team for years for making me gay.' She then joked, 'If only she'd done gymnastics', my mum used to say. Bless her!' Cathy shared a similar experience: 'I think my mum did blame hockey at the time because she didn't want to accept it: so she blamed hockey as a sport, which is crazy!' Likewise, Joanna stated, 'When I came out to my mum, one of things she said (was) that her biggest regret was letting me play football, because she thought I was gay because of playing!' She explained the steps her mother then took: 'I think she had rung the secretary of the football club, which was really embarrassing, because she didn't want me sort of hanging around with them.' Joanna subsequently left home and lived with her teammates after her parents' lack of acceptance. However, while these athletes faced stereotyping from their own parents, it is important to acknowledge that these events took place in the past.

Joanna stated that the image of female footballers is changing, whereas when she was young, 'It was tomboyish girls that played football and you only ever tried it if you loved it.' She suggested that, with more girls playing football at school, the connection between lesbianism and football will decrease: 'I think it is probably changing and it is becoming less lesbian-orientated that it probably was ten years ago.' The suggestion here is that the more girls who play, the lower the percentage of lesbians on teams, which in turn could positively affect stereotypes imposed on women's sport.

A number of participants discussed the stereotyping that occurs in and around women's sport. Kerry commented: 'I think generally in women's sport, if you've got short hair, and you are quite sporty, then people assume you are a lesbian.' Perhaps most interestingly, she went on to say, 'In fairness actually, other lesbians see that [stereotype] just as much as straight people do.' Meanwhile, Mel stated:

I think people presume that anyone that plays, particularly football, hockey, and some other sports, that you're gay, which is not a negative thing. I think people have perceptions of the type of person that you are because of the sort of sports you play. I don't think gay people help that either; in women's rugby I'd say loads of them are gay, but they might not be. I think it is a perception or generalisation.

Interestingly, though Mel suggested that these stereotype were still evident in society, she also felt that it was no longer negative to be perceived as gay, a clear indicator of declining homophobia in women's sport. She also noted that such perceptions were only held by those outside of the sporting arena.

Caroline commented, 'Well, you're shocked if somebody isn't gay in cricket,' but unlike others, she claimed that this perception was stoked by the media. Claudia stated: 'There is a general feeling that if you play sport and you are a female you have got to be gay, which is wholly wrong.' The difference between Caroline and Mel's perception of gay presumption can be attributed to cultural lag. Caroline was 40 at the time of interview and Mel was 26, therefore Caroline grew up in the homophobic height of the 1980s and tended to view certain behaviours as stereotyping, where maybe others would not. Mel was considerably younger and had grown up in a more inclusive society, so did not necessarily view labels as offensive or derogatory.

Perhaps more positively, Caroline commented, 'Hopefully it's on the decline' when discussing stereotypes. She attributed this decline to positive reporting of female athletes, presumably at the London 2012 Olympics and other sporting events. There has been a general improvement in media coverage of women's sports, with female athletes increasingly evident in print media and on television. For example, Netball Super League and women's football both get regular coverage. However, Sally felt

that this change in stereotyping might negatively affect lesbian women: 'I think that women's sport is trying to move away from the stereotype of lesbian athletes, and that then isolates those that are.' This was an interesting point made by Sally, who had also insinuated that sports administrations were still trying to promote an idealised feminine image.

Some participants argued that it was certain types of sport that attracted stereotypes. Cathy used boxing in her example:

I think because it is seen as an aggressive, strong sport that women are going to get labelled as lesbian, just because we have got an Olympian boxer who happens to be a lesbian¹³. I think that it is still going to carry on that stigma for a long time.

Sam applied this to football: 'Without being disrespectful to football, if someone came out in football, you wouldn't be surprised.' Bridget also suggests it is down to the sport: 'I don't think the same for hockey...I think there is a view of like an image of a stereotypical footballer or rugby player.' She attributes this to the historic origins of the sports, which are '... traditionally masculine, whereas hockey has always been a girls' sport at school.' This shows that the historic basis of some sports may still impact on perceptions of women participating in them today.

Stereotyping can affect heterosexual and lesbian players alike. Tamara's heterosexual teammates have adopted relaxed attitudes towards such occurrences:

There was a time recently when, (I wasn't out that night), but one of my friends that is straight had gone out. She is very, very straight but you wouldn't be surprised if she said she was gay... people weren't being mean about it or anything but when she said she played Roller Derby they said 'Are you a lesbian then?' She said 'no', and they said 'really? What, you have straight people on the team as well?' They were quite shocked because of the stereotype but she said 'no I'm straight' and they said 'Oh, okay'. She did say she found it quite funny; she wasn't offended in any way, but it was just the assumption that if you play Roller Derby then you must be gay.

¹³ Nicola Adams identifies as bisexual.

She recalled the player's reaction: 'She was fine - she found it quite funny. She said this rollerblading isn't doing me any good to pull men when I go out! She laughed about it!' Annie recalled a similar situation on a social, when she had been asked how the group all knew each other: 'We all said 'we play rugby together' and they said, 'Oh, so you're all lesbian then.'" Similarly, people regularly assumed that Joanna's (straight) captain was a lesbian because she played football. Joanna commented: 'She'll get chatted up by the opposition quite a lot and stuff...I wouldn't call it labelling or anything bad, I think it is more assuming because you play football, then you must be gay.' When asked how her colleague dealt with this stereotyping, she responded:

She doesn't mind at all. She laughs it off and I think she's probably quite flattered! She'll tell them that she's straight and sometimes they might go 'oh no you're not,' but she takes it in good spirit, I think. She quite likes it probably!

These results show that although some athletes still experience stereotyping, they are able to dismiss or laugh off such assumptions. This represents a significant change from previous studies.

Mia mentioned how one player at her previous club actually gave up the sport because of the stereotypes attached to women's rugby. When Mia discussed the situation with the player, she replied, 'I don't play rugby because I don't want to be labelled as a lesbian, I'm over 30, and I really want to find someone that I want to settle down with.' This clearly demonstrates the potential effect on both the individual and the sport, when they acquire unwanted labels.

Social lesbianisation

Social lesbianisation denotes the process by which the presence of lesbians on a team casts suspicion on their teammates (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). A useful analogy for describing this effect runs as follows: imagine a team being a glass of water. If you add a small quantity of orange squash (= a lesbian teammate), all of the water turns orange. Lesbian teammates effectively pollute the team environment,

causing their teammates to fall under suspicion of being lesbian (Griffin 1998; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Previous research has shown that heterosexual teammates distance themselves from lesbian athletes, so as not to be labelled a lesbian, as one lesbian on a team may impact on the entire team, regardless of the sexuality of the majority (Hargreaves 2000).

During the interviews, athletes were asked if their heterosexual teammates were ever labelled as lesbian. Kerry explained that having lesbian athletes on a team 'puts it in people's brains, I think. I don't think people necessarily make the conscious connection.' She continued by explaining how the male members of opposing teams regularly applied the concept of social lesbianisation:

[They] said something like, 'Oh you know I see that there's four of you in a room and you're all in with Kerry, you're going to look tired tomorrow night', and they were laughing about that. They weren't offended by it, but the inference was because I was in there, we were going to have a lesbian orgy. I think they responded something like, 'We have just spent five hours training we haven't got the energy, let alone the will to do anything!'

In this example, social lesbianisation was applied yet the heterosexual athletes were not affected by the inference. Yasmin explained that her teammates took a similar attitude: 'I think they got a bit annoyed...but I think as we have got to know them better and they have got to know us better, they don't care – they just shrug it off.'

Faye recalled a historic incident at university, when one of the heterosexual teammates was labelled a lesbian: 'She went mental! She said, 'Why do you fucking label us all the time?!' so we had to drag her away, calm her down and give her a beer.' Since this incident, which occurred ten years ago, cultural homophobia has been in steady decline (Clements & Field 2014) and as seen in other examples, athletes now feel able to rebut stereotyping with humour rather than anger. Whilst many of the examples of social lesbianisation cited were historical, it still appears that sporting stereotypes remain in operation, particularly from those outside of sport.

Chapter conclusion

Although this study shows, on the whole, that athletes are competing in a welcoming and supportive environment within their teams, this chapter reveals that there is still room for improvement. I have demonstrated that elite level athletes still experience some homophobia from their respective administrations. This supports the findings of Fink and colleagues (2012), who found that US collegiate athletics administrations were reluctant to acknowledge lesbian athletes. The elite athletes in this study show that they perhaps face greater challenges than lower level lesbian participants in sport; whilst they are open to the media and have been positively received, they still experience difficulties within the international set-up. Interestingly, even the elite athletes demonstrated that they were prepared to stand up to homophobia and to discuss issues with peers and coaches.

The predatory lesbian label remained an ongoing concern for some women competing in sport, although admittedly, this was limited to a small number of participants and to one particular sport – football. It appears that more research is needed based on a larger sample to further investigate this issue. However, based on the positive findings from this research and improved media coverage of women's football, a decline in this stereotype is possible. This stereotype may be further challenged by the positive national coverage of women's football, with the England women's team achieving third place at the FIFA Women's World Cup, despite having an openly lesbian player on the team. Coverage of large sporting events are likely to raise awareness of lesbian participation; according to outsports.com, there were 16 openly lesbian players and two openly lesbian coaches at the football World Cup. Social media statistics perhaps best encapsulate the surge in interest in women's football; since May 2015, the FIFA hashtag (#LiveYourGoals), to encourage girls and women to participate in football, has been used 9.4 million times and the FA equivalent hashtag (#WeCanPlay) has featured in 1.3 million tweets.

Perhaps the most interesting finding to emerge from the interviews regarding the predatory lesbian stereotype was the fact that those participants who discussed the label were all too aware of the stereotype and had taken measures, either as a club or personally, to promote a positive image to younger players. There did appear to

have been some progress made in terms of perceptions of lesbians in sport, compared to the overwhelming negativity towards lesbians presented in previous studies (Griffin 1992a; Kane & Lenskyj 1998; Hargreaves 2000; Caudwell 2002; Harris 2005).

The assumption that sport turns young girls into lesbians was discussed by three participants, who all recounted conversations they'd had with their parents. They had all needed to explain to their family that sport had not influenced their sexuality. Reflecting back, two of the athletes were able to discuss this with humour, referring to the naivety of their parents. However, it appears that stereotyping in women's sport is still evident. Differing perceptions of various sports were also covered; it seems that the assumption of lesbianism seems most prevalent in football. As previous research has suggested, heterosexual women are also affected by lesbian presumption, yet unlike in previous studies, this appears to have little negative impact on the behaviour and experiences of heterosexual women competing in the current climate.

Anderson and Bullingham (2013) discuss the process of social lesbianisation in a study of athletes from 2002. I have shown that while there is still evidence of its existence, social lesbianisation has diminished significantly. Where it did occur, the recipients of such labels were able to respond in a relaxed manner with humour. This represents a significant shift from previous studies, which suggest teammates actively distance themselves from lesbian colleagues (Hargreaves 2000).

Chapter 15: Discussion

I have witnessed considerable change in my own sporting life. I have witnessed declining homophobia in women's sport, since the 1990s. At school, I played in a hostile environment so I stayed firmly in the closet. At University, I found an environment of conditional tolerance within the team, accompanied by a supportive, yet secretive, lesbian community. These past ten years, since leaving my undergraduate university, I have participated in inclusive and welcoming sport environments. Although I have experienced longitudinal improvement at a personal level, there is a relative lack of research documenting these changes for lesbian athletes in general, across a range of sports.

Existing research on homophobia in women's sport is predominately outdated (Lenskyj 1986, 1991, 2003; Blinde & Taub 1992a; Griffin 1992a, 1998, 2002; Hargreaves 1994, 2000; Cahn 1994a; Cox & Thompson 2001; Krane 2001). The most comprehensive work in this field until now has come from Griffin (1998) in her seminal text *Strong Women, Deep Closets*, which examines the lives of lesbian athletes and coaches. Throughout the text, she highlights that homophobia in women's sport is embedded within the social institution of sport. She outlines barriers for lesbian athletes that have stopped sporting progress in its tracks, as well as providing useful concepts for examining playing environments and identity-management strategies. However, this research, so heavily relied upon by academics, was conducted and located within a highly homophobic zeitgeist. Griffin's (1998) research can therefore be considered unrepresentative of contemporary culture and experiences.

Only recently has more positive research been published on the topic of lesbians in sport, with limited research conducted on a range of sports within Anglo-American culture since the turn of the century (Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). While poststructuralist researchers have presented mixed findings, these do show some signs of improvement (Caudwell 2002, 2006; Drury 2011; Hardy 2015). However, these studies were limited in their sample sizes and concentrating on specific sports, teams or clubs. Despite its 2013 publication date, data from my previous research with Anderson was collected back in 2002 (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). This data showed that the US collegiate sporting environment was

conditionally tolerant and that homophobia was still evident. Fink's work was conducted in 2012, demonstrating open and inclusive environments in all aspects of sport aside from the administration (Fink *et al* 2012). Yet Fink's study was carried out on just twelve athletes. In the UK, research has tended to focus on homophobia within individual sports, within coaching or within educational settings (Caudwell 1999, 2006, 2007; Drury 2011; Norman 2012; Roy 2013; Edwards *et al* 2014). There is a lack of UK research on lesbians competing across a range of team sports.

Contemporary research on attitudes towards gay male athletes, however, is extensive (Anderson 2005a, 2009b, 2011a; Anderson & McGuire 2010; Jones & McCarthy 2010; Adams & Anderson 2011, 2012; Jarvis 2013). Scholars have shown a growing acceptance of gay teammates at all levels of participation and across numerous sports (Anderson 2005a, 2009b, 2011a, 2013; Anderson & McGuire 2010; Adams 2011; Adams & Anderson 2011; Cashmore & Cleland 2011; Magrath *et al* 2013). Additionally, significant advancements have been made in sporting media coverage of gay athletes, who have become accepted and even supported by the print media (Kian & Anderson 2009; Cleland 2014; Kian *et al* 2015).

Although there is limited research on British lesbian athletes beyond my own study, recent equalities achieved for LGBT people elsewhere in society demand wholesale changes are made to the treatment of lesbian athletes in sports teams. The steady decline in homophobia in the UK and US (Clements & Field 2014; Keleher & Smith 2012) is reflected in the legalisation of same-sex marriage and the introduction of other civil liberties, as well as positive portrayals of LGBT people in the entertainment industry.

Finally, the expansion of the internet has destigmatized all sorts of sex acts: oral sex, pre-marital sex, hooking up, anal sex and group sex (Anderson 2014). While it is impossible to attribute social change to any one factor, it is likely that the reasons highlighted above have had a large impact on changes in women's port.

Nevertheless, change is neither linear nor universal; there are large pockets of resistance to social change in traditionally religious States in America and higher rates of homophobia still exist in Southern states (Worthen 2014; Southall *et al* 2009; Magrath 2015). While maverick comments still abound - for example, UKIP Councillor

David Silvester claimed recent floods in the UK were invoked by the passing of equal marriage laws in England, the reaction to this statement showed clear support for the gay and lesbian community. A parody Twitter account, set up in the wake of Silvester's comments, had 87,200 followers by Saturday 14th November 2015. On the whole, LGBT people are now accepted in the UK.

The visibility of gay celebrities and sexual minority athletes has helped contribute to social change. The number of athletes coming out of the closet has demonstrated that, even in the most masculinised environments, gay men are welcome (Anderson 2011a). Although the shift in acceptance of lesbian athletes has been significantly slower, more high profile sportswomen have come out in recent years in the UK - Kate and Helen Richardson-Walsh (hockey) and Casey Stoney (football). A number of gay male athletes have also made the step, from celebrity diver Tom Daley¹⁴, to Gareth Thomas (Rugby Union and Rugby League) and Steven Davies (cricket).

Research Aims

The study aimed to extensively examine the experiences of lesbian athletes competing within team sports. The research aimed to investigate the types of homophobia faced by women and how they navigated such behaviours within their team environment. The purpose of this investigation was to establish whether negative homophobic behaviour came from within the team or beyond the sporting arena. Where athletes faced homophobia, the extent and nature of this behaviour was explored, whilst also reviewing the various coping strategies used by athletes to deal with hostile behaviour. Finally, this study examined the changes that athletes had witnessed throughout their playing careers, considering differences in cohort between participants.

These objectives were reached using a variety of sampling methods, including use of social media, snowball sampling and advertisements in the national press. This study is unique in that it takes in a large range of sports and sporting abilities, with a broad age demographic in various geographical locations around the UK. It examines the climate for lesbian athletes through the use of semi-structured interviews. While

¹⁴ Came out as bisexual and is now engaged to a man

snowball sampling is often criticised for generating localised data that cannot be used to generate theories, the rich qualitative data within this study allows in-depth experiences of lesbian athletes to be examined, thereby reducing the importance of generalizability. Athletes interviewed covered the full spectrum of competition, from Olympians to complete beginners, all of whom identified themselves as open or out lesbians. Additionally, a wide geographic profile was represented owing to flexible and non-limiting data collection methods such as telephone or face-to-face interviews. Accordingly, a diverse sample of lesbian athletes participated in this study. Data collection occurred over a six month period, with interviews transcribed verbatim following completion.

A constructivist grounded approach allowed new and emerging themes to be developed, whilst remaining thoroughly grounded in data (Charmaz 1996). This approach was chosen as it directly fits with the researcher's chosen interpretivist position. The coding procedures ensured that the data was not influenced by previous surveys carried out during a cultural epoch of high homophobia. Essentially, I used the techniques of Charmaz's approach to grounded theory to examine whether homophobia can be effectively applied to women. Wignall and McCormack (2015) have shown that grounded techniques can be applied within existing theoretical frameworks without compromising the data (that is, results are still grounded in the data.) The coding process, as well as the use of memos (see appendix), allowed data to be focused and developed to construct a theoretical analysis (Charmaz 1996). As Melton and Cunningham (2014a: 24) explain when using grounded theory for a theoretical framework: 'Applying a theoretical framework is imperative to understanding the work experience of LGBT individuals, as it enhances understanding and application of research findings.' Here, research findings were applied to the theoretical framework of homophobia, in order to make sense of the overwhelmingly positive findings and to track changes since Griffin's initial research.

The driving theoretical paradigm here was Eric Anderson's inclusive masculinity theory. While neither men nor masculinities form the basis of this research, the central heuristic to Anderson's theory is that of homophobia (McCormack & Anderson 2014). First conceived in 2009 (Anderson 2009b), his notion of homophobia has only recently been applied to women and in this instance,

empirical data to support the framework (Bullingham *et al* 2014; Worthen 2014) did not feature. The sole study that did use empirical data within this framework found improved results, but still revealed signs of homohysteria behaviours, for example one participant had her car vandalised (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Anderson & Bullingham's study of 2013 is the first of its kind to use empirical data from the United Kingdom within this particular theoretical context. Grounded theory (used here as a method, not a theory) permitted the data to evolve organically, without the restrictions imposed by *theoretical* concepts; here the use of homohysteria was only considered after full data analysis had taken place. This was achieved through a detailed coding procedure, as well as use of memos to ensure the data itself was used to develop the theoretical perspective.

This research aimed to discover whether there was a decline in homophobia in women's sport in the light of significant improvements found in men's team sport recently (Anderson 2005a, 2009b, 2011a; Anderson & McGuire 2010; Adams 2011; Adams & Anderson 2011, 2012; Cashmore & Cleland 2012; Cleland 2013; Jarvis 2013; Michael 2013; Magrath *et al* 2013). Participants within this study shared unanimously positive experiences. While some recounted historic incidences of homophobia and lack of acceptance from others, all participants stated that they currently competed in welcoming and supportive environments.

Conceptualising a new climate

Griffin's (1998) describes three categories of climates relating to lesbians in sport: hostile, conditionally tolerant and open and inclusive. However, she found no evidence of the latter. These categories, although loose, have been useful tools in previous research, when cultural homophobia was high. However, they fail to accurately conceptualise the climate lesbian athletes are competing in today. While some may argue that open and inclusive is sufficient to describe the current climate for lesbian athletes, my research reveals some shortcomings in Griffin's concept. Such shortcomings may be due to the fact that an open and inclusive climate existed only at a conceptual level at the time of publication in 1998. Due to lack of research, it can only be hypothesised that women's sport moved from conditionally tolerant

(Anderson & Bullingham 2013) to open and inclusive. It would be more accurate now, however, to conceptualise the environment as welcoming and supportive, as lesbian athletes are not only accepted, but now embraced.

Welcoming and supportive - the condition I apply to the sporting environments studied - may be defined as a club that welcomes, encourages and provides support for lesbian athletes. Some clubs (teams) even advertise in the local LGBT press to encourage new members. Welcoming aspects may include encouraging athletes' partners into the wider club setting, such as an open invitation to social events. The characteristics of a supportive club include enquiring after partners, checking on players' welfare and providing help and guidance in times of need. Unlike findings from previous research, coaches and sporting administrations are also behaving in welcoming and supportive ways (at least at grassroots level), with some coaches clearly displaying concern for players' welfare and partaking in inclusive behaviours, such as team banter. Such behaviours extend far beyond what Griffin was able to imagine was possible in 1998.

Club committees as well as coaches have also helped promote this welcoming and supportive climate. Griffin (1998: 103) describes such coaches as 'brave and often lonely pioneers navigating uncharted waters, with little guidance and support [from the administration].' Although coaches were not been interviewed in this study, all participants were asked about their coaches' language and behaviour. With the exception of two of the elite athletes, both of whom had to work at developing a positive relationship with them, the other participants all recognised the support and openness of their coaches.

Furthermore, athletes' body images were previously monitored by the coaching staff or administration (Burrough *et al* 1995; Mennesson & Clément 2003). I show that coaches no longer hold any influence over what athletes wear or how they comport themselves in general and that due to the welcoming and supportive nature of the clubs, athletes no longer feel under pressure to conform to a feminised image. The lack of conformity to a particular image marks a significant shift from previous

research within women's sport. Again, this may be a combination of cultural shift in society and changes to the sporting environment in which athletes compete.

The changing nature of coming out

As a result of this welcoming and supportive climate, athletes can come out without making statements or holding events to announce their sexuality this is in marked contrast to previous studies, where athletes would choose a big event to come out (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). In other words, coming out has become a non-event. This has been conceptualised, as a result of these findings, as 'coming out quietly;' athletes can now come out in this way, as sexuality has become a non-issue.

Athletes have historically remained in the closet for their own safety and sometimes even protection (Griffin 1998). More recent research from 2013 revealed that athletes came out by making a big statement (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). The findings from this research reveal that athletes are no longer staying hidden, yet neither do they feel compelled to make a statement about their sexuality. Consequently, athletes in this study came out quietly. Participants dropped their sexual orientation into conversations, casually or otherwise, or simply turn up to events with their girlfriends. The athletes discussed this topic in a jovial manner, stating that they did not throw coming out parties with balloons or party-poppers!

In fact, some athletes who had remained closeted for a period of time found that they had become distanced from their teammates and their friends *because* they were closeted. One participant discussed how she turned to destructive behaviour, including excessive drinking, while she was closeted. All these athletes expressed how they found life easier once they came out. This is the first time that athletes have been shown to actually be happier *out* of the closet, rather than remaining silent and hidden. This shift is highly significant, and provides yet more evidence that declining homophobia has positively affected the acceptance of lesbian women within sports.

In addition, the value of athletic capital has also diminished. Previously athletes who came out were shown to be more accepted where they had a tangible benefit on the team's success (Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Anderson (2005b) has described this processes of acceptance linked to sporting prowess as 'athletic capital.' This concept dictates that athletes can only come out within hostile or conditionally tolerant environments where their ability contributes to the overall success of the team (Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). This is clearly because teams value success above all else. However, this research shows that athletic capital has ceased to be a factor in coming out among the athletes I studied. Athletes of all abilities, including complete beginners, were welcomed into their teams. While some athletes acknowledged that athletic capital could help some settle in more quickly—after all, who doesn't like a winner?—all recognised it was merely one contributing factor, rather than the defining factor, in gaining acceptance on the team. The diminishing value of athletic capital has occurred due to more positive team environments (conceptualised as welcoming and supportive), resulting from a decline in homophobia.

These results show that athletes are no longer afraid to come out; therefore, it can be proposed that the lesbian label has lost its damaging association. The women within this study stated that they did not subscribe to any label and would rather be considered on an individual basis. In fact, participants acknowledged that they no longer conceptualise sexuality in its binary form of heterosexuality and homosexuality, supporting recent research findings (e.g. Better 2014). Therefore, sexuality can be considered more fluid. The fluidity of sexuality expressed and presented by the women in this study mirrors findings from the more abundant studies of male athletes (Anderson & Adams 2011) and their increasing willingness to describe themselves as something beyond the hetero-/homosexual binary.

Trailblazers becoming torchbearers

Previously, athletes who had come out were described as trailblazers (Anderson 2002; Fink *et al* 2012). These athletes provided an opportunity for other, closeted, athletes to monitor conditions and acceptance levels and decide whether it was safe

to come out (Fink *et al* 2012). This research found that some athletes still found the presence of open lesbians on their team helpful at the point of entry. They described the benefits as: not feeling alone, not being the only one, and have someone who has already been through the process of coming out.

However, the influence of the trailblazing athlete has declined. With many more athletes feeling able to be open about their sexuality, the impact of the trailblazing athlete has diminished. While open lesbians may still provide advice and support for closeted athletes, their role has changed. Open lesbians are no longer trailblazers but rather torchbearers (in the sense that they pass on the culture of inclusivity), continuing the positive work of the original trailblazing athletes. They are no longer required to provide a window or insight into the other side of the closet. While trailblazers still exist, their numbers are drastically reduced, to the extent that they now only really exist in traditionally feminine sports, such as cheerleading, netball and lacrosse. However even these athletes have less impact than the original trailblazers from the 1980s and 1990s, because sexuality now is now discussed openly by all athletes, regardless of sexual orientation. This, I hypothesise, is the result of decreased stigmatisation of lesbians in general (Bush *et al* 2012).

The support and advice that torchbearers provided proved helpful to a number of the athletes interviewed. While not all athletes relied on the support of torchbearers on their team, those that did have been able, in turn, to provide support for younger athletes. Scholars have previously uncovered secret networks of lesbian athletes who provided support for each other (Hargreaves 2000). Current networks may provide help, support and guidance for athletes contemplating coming out. In this study, one athlete made use of this network having been cast out of the family home following disclosure of her sexuality, finding support among her teammates.

Tackling obstacles to transformation – dismissing unplayable lies

Griffin (1998: 212) highlights ten so-called 'Obstacles to transformation' that she refers to as 'Unplayable lies.' She argues that until these unplayable lies are confronted, women's sport will remain a homophobic institution. It is therefore

appropriate to consider whether Griffin's lies have indeed been confronted, since the environment for lesbian athletes, according to this study, has vastly improved.

Examining unplayable lies

Griffin (1998) suggests that there are ten unplayable lies that serve as obstacles to progression in women's sport, and with it the acceptance of lesbian athletes. These are myths held by people inside and outside of sport, which aid the exclusion of, and promote hostility towards, lesbian athletes. Griffin (1998: 213) explains, 'These unplayable lies are assumptions that must be challenged as part of our journey toward transformation.' However, these unplayable lies need re-examining in the current climate of declining homophobia, to see whether these obstacles have been dismantled.

Unplayable lie 1: 'Women in sport must present a public image that is feminine and heterosexual' (Griffin 1998: 213). Within this study, the majority of women expressed feeling comfortable with their appearance. Only one athlete in this study stated that she no longer felt happy presenting an overtly lesbian image. Throughout the interviews, athletes felt no pressure from coaches or teammates to conform to a particular image. One even stated that she actively avoided sexualised fancy dress that her university teammates wore to social events. Numerous athletes discussed wearing casual attire, even 'masculine' attire to social events, which is acceptable in a culture of low homophobia (Worthen 2014). It therefore seems that Unplayable lie 1 no longer exists.

Unplayable lie 2: 'No one knows there are lesbians in sport (the hypocrisy of the glass closet)' (Griffin 1998: 213). The glass closet only exists in a climate of conditional tolerance. Therefore, this unplayable lie has arguably already been disputed by recent research into positive and inclusive environments (Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). All of the athletes in this study were competing in a climate that was welcoming and supportive and the hypocrisy of the glass closet appears to have been dismantled by declining homophobia. The removal of the glass closet was aided by the increased use of pro-gay language found within this study. Language has helped to break down barriers and has changed the culture of

silence that existed in previous climates of hostility and conditional tolerance. Again, this unplayable lie appears to have been overcome, perhaps even before this research started, with the shift towards positive and inclusive environments (Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013).

Unplayable lie 3: ‘The glass closet provides protection from discrimination’ (Griffin 1998: 213). When advertising for participants, the words ‘openly lesbian’ were used to define participants’ sexuality. Although this label caused much discussion during interviews, all of the athletes acknowledged that their teammates were fully aware that they had a female partner. Therefore, athletes within this study were not in the glass closet, as they had been open with their teammates about their sexuality. However, even though they were open about their sexuality, they had not faced discrimination within their current team. Where athletes had faced homophobia, it had occurred predominately outside of the sporting arena and was actively challenged. Therefore, these athletes had become agents of change. This unplayable lie is only relevant when athletes are competing in a climate of conditional tolerance, which was not the case in this research. Instead, athletes competed in a welcoming and supportive environment, thus diffusing this unplayable lie.

Unplayable lie 4: ‘Lesbians are to blame for image problems in women’s sport’ (Griffin 1998: 214). In the current climate, lesbians are not only accepted and included in team activities, but they were welcomed and included, as were their partners. The inclusion of partners at team events shows a new found tolerance for lesbian athletes not shown in previous research. If lesbians were to blame for image problems in women’s sport, then they would still be forced to conform to feminine dress codes and promote a heterosexual image. Lesbian partners would be ostracised from social events to maintain the heterosexual image. This is not the case; in fact, in some cases, lesbian partners were more welcome than their male counterparts, as they could just fit in as ‘one of the girls’. This supports Worthen’s (2014) suggestion that heterosexual women make friendships with homosexual teammates, as well as accepting masculinised presentation. Additionally, some participants stated that it was media representation rather than lesbian participation that affected the image of women’s sport. It seems that this unplayable lie is no

longer applicable, although more research on female athletes will need to be carried out to conclusively confirm this finding.

Unplayable lie 5: ‘The interests of lesbian and heterosexual women are at odds’ (Griffin 1998: 214). Griffin describes how the lesbian label is used to incite fear and intolerance in women’s sport. This unplayable lie works on the principle of divide and conquer in relation to women’s sport, a process that is clearly evident within climates of hostility or conditional tolerance. However, within the newly formed welcoming and supportive climates, the threat of the lesbian label appears to have dissipated. This has been shown within this study in a number of ways. For example, heterosexual women are reportedly happy not only to go to lesbian bars, but also to dance with other women. Additionally, women no longer get angry or offended if they are assumed to be a lesbian because of their choice of sport. This is also supported by the use of pro-gay language and banter on the teams represented within this study. These results support the premise of Worthen (2014), with her application of declining homophobia to women’s sport. Using the framework of homophobia, it is clear that this unplayable lie is also no longer applicable.

Unplayable lie 6: ‘A women’s sexual orientation is a private issue’ (Griffin 1998: 215). Athletes are coming out quietly. This could be interpreted as maintaining secrecy around sexuality, rendering sexuality a private issue not up for discussion. However, it appears that the silence and denial that contaminated open lesbian participation in the 1980s and 1990s is now a thing of the past. Silence allowed climates of conditional tolerance to be maintained and reinforced; however athletes are now using banter and pro-gay language to negate the silence.

Unplayable lie 7: ‘Lesbians in sport are a non-issue’ (Griffin 1998: 216). Although Griffin (1998) claims this as an unplayable lie, it appears from this study that lesbians in sport have indeed become a non-issue, albeit for quite different reasons. In the 1990s, homophobia was still evident in mainstream society, as well as within sport, and the presence of known lesbian athletes damaged both the team and its sponsors (Griffin 1998; Hargreaves 2000). However, with more athletes coming out, particularly within recreational sport, lesbians are indeed a non-issue. They are a

non-issue because so many exist, rather than because their identity is entirely suppressed and therefore rendered invisible, as was the case in the past. While this study found overwhelming support within teams for lesbian players, it must be recognised that this may not always be the case, particularly at elite level, where more research into acceptance of gay athletes is required. All areas of sport analysed showed a significant improvement, but further research is required on national governing bodies and elite athletes.

Unplayable lie 8: ‘Talking about lesbians in sport is talking about sex’ (Griffin 1998: 216). Discussions about sex and sexuality have become more prevalent in men’s sport and within society as a whole (Anderson & McGuire 2010; Adams 2011; Adams & Anderson 2011), leading to a more inclusive culture. This positive cultural change is carrying through to women’s sport, as findings reveal. It appears that women use humour to talk about sexuality through banter. Banter between teammates is often of a sexual nature, which has led to more open discussions about sexuality, and, in turn, created a more welcoming environment. Using McCormack’s (2011a) model of homosexually-themed language, it was possible to ascertain that banter made a positive contribution to the development of a welcoming and supportive environment. In fact, the use of banter has been essential in developing and reinforcing this positive environment and therefore this unplayable lie is no longer applicable, either.

Unplayable lie 9: ‘Talking about lesbians and heterosexism in sport is ‘promoting a lifestyle’ (Griffin 1998: 216).’ The promotion of lifestyle argument was reported by three athletes, in discussing their parents’ reaction to their sexuality. However, there was no suggestion from any of the athletes that this stereotype still exists within sport. The exceptions to this rule are national governing bodies and their administrations, who still appear to be wary of this stereotype (Norman 2012). Evidence of this was discovered within one governing body, who actively discouraged athletes from answering questions on sexuality, while a different administration only promoted a ‘certain type of person’. It is clear that this unplayable lie is no longer true at lower levels of sport; however, a more detailed analysis of national governing bodies is required to affirm if this is the case at all levels of sport.

Unplayable lie 10: ‘Your daughter will/will not become a lesbian if she plays sports’ (Griffin 1998: 27). While three athletes spoke of their parents’ belief that sporting prowess and participation had ‘caused’ their sexuality, these were historic incidents. The athletes that had come out more recently acknowledged overwhelming support from friends and family. Although two footballers commented that structures were in place within their clubs to allay any parental concerns, both acknowledged that there had never been a problem. Although athletes in some sports were still concerned by historical stereotypes, there was no evidence of negative stereotyping from teammates within this sample. It appears that the process Anderson and Bullingham (2013) describe as social lesbianisation has declined. Additionally, if the lesbianisation argument is cited by outsiders, it is challenged by both heterosexual and homosexual women, who are able to support each other in a climate of declining homophobia (Worthen 2014). It is likely that this unplayable lie will no longer exist in the future, as the next, more inclusive millennial generation (Anderson 2014) become the leaders and organisers of sport in the United Kingdom.

It appears as though the ‘obstacles to transformation’ cited by Griffin (1998) have been successfully overcome, enabling athletes to compete within a welcoming and supportive environment. The unplayable lies evident during the time of Griffin’s research in the 1990s are challenged by these results, and in fact, the lies have been overcome in an era and culture of declining homophobia. The most recent studies on lesbian athletes (Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013) confirm that strategies aimed at challenging these assertions have been successfully implemented such that the unplayable lies no longer exist.

Theoretical implications

The use of constructivist grounded theory was essential for this research, since previous research within this area had been carried out from a social constructivist standpoint, arguably not communicating the lived experience of lesbian athletes in team sports. While it could be argued that such overwhelmingly positive results were to be expected, given recent positive research on male athletes (see Anderson 2011a), women have historically faced additional challenges – specifically, sexism and stereotyping. Since a clear trend towards declining homophobia has been shown in

research on gay male athletes, a new approach to research on lesbian athletes was required. Research on male athletes has predominately been framed by either hegemonic masculinity theory (Connell 1995) or inclusive masculinity theory (Anderson 2009b). However, neither theory has been effectively used to theorise the experiences of female and/or lesbian athletes.

Some proponents of hegemonic masculinity have attempted to acknowledge women within the model. They did so by developing the concept of emphasised femininity (Lenskyj 2003). More recently, however, scholars have rejected the use of emphasised femininity for two main reasons. Firstly, it is designed around sexual preference for men, as well as presenting an overtly feminine image (Grindstaff & West 2011; Budgeon 2013). Carlson (2010) acknowledges that athletes challenged emphasised femininity as a theoretical model, owing to the difference in their on-field and off-field persona, image and behaviour. Secondly, hegemonic masculinity has recently been shown to be incompatible with a decline in homophobia, where multiple archetypes of masculinity proliferate (Anderson 2009a; Clements & Field 2014; Hardy 2015). Therefore, this study could not be located within this model.

Inclusive masculinity theory has been used extensively in research on men in a variety of environments, including sport and education (Anderson 2009b; McCormack & Anderson 2010a, 2010b; Anderson *et al* 2011; Cleland 2013). Anderson's (2009b) model is on a horizontal axis, unlike Connell's vertical hegemonic masculinity theory. This allows social groups of men to exist in harmony alongside each other, rather than taking their place within the hierarchy that existed in periods of high homophobia (Anderson 2009b). Whilst such a model does not preclude dominance of certain male groupings, there is crucially no hegemony at play. However, the hegemonic masculinity model has never been applied to women.

Instead, the concept of homophobia, developed in conjunction with inclusive masculinities, can be used to examine changes for women (Anderson 2009b; McCormack & Anderson 2014). Only recently has this been applied to women, and predominately without supportive empirical data (Bullingham *et al* 2014; Anderson & Bullingham 2013; Worthen 2014). In a culture of high homophobia, gay and lesbian athletes can be accepted in a climate of conditional tolerance, but only if they have

high athletic capital (Anderson 2002; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). The changing climate of women's sport has become more welcoming, meaning that all abilities are now accepted.

Worthen (2014: 141) uniquely applies homophobia to heterosexual women, involving several modifications to the concept. She explains these four adaptations:

- (1) Social inclusion of *lesbian and bisexual women* peers
- (2) the embrace of once-masculinized artefacts
- (3) *sexualization* and the 'party-time rule' of homosexuality, and on additional characteristics
- (4) increased assertiveness of heterosexual women

Social inclusion of lesbian team mates has evident throughout this study, with athletes discussing teammates as welcoming and supportive and noting friendships with teammates. Full inclusion is also indicated by the fact that athletes found it easier to be out and open, rather than remaining closeted. In fact, two athletes commented that once they came out, they became closer to their friends. Perhaps the most evident aspect of social inclusion was the inclusive nature of social events, in terms of the acceptance of partners, wives and girlfriends.

Heterosexual athletes are now able to attend gay and lesbian bars without fear of being labelled. Participants did note that this was only a recent change; some reflected on a time when heterosexual and homosexual teammates would split up to attend different establishments. The attitude of heterosexual teammates has also softened towards lesbian athletes. Participants discussed that heterosexual athletes were happy to dance with other women and actually enjoyed the atmosphere of gay bars. Despite this, numerous athletes either stated that their local gay bar had shut or that they were not sure where it was, but again this represented a wider cultural change (Ghaziani 2014). Gay bars have shut because LGB individuals are now welcomed in mainstream establishments. This was acknowledged by numerous lesbian participants, who previously they felt that they could not attend mainstream bars, but now happily attended all establishments without fear of overt or covert homophobic abuse.

With homophobia in decline, the lesbian label has lost its influence as a powerful and controlling act of stigma (Worthen 2014). Griffin (1998) describes the lesbian label as a useful political tool for maintaining acceptable behaviour among female athletes and for ensuring that a culture of silence is maintained and even reinforced. The lesbian label has lost its power for two main reasons: firstly, women's sexuality is considered more fluid than men's (Better 2014; Davis-Delano 2014); this has been shown within this study with athletes taking a female partner later in life - and in some cases, unexpectedly. Secondly, these women demonstrated a clear desire to avoid labels and to avoid conforming to certain behaviours and stereotypes. Athletes described spectrums or continuums to describe their sexuality rather than the traditional binary hetero-/homosexual approach, findings which are reflected in research on men (Anderson & Adams 2011).

The second adaptation Worthen (2014) discusses is the embracing of so-called masculinised artefacts. This was particularly evident in the descriptions of what teammates wore on nights out, described by some as 'relaxed' attire. In addition, many participants were competing in traditionally male team sports. They all spoke of a growing junior section of the club, showing that young women are no longer afraid of participating in a sport traditionally dominated by men.

The third adaptation presented by Worthen (2014) concerns the 'party time rule' of homosexuality. Worthen (2014) based this rule on research undertaken on the behaviour of straight women on nights out. It was found that straight women kissed other women and were influenced by popular songs such as 'I Kissed a Girl' by Katy Perry. Athletes in this study acknowledged increased tactility among teammates. In addition, athletes commented on how their teammates would dance provocatively to music in clubs and also recollected incidences of heterosexual teammates pretending to have a girlfriend. All these events support Worthen's (2014) 'party time rule' of homosexuality, since all of these behaviours took place on team socials.

Worthen's (2014: 141) final adaptation to homophobia refers to 'Increased assertiveness of heterosexual women.' Small examples of this can be seen in the challenging of homophobic behaviours. While this does not necessarily express

leadership, as Worthen (2014) suggests, such confrontation of homophobia does show a level of assertiveness. Neither heterosexual nor homosexual athletes challenged homophobia in periods of high homophobia, for fear of being labelled a lesbian. Athletes within this study commented on heterosexual allies - both within and outside the sporting arena – who were happy to challenge homophobia without fear of casting suspicion on their own sexual identity.

Worthen's (2014) adaptations emerged from McCormack and Anderson's (2014) initial discussion on homophobia as it affects heterosexual men. McCormack and Anderson (2014) suggest six changes in attitude that demonstrate a decline in homophobia in the US, of which three were adapted by Worthen (2014). However, a further adaptation can also be made; McCormack and Anderson (2014: 109) state that declining homophobic behaviour for men includes 'rejection of violence' and this can also be adapted for women. Inflicting violence allows men to reinforce heterosexuality, therefore violence is considered a masculine trait; women have traditionally had to reinforce their heterosexuality through an alternative method - language. Women have used language as a weapon to reinforce their heterosexuality and dismiss homosexual connotations, as explained below.

McCormack and Anderson's (2014: 109) 'rejection of violence' can be modified to 'rejection of homophobic language' by heterosexual women towards their lesbian counterparts. This was seen throughout this study in the constant references to good-humoured banter involving both heterosexual and homosexual women. Using McCormack's (2011a) model of homosexually-themed language, banter can be seen to have a positive social effect on team environments (McCormack & Anderson 2010b; McCormack 2012). McCormack (2011a: 667) acknowledges that there are three prerequisites for homophobic language: *homophobic environment*, *pernicious intent* and *negative social effect*. Previous studies have shown that where significant homophobia exists, heterosexual women intend to inflict harm in order to maintain an environment of silence and denial, resulting in athletes remaining closeted (Griffin 1998; Hargreaves 2000). Context is all important in this instance; many of the athletes in this study acknowledged that if banter was heard out of context it could be seen as damaging and harmful, in line with previous research (e.g. Hargreaves

2000; Dean 2013). However, in this study, comments made as part of banter between teammates carried a positive value.

Athletes noted that a wide range of banter was used within their teams, with some banter more sexually graphic than other expressions of it. Nevertheless, all banter was pro-gay in ethos, with either no pernicious intent or negative impact.

McCormack (2011a) notes that positive banter can only occur in gay friendly cultures, clearly supported by the findings from this study. (Scholars have previously noted that homophobic language can be damaging for lesbian women (Hargreaves 2000), though these studies were undertaken within homohysterical cultures). This research shows a significant change for lesbian women competing in team sports, where they now find themselves competing in an environment that allows pro-gay language to be used.

Banter within male sports teams has been analysed by academics (Hargreaves 2000; Harris 2005; Adams *et al* 2010; Anderson & McGuire 2010; Anderson 2012). As Harris (2005) explains, there is a fine line to be drawn between what is banter and what is homophobic language, with perception playing a key role. More recent research suggests the existence of a clear distinction between banter and homophobic language within the culture of football and states that gay men should be able to distinguish the difference (Jones & McCarthy 2010). It appears that in a culture of declining homophobia, banter is no longer interpreted as negative (McCormack 2011a). However, the context and exponents of banter are subject to change, therefore situational factors determine whether banter is deemed harmful or not.

Limitations

This study has shown significant improvements for lesbian women competing in team sports. However, it is essential to acknowledge potential limitations of this study. This research can be seen as the starting point for new research in this area. Like Anderson's study of 2002, significant changes have been documented, yet based on a relatively small sample size. Since Anderson's (2002) initial study, the breadth of research on homophobia in men's sport has steadily increased and it is hoped that the limitations of this study will similarly be overcome by future research.

While the sample size of 31 participants is too small to allow for generalisability, a rich amount of qualitative data has been collected throughout this study. However, the unanimity of the results suggest that these results are more likely to be generalisable than assumptions of homophobia. While participants were taken from a broad range of sports and abilities, only three athletes were currently competing at international level. Though it is not expected that results from sports not covered would be markedly different, there is a clear requirement for more research. Additionally, this study shows that national governing bodies need to engage in future research, since the international athletes interviewed demonstrated the least progressive results for lesbian athletes, compared to grassroots participants.

Ethnic diversity was also limited, with only one participant not identifying as White British. Anderson (2002) acknowledges a similar bias in his initial research on homophobia in sport, noting that his participants were exclusively white, middle-class Americans. It is likely that the majority of the participants were middle-class; although this question was not posed to interviewees, the majority spoke of professional careers outside of sport. Only one participant did not have a professional occupation outside of sport, discussing areas of her personal life that would suggest she came from a working-class background. Accordingly, there is a need to interview a wider range of participants to allow for potentially different results based on ethnicity and social class. Nevertheless, since 86% of the population of UK is white according to the 2011 census data (Office of National Statistics), it is not unreasonable to expect participant samples to be predominantly Caucasian.

It is also possible that athletes within this study were willing to participate precisely because of their positive experiences within sport. It could be argued that those who have suffered negative experiences either did not make contact or no longer play sport. This factor could also explain the lack of elite athletes willing to take part, as there may have been some degree of anxiety associated with communicating negative experiences. However, one might also argue that, in the same way that only upset customers generally complete customer feedback forms, lesbian athletes with troubling stories would be more likely to volunteer for this research. But given that the 31 athletes interviewed also had lesbian friends with allegedly positive

experiences in sport, it is not implausible to suggest that the sample accurately reflects the average lesbian sporting experience.

Additionally, a wide range of sports, abilities and geographical regions were covered which produced rich, in-depth qualitative data. It is clear that more research needs to be conducted, for example, to discover to what extent results differ per environment, for example, between team sports and individual sports, or between university teams and public sports teams. With findings from men's sport consistently showing a steady decline in homophobia (Anderson 2005a, 2009b, 2011a, 2013; Anderson & McGuire 2010; Adams 2011; Adams & Anderson 2011; Cashmore & Cleland 2012; Cleland 2013; Jarvis 2013; Magrath *et al* 2013), there is no reason to suspect that results would be any different within women's sporting cultures.

Future research

This study has attempted to show the current environment for lesbian women competing in team sports. However, there is clearly a need to build on this research, particularly within specific sports. Football, for example, produced slightly different results in some areas and athletes within women's football were more aware of potential issues regarding sexuality. Within men's football, studies have revealed the existence of a positive environment for gay male athletes in all aspects of the game (Adams 2011; Cashmore & Cleland 2011; Adams & Anderson 2012; Cleland 2013 2014; Magrath *et al* 2013; Magrath 2015). Charting changes for women is more complex, since they are competing in an environment that is potentially sexist as well as homophobic. Therefore, more research on specific sports is required to test whether the results from this research can be generalised to encompass all women playing sport.

In addition, only two university students were interviewed for this study. While it is not anticipated that results would vary from this study, a larger sample is required. This is particularly true of this study, since the two university athletes featured both partook in traditionally feminine sports (cheerleading and lacrosse). Feminised sports are arguably where homophobia would be most prevalent, yet this was not found to be the case.

It should also be noted that team sports have predominately been the focus of studies on sexuality within men's and women's sports (Anderson 2002, 2011a; Caudwell 2002, 2007; Anderson & Maguire 2010; Adams 2011; Adams & Anderson 2011; Cleland 2013; Magrath *et al* 2013). Individual sports are therefore under-researched, yet the climate that homosexual athletes compete within merit investigation, especially given that women are potentially more likely to participate in individual sports (Elling & Janssens 2009).

Within this study, elite athletes demonstrated that governing bodies were not always supportive of their decision to come out. This suggests that results may well be less positive among sports administrations, as recent research has found (Norman 2012; Fink *et al* 2012; Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Therefore, the governing bodies of sports require further investigation, from equality legislations within sporting bodies to responses to homophobic incidences – and the effect of this legislature on individual athletes within these sports.

International governing bodies have influence, yet there is limited research on their impact. Postlethwaite (2014) examines the IOC's role during the Sochi Olympics from a legal standpoint, arguing that their influence was limited in enforcing inclusive practices. Therefore, a wider study is required to interview the administration of sport, to discover whether attitudes and behaviours are positive and inclusive.

It is hoped that this research will encourage more academics to research homophobia in women's sport. Anderson's 2002 research was ground-breaking, representing a fresh approach to studying gay men in sport and his approach and subsequent theory (Anderson 2009b) has opened the doors to further research in this area. My study marks the start of research on homophobia and declining homophobia in women's sport.

Summary

This study examined the experiences of lesbian athletes competing within team sports. The primary aims of the study were to examine the types of homophobia that openly lesbian athletes might face while competing within team sports. However, as

the results chapters have shown, the homophobia faced by women was limited and predominately historic. Moreover, when participants did face homophobia, they actively challenged this behaviour, thereby becoming agents of change. While the aim of this study was to examine how women navigate homophobia in sport, I found that rather than navigating it, they challenged it head on.

This research aimed to investigate whether women faced homophobia from within the team, within the wider club, or beyond the sporting arena. Again, participants reported limited homophobia and team cultures were more inclusive than previous studies have shown. Homophobia within teams was no longer deemed acceptable, either openly or through tactics such as silence and denial. The coping strategies previously outlined in studies - for example, reverse relative deprivation (Anderson 2002) - were not discovered, since the climate was positive, welcoming and inclusive.

Finally, this research examined any potential cohort differences between the women interviewed. There was some variation between experiences recounted by older women and those of their younger colleagues, demonstrating a clear change in sporting landscape.

Women's sport has traditionally been defined as a homophobic institution (Lenskyj 1986, 1991, 2003; Blinde & Taub 1992a; Griffin 1992a, 1998, 2002; Hargreaves 1994, 2000; Cahn 1994a; Cox & Thompson 2001; Krane 2001). The results of this study, however, indicate a positive cultural shift and a significant decline of homophobia in women's sport (Anderson & Bullingham 2013). Results from the 31 athletes interviewed for this research show that homophobia has not only declined, but is practically non-existent, with all athletes describing their current experiences as 'wholly positive'.

References

- Adams, A. (2011). "Josh wears pink cleats" Inclusive Masculinity on the Soccer Field. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58, 579-596.
- Adams, A., & Anderson, E. (2011). Exploring the Relationship between Homosexuality and Sport Among the Teammates of a Small, Midwestern Catholic College Soccer Team. *Sport, Education and Society* 17(3), 347-363.
- Adams, A., Anderson, E., & McCormack, M. (2010). Establishing and Challenging Masculinity: The Influence of Gendered Discourses in Organised Sport. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 29(3), 278-300.
- Adams, N., Schmitke, A., & Franklin, A. (2005). Tomboys, Dykes, and Girly Girls: Interrogating the Subjectivities of Adolescent Female Athletes. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 33(1/2), 17-34.
- Alexander, M., MacLaren, A., O'Gorman, K., & Taheri, B. (2012). "He just didn't seem to understand the banter": Bullying or simply establishing social cohesion? *Tourism Management*, 33, 1245-1255.
- Allan, G. (2003). A Critique of Using Grounded Theory as a Research Method. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods* 2(1), 1-9.
- Amis, J. (2005). Interviewing for Case Study Research. In D. L. Andrews, D. S. Mason & M. L. Silk (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods in Sports Studies* (pp.104-138). Oxford: Berg.
- Anderson, E. (2000). *Trailblazing: America's First Openly Gay High School Coach*. Fountain Valley, CA: Identity Press.
- Anderson, E. (2002). Openly gay athletes. Contesting Hegemonic Masculinity in a Homophobic Environment. *Gender & Society* 16(6), 860-877.
- Anderson, E. (2005a). Orthodox & inclusive masculinity: Competing Masculinities among Heterosexual Men in a Feminized Terrain. *Sociological perspectives*, 48, 337-355.
- Anderson, E. (2005b). *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Anderson, E. (2007). Inclusive Masculinity in a Fraternal Setting. *Men and Masculinities* 10(5), 604-620.
- Anderson, E. (2008). "Being masculine is not about who you sleep with...": Heterosexual Athletes Contesting Masculinity and One-time Rule of Homosexuality. *Sex Roles*, 58, 104-155.
- Anderson, E. (2009a). The Maintenance of Masculinity Among Stakeholders in Sport. *Sport Management Review* 12(1), 3-14.
- Anderson, E. (2009b). *Inclusive Masculinity the Changing Nature of Masculinities*. London: Routledge.
- Anderson, E. (2010). *Sport Theory and Social Problems*. London: Routledge.
- Anderson, E. (2011a). Updating the Outcome: Gay Athletes, Straight Teams and Coming Out at the End of the Decade. *Gender & Society* 25(2), 250-268.
- Anderson, E. (2011b). Masculinities and Sexualities in Sport and Physical Cultures: Three Decades of Evolving Research. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58, 565-578.
- Anderson, E. (2012). The Changing Relationship between Men's Homosexuality and Sport. In G. B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport* (pp.35-45). College Station, Texas: Center for Sport Management Research and Education.
- Anderson, E. (2014). *21st Century Jocks: Sporting Men and Contemporary Heterosexuality*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Anderson, E., & Adams, A. (2011). "Aren't We All a Little Bisexual?": The Recognition of Bisexuality in an Unlikely Place. *Journal of Bisexuality* 11, 3-22.

- Anderson, E., Adams, A., & Rivers, I. (2012). "I Kiss Them Because I Love Them": The Emergence of Heterosexual Men Kissing in British Institutes of Education. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 41, 421-430. doi: 10.1007/s10508-010-9678-0
- Anderson, E., & Bullingham, R. (2013). Openly Lesbian Team Sport Athletes in an Era of Decreasing Homophobia. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* Online First.
- Anderson, E., & McCormack, M. (2015). Cuddling and Spooning: Heteromascularity and Homosocial Tactility Among Student-Athletes. *Men and Masculinities*, Online First.
- Anderson, E., McCormack, M., & Lee, H. (2011). Male Team Sport Hazing Initiations in a Culture of Decreasing Homophobia. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, XX(X) 1-22.
- Anderson, E., & McGuire, R. (2010). Inclusive Masculinity and the Gendered Politics of Men's Rugby. *The Journal of Gender Studies* 19(3), 249-261.
- Annells, M. (1996). Grounded Theory Method: Philosophical Perspectives, Paradigm of Inquiry, and Postmodernism. *Qualitative Health Research*, 6, 379-393.
- Archer, B. (2015, Jun 09). Olympic Dream Masks the Back Pain for Helen Richardson-Walsh as GB head to Valencia. *Express (Online)* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1686885706?accountid=15133>
- Arksey, H., & Knight, P. (1999). *Interviewing for Social Scientists*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Aspinall, P.J. (2003). The Conceptualisation and Categorisation of Mixed Race/Ethnicity in Britain and North America: Identity Options and the Role of the State. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 269-296.
- Ayling, R., & Mewse, A. J. (2009). Evaluating Internet Interviews with Gay Men. *Qualitative Health Research* 19(4), 566-576.
- Bandy, S. J. (2005). From Women in Sport to Cultural Critique: A Review of Books About Women in Sport and Physical Culture. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 33(1/2), 246-261.
- Beck, C. T. (2005). Benefits of Participating in Internet Interviews: Women Helping Women. *Qualitative Health Research* 15(3), 411-422.
- Berg, B. L. (2004). *Qualitative Research Methods* (5th ed.). London: Pearson.
- Berger, P.L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Better, A. (2014) Redefining Queer: Women's Relationships and Identity in an Age of Sexual Fluidity. *Sexuality & Culture*, 18, 16-38.
- Biscomb, K., & Griggs, G. (2013). 'A splendid effort!' Print Media Reporting of England's Women's Performance in the 2009 Cricket World Cup. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 48(1), 99-111.
- Birks, M., & Mills, J. (2011). *Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide*. London: SAGE.
- Blaikie, N. (1993). *Approaches to social enquiry*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Blanchard, C., McCormack, M., & Peterson, G. (2015). Inclusive Masculinities in a Working-Class Sixth Form in the Northeast England. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Online first, 1-24.
- Blinde, E. M., & Taub, D. E. (1992a). Homophobia and Women's Sport: The Disempowerment of Athletes. *Sociological Focus*, 25(2), 151-166.
- Blinde, E. M., & Taub, D. E. (1992b). Women Athletes as Falsely Accused Deviants: Managing the Lesbian Stigma. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 33(4), 521-533.
- Boutilier, M. A., & SanGiovanni, L. F. (1983). *The Sporting Woman*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.

- Bond, D. (2007, Apr 05). RFU Face Cuts to Funding. *The Daily Telegraph* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/321463198?accountid=15133>
- Boxhill, J. (1993). Title IX and Gender Equity. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, XX-XXI, 23-31.
- Brailsford, D. (1991). *Sport, Time, and Society: The British at Play*. London: Routledge.
- Brailsford, D. (1997). *British Sport: A Social History*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Breckenridge, J. P., Jones, D., Elliott, I., & Nicol, M. (2012). Choosing a Methodological Path: Reflections on the Constructivist Turn. *The Grounded Theory Review* 11(1), 64-71.
- Briggs, S. (2012, Aug 09). World-class Athlete, Gay and in Closet. *The Daily Telegraph* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1032707435?accountid=15133>
- Broad, K. L. (2001). The Gendered Unapologetic Queer Resistance in Women's Sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 18, 181-204.
- Browne, K. (2005). Snowball Sampling: Using Social Networks to Research Non-heterosexual Women. *International Journal Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 47-60.
- Bruening, J. E., & Dixon, M. A. (2008). Situating Work- Family Negotiations within a Life Course Perspective: Insights on the Gendered Experiences of NCAA Division 1 Heading Coaching Mothers. *Sex Roles*, 58, 10-23.
- Bryant, A. (2003). A Constructive/ist Response to Glaser. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 4(1), Art. 15.
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2007). Grounded Theory Research: Methods and Practices. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (pp. 1-28). London: SAGE Publications.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Budgeon, S. (2013). The Dynamics of Gender Hegemony: Femininities, Masculinities and Social Change. *Sociology*, Online First, 1-18.
- Bullingham, R., Magrath, R., & Anderson, E. (2014). Changing the Game: Sport and a Cultural Shift Away From Homophobia. In J. Hargreaves & E. Anderson (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality* (pp.275-282). London: Routledge.
- Burrough, A., Ashburn, L., & SeeBohm, L. (1995). "Add Sex and Stir" Homophobic Coverage of Women's Cricket in Australia. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 19(3), 266-286.
- Burstyn, V. (1999). *The Rites of Men. Manhood, Politics and the Culture of Sport*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Burton Nelson, M. (1994). *The Stronger Women get, the More Men Love Football*. New York: Avon Books.
- Burton, L. J. (2015). Underrepresentation of Women in Sport Leadership: A Review of Research. *Sport Management Review*, 18, 155-165.
- Bury, J. (2015). Non-performing Inclusion: A critique of the English Football Association's Action Plan on Homophobia in Football. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 50(2), 211-226.
- Bush, A., Anderson, E., & Carr, S. (2012). The Declining Existence of Men's Homophobia in British Sport. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 6(1), 107-120.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge. (First published in 1990).

- Cahn, S. (1994a). *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport*. London, England: Harvard University Press.
- Cahn, S. (1994b). Sports Talk: Oral History and Its Uses, Problems, and Possibilities for Sport History. *The Journal of American History*, 81(2), 594-609.
- Cahn, S. (1994c). Crushes, Competition and Closets: The Emergence of Homophobia in Women's Physical Education. In S. Birrell & C. L. Cole (Eds.), *Women, Sport, and Culture* (pp.327-339). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Calhoun, A. S., LaVoi, N. M., & Johnson, A. (2011). Framing With Family: Examining Online Coaches' Biographies for Heteronormative and Heterosexual Narratives. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 4, 300-316.
- Carlson, J. (2010). The Female Significant in All-Women's Amateur Roller Derby. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 27, 428-440.
- Cashmore, E., & Cleland, J. (2011). Glasswing butterflies: Gay Professional Footballers and their Culture. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 20(10), 1-17.
- Cashmore, E., & Cleland, J. (2012). Fans, Homophobia and Masculinities in Association Football: Evidence of an more Inclusive Environment. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 63(2), 370-387.
- Caudwell, J. (1999). Women's football in the United Kingdom. Theorizing Gender and Unpacking the Butch Lesbian Image. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 23(4), 390-402.
- Caudwell, J. (2002). Women's Experiences of Sexuality within Football Contexts: A particular and Located Footballing Epistemology. *Football Studies*, 5(1), 24-45.
- Caudwell, J. (2003). Sporting Gender: Women's Footballing Bodies as Sites/Sights for the (Re)articulation of Sex, Gender and Desire. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 20(4), 371-386.
- Caudwell, J. (2006) Women Playing Football at Clubs in England with Socio-Political Associations. *Soccer and Society*, 7(4), 423-438.
- Caudwell, J. (2007). Queering the field? The Complexities of Sexuality within a Lesbian-identified Football Team in England. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 14(2), 183-196.
- Caudwell, J. (2011). "Does your Boyfriend Know You're Here?" The Spatiality of Homophobia in Men's Football Culture in the UK. *Leisure Studies*, 30(2), 123-138.
- Charmaz, K. (1990). 'Discovering' Chronic Illness: Using Grounded Theory. *Soc. Sci. Med.*, 30(11), 1161-1172.
- Charmaz, K. (1995). The Body Identity, and Self. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 36(4), 657-680.
- Charmaz, K. (1996). The search for Meanings - Grounded Theory. In L. Van Langenhove (Ed.), *Rethinking Methods in Psychology* (pp.27-49). London: Sage Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Constructivist and Objectivist Grounded Theory. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2, 277-292.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. London: SAGE.
- Chawansky, M., & Francombe, J. M. (2011). Cruising for Olivia: Lesbian Celebrity and the Cultural Politics and Coming Out in Sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 28, 461-477.
- Choi, P.Y. L. (2000). *Femininity and the Physically Active Woman*. London: Routledge.
- Clarke, G. (1998). Queering the Pitch and Coming Out to Play: Lesbians and Physical Education in Sport. *Sport, Education and Society*, 3(2), 145-160.
- Cleland, J. (2013). Discussing Homosexuality on Association Football Fan Message Boards: A Changing Cultural Context. *International Review of the Sociology of Sport*.

- Cleland, J. (2014). Association Football and the Representation of Homosexuality by the Print Media: A Case Study of Anton Hysen. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 61(9), 1269-1287.
- Clements, B., & Fields, C. D. (2014). Public Opinion Toward Homosexuality and Gay Rights in Britain. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 78(2), 523-547.
- Cohen, N., & Arieli, T. (2011). Field Research in Conflict Environments: Methodological Challenges and Snowball Sampling. *Journal of Peace Research*, 48(4), 423-435.
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829-859.
- Cook, N. (2008). It's Good to Talk: Performing and Recording the Telephone Interview. *Area*, 41(2), 176-185.
- Cox, B., & Thompson, S. (2001). Facing the Bogey: Women, Football and Sexuality. *Football Studies*, 4(2), 7-24.
- Crosset, T. (1990). Masculinity, Sexuality, and the Development of Early Modern Sport. In M. A. Messner & D. F. Sabo (Eds.), *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order* (pp.45-54). Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books.
- Cunningham, G. B. (2012). Bridging the Gap: Researchers and Activists Pursuing LGBT Equality in Sport. In G. B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport* (pp.69-77). College Station, Texas: Center for Sport Management Research and Education.
- Cunningham, G. B., & Melton, N. E. (2013). The Moderating Effects of Contact with Lesbian and Gay Friends on the Relationship among Religious Fundamentalism, Sexism, and Sexual Prejudice. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50(3), 401-408.
- Davis, M., Bolding, G., Hart, G., Sherr, L., & Elford, J. (2004). Reflecting on the Experiences of Interviewing Online: Perspectives from the Internet and HIV study in London. *AIDS Care*, 16(8), 944-952.
- Davis-Delano, L. R., Pollock, A., & Ellsworth Vose, J. (2009). Apologetic Behavior Among Female Athletes. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 44(2-3), 131-150.
- Davis-Delano, L. R. (2014). Sport as Context for the Development of Women's Same-Sex Relationships. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Online first, 1-23.
- Dean, J. J. (2013). Heterosexual Masculinities, Anti-homophobias, and Shifts in Hegemonic Masculinity: The Identity Practices of Black and White Heterosexual Men. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 54(4), 534-560.
- Deutsch, F. M. (2007). Undoing Gender. *Gender & Society* 21(1) 106-127.
- Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A user-friendly guide for social scientists*. London: Routledge.
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. J. (2006). The Qualitative Research Interview. *Medical Education*, 40, 314-321.
- Dimond, J. P., Fiesler, C., DiSalvo, B. J., Pelc, J., & Bruckman, A. (2012). Qualitative Data Collection Technologies: A Comparison of Instant Messaging, Email, and Phone. *GROUP 2012* 277-280.
- Donnelly, M. K., Norman, M., & Donnelly, P. (2013). *The Sochi 2014 Olympics: A Gender Equality Audit*. Retrieved from Centre for Sport Policy Studies Research Reports:
- Douglas, D. (2003). Grounded theories of management: a methodological review. *Management Research News*, 26(5), 44-52.
- Doyle, P. (2012, Apr 05). Football: Women's Super League Players Wear Twitter on Sleeves to Boost Interest. *The Guardian* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/964733153?accountid=15133>

- Drury, S. (2011). 'It seems really inclusive in some ways, but...inclusive just for people who identify as lesbian': Discourses of Gender and Sexuality in a Lesbian-identified Football Club. *Soccer & Society*, 12(3), 421-442.
- Duffin, C. (2014, Aug 25). Success Pays for Women Rugby Players. *The Daily Telegraph* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1555593033?accountid=15133>
- Duncan, M. C., & Messner, M. A. (1998). The Media Image of Sport and Gender. In L. A. Wenner (Ed.), *Mediasport* (pp.170-185). London: Routledge.
- Dunne, C. (2011). The Place of the Literature Review in Grounded Theory Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 14(2) 111-124.
- Dworkin, S. L., & Messner, M. A. (2002). Just do...what? In S. Scruton & A. Flintoff (Eds.), *Gender and Sport: A reader* (pp.193-208). London: Routledge.
- Eastman, S. T., & Billings, A. C. (2000). Sportcasting and Sports Reporting: The Power of Gender Bias. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 24, 192-214.
- Edwards, L. L., Brown, D. H. K., & Smith, L. (2014) We are getting there slowly': Lesbian Teacher Experiences in the Post-Section 28 Environment. *Sport, Education and Society*, 21(3), 299-318.
- Elling, A., De Knop, P., & Knoppers, K. (2003). Gay/lesbian Sport Clubs and Events. Places of Homo-social Bonding and Cultural Resistance? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(4), 441-456.
- Elling, A., & Janssens, J. (2009). Sexuality as a Structural Principle in Sport Participation. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 44(1), 71-86.
- Engh, M. H. (2011). Tackling femininity: The Heterosexual Paradigm and Women's Soccer in South Africa. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28(1), 137-152.
- Epstein, D., & Johnson, R. (1998). *Schooling Sexualities*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Essig, L. (2014). Queer Russia. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 60(22).
- Ezzell, M. (2009). "Barbie Dolls" on the Pitch: Identity Work, Defensive Othering, and Inequality in Women's Rugby. *Social Problems*, 56, 111-131.
- Fallon, M. A., & Jome, L. M. (2007). An Exploration of Gender-Role Expectations and Conflict Among Women Rugby Players. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31, 311-321.
- Felshin, J. (1974). The Triple Option... for Women in Sport. *Quest*, 21, 36-40.
- Ferez, S. (2012). From Women's Exclusion to Gender Institution: A Brief History of the Sexual Categorisation Process within Sport. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29(2), 272-285.
- Fink, J. S. (2012). Homophobia and the Marketing of Female Athletes and Women's Sport. In G. B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Sexual orientation and gender identity in sport: Essays from activists, coaches and scholars*. (pp.49-60). College Station, TX: Center for Sport Management Research and Education.
- Fink, J. S., Burton, L. J., Farrell, A. O., & Parker, H. M. (2012). Playing it out: Female Intercollegiate Athletes' Experiences in Revealing their Sexual Identities. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 6(1), 83-106.
- Finley, N. J. (2010). Skating Femininity: Gender Manoeuvring in Women's Roller Derby. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 39(4), 359-387.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., pp.645-672). London: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Forman, P.J., & Plymire, D. C. (2005). Amélie Mauresmo's Muscles: The Lesbian Heroic and Women's Professional Tennis. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 33(1/2), 120-133.
- Frey, J. H., & Eitzen, D. S. (1991). Sport and Society. *Annual Review of Sociology* 17, 503-522.
- Fusco, C. (1998). Lesbians and Locker rooms: The Subjective Experiences of Lesbians in Sport. In G. Rail (Ed.), *Sport and Postmodern Times*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Ghaziani, A. (2014). *There Goes the Gayborhood?* NJ: Princeton University Press: Princeton.
- Ghezeljeh, T. N., & Emami, A. (2009). Grounded theory: methodology and philosophical perspective. *Nurse Researcher*, 17(1), 15-23.
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2001). *The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization Contrasted with Description*. Mill Valley, CA: The Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2002). Constructivist Grounded Theory? *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(3), Art. 12.
- Glaser, B. G. (2010). The Future of Grounded Theory. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 9(2), 1-14.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, Inc.
- Goldkuhl, G., & Cronholm, S. (2010). Adding Theoretical Grounding to Grounded Theory: Toward Multi-grounded Theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 9(2), 187-205.
- Goulding, C. (1998). Grounded Theory: The Missing Methodology on the Interpretivist Agenda. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 1(1), 50-57.
- Goulding, C. (1999). *Grounded Theory: Some Reflections on Paradigm, Procedures and Misconceptions*. Wolverhampton: Wolverhampton Business School, University of Wolverhampton.
- Goulding, C. (2005). Grounded theory, Ethnography and Phenomenology. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(3/4), 294-308.
- Gray, D. E. (2009). *Doing Research in the Real World*. London: Sage.
- Graydon, J. (1983). 'But It's More Than a Game. It's an Institution.' Feminist Perspectives in Sport. *Feminist Review*, 13, 5-16.
- Greenwell, M. (2012). Title IX was Great for Female Athletes. And Terrible for Female Coaches., *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/title-ix-was-great-for-female-athletes-and-terrible-for-female-coaches/2012/07/26/gJQAAFK1BX_story.html
- Griffin, P. (1992a). Changing the Game: Homophobia, Sexism and Lesbians in Sport. *Quest*, 44, 251-265.
- Griffin, P. (1992b). From Hiding out to Coming Out: Empowering Lesbian and Gay Educators. In K. Harbeck (Ed.), *Coming Out of the Classroom Closet: Gay and Lesbian Students, Teachers, and Curricula* (pp.167-196). New York: Harrington Park Press.
- Griffin, P. (1998). *Strong Women, Deep Closets*. Leeds: Human Kinetics.
- Griffin, P. (2002). Changing the Game: Homophobia, Sexism and Lesbians in Sport. In S.

- Scruton & A. Flintoff (Eds.), *Gender and Sport: A reader* (pp. 193-208). London: Routledge.
- Griffin, P. (2011) Some Thought on Straight Allies in Sport. Available at: <http://ittakesateam.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/some-thoughts-on-straight-allies-in.html> (accessed 12th November 2015).
- Griffin, P. (2012). LGBT Equality in Sports: Celebrating our Successes and Facing our Challenges. In G. B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport: Essays from Activists, Coaches, and Scholars* (pp.1-13). Texas: The Center for Sport Management Research and Education.
- Griffin, P. (2014). Overcoming Sexism and Homophobia in Women's Sport: Two Steps Forward and One Step Back. In J. Hargreaves & E. Anderson (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality* (pp.265-274). London: Routledge.
- Grindstaff, L., & West, E. (2011). Hegemonic Masculinity on the Sidelines of Sport. *Sociology Compass*, 5(10), 859-881.
- Grix, J. (2010). *The Foundations of Research*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, MacMillan.
- Guttmann, A. (1991). *Women's Sport: A History*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hallberg, L. R.-M. (2006). The "Core Category" of Grounded Theory: Making Constant Comparisons. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 1 141-148.
- Hamilton, L. (2007). Trading on Heterosexuality: College Women's Gender Strategies and Homophobia. *Gender & Society*, 21(2), 145-172.
- Hamilton, R. J., & Bowers, B. J. (2006). Internet Recruitment and E-Mail Interviews in Qualitative Studies. *Qualitative Health Research*, 16(6), 821-835. doi: 10.1177/1049732306287599
- Hanna, P.(2012). Using Internet Technologies (such as Skype) as a Research Medium: A Research Note. *Qualitative Research*, 12(2), 239-242.
- Hardin, M., Blount, R., LaVoi, N. M., & Ruggiero, A. (2009, Monday 19th October 2009). *Facing Off Over Facebook: The Impact of Social Media on Women's Sports*. Paper presented at the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport Presents the 2009 Fall Distinguished Lecture, University of Minnesota.
- Hardy, E. (2015). The Female 'Apologetic' Behaviour within Canadian Women's Rugby: Athlete Perceptions and Media Influences. *Sport in Society*, 18(2), 155-167.
- Hargreaves, J. A. (1985). The Early History of Women's Sport. *Society for the Study of Labour History, Spring* 85(50), 5-6.
- Hargreaves, J. (1986). *Sport, Power and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hargreaves, J. A. (1994). *Sporting Females*. London: Routledge.
- Hargreaves, J. A. (2000). *Heroines of sport*. London: Routledge.
- Hargreaves, J. A. & Anderson, E. (2014). Sport, gender and sexuality: surveying the field. In J. Hargreaves & E. Anderson (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality* (pp.3-18). London: Routledge.
- Harris, J. (2005). The Image Problem in Women's Football. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 29(2), 184-197.
- Harris, C. (2013, Dec 04). Partners Make Name for Themselves. *The Times* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1464483876?accountid=15133>
- Harris, M. (1964). *Patterns of Race in the Americas*. New York: Walker.
- Hekma, G. (1998). "As long as they don't make an issue of it...": Gay Men and Lesbians in Organised Sports in the Netherlands. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 35(1), 1-23.
- Hemphill, D., & Symons, C. (2009). Sexuality Matters in Physical Education and Sports Studies. *Quest*, 61, 397-417.

- Heywood, L., & Dworkin, S. L. (2003). *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon* (Vol. 5). London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Holt, N. L., & Tamminen, K. A. (2010). Improving Grounded Theory Research in Sport and Exercise Psychology: Further Reflections as a Response to Mike Weed. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 11, 405-413.
- Holt, R. (1989). *Sport and the British a Modern History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Holton, J. (2007). The Coding Process and its Challenges. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (pp.265-290). London: SAGE Publications.
- Horowitz, J. M. (2013). Americans Less Accepting of Homosexuality than other Westerners - Religion May Be One Reason Retrieved 3rd January 2014, from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/12/americans-are-less-accepting-of-homosexuality-than-canadians-western-europeans-and-religion-may-be-one-explanation/>
- Hunt, N., & McHale, S. (2007). A Practical Guide to the E-Mail Interview. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1415-1421.
- Hunt, S. (2013). Negotiating Equality in the Equality Act 2010 (United Kingdom): Church-State Relations in a Post-Christian Society. *Journal of Church and State*, 55(4), 690-711.
- Iannotta, J. G., & Kane, M. J. (2002). Sexual Stories as Resistance Narratives in Women's Sports: Reconceptualising Identity Performance. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 19, 347-369.
- Ibson, J. (2002). *Picturing Men: A Century of Male Relationships in Everyday Life*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books.
- Isabella, L. A. (1990). Evolving Interpretations as a Change Unfolds: How Managers Construe Key Organizational Events. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(1), 7-41.
- Jackson, S. (2006). Gender, Sexuality and Heterosexuality: The Complexity (and Limits) of Heteronormativity. *Feminist Theory*, 7(1), 105-121.
- Jarvis, N. (2013). The Inclusive Masculinities of Heterosexual Men within UK Gay Sports Clubs. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, Online First*.
- Jeon, Y.-H. (2004). The Application of Grounded Theory and Symbolic Interactionism. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Science*, 18, 249-256
- Jones, L., & McCarthy, M. (2010). Mapping the Landscape of Gay Men's Football. *Leisure Studies*, 29(2), 161-173.
- Kane, M. J., & Lenskyj, H. J. (1998). Media Treatment of Female Athletes: Issues of Gender and Sexualities. In L. A. Wenner (Ed.), *Media Sport* (pp.186-201). London: Routledge.
- Kauer, K. J., & Krane, V. (2006). "Scary Dykes" and "Feminine Queens": Stereotypes and Female Collegiate Athletes. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity*, 15(1), 42-55.
- Keleher, A., & Smith, E. R. A. N. (2012). Growing Support for Gay and Lesbian Equality Since 1990 *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59, 1307-1326.
- Kian, E. M., & Anderson, E. (2009). John Amaechi: Changing the Way Sport Reporters Examine Gay Athletes. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 56, 799-818.
- Kian, E. M., Flavio, G., Vincent, J., & Shaw, S. D. (2011). Homophobic and Sexiest yet Uncontested: Examining Football Fan Posting on Internet Message Boards. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58, 680-699.
- Kian, E. M., Anderson, E., & Shipka, D. (2015). "I am Happy to Start the Conversation" Examining Sport Media Framing of Jason Collins Coming out and Playing in the NBA. *Sexualities*, Online First.

- Kidd, B. (1990). The Men's Cultural Centre: Sports and the Dynamic of Women's Oppression/Men's Repression. In M. A. Messner & D. F. Sabo (Eds.), *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books.
- Knight, J. L., & Giuliano, T. A. (2003). Blood, Sweat, and Jeers: The Impact of the Media's Heterosexist Portrayals of Perceptions of Male and Female Athletes. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 26(3), 272-284.
- Knoppers, A., & McDonald, M. (2010). Scholarship on Gender and Sport in *Sex Roles* and Beyond. *Sex Roles*, 63, 311-323.
- Knox, S., & Burkard, A. W. (2009). Qualitative Research Interviews. *Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4-5), 566-575.
- Krane, V. (1997). Homonegativism Experienced by Lesbian Collegiate Athletes. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity*, 6, 237-246.
- Krane, V. (2001). We can be Athletic and Feminine, but do we want to? Challenging Hegemonic Femininity in Women's Sport. *Quest*, 53, 115-133.
- Krane, V., & Barber, H. (2003). Lesbian Experiences in Sport: A Social Identity Perspective. *Quest*(55), 328-346.
- Krane, V., & Barber, H. (2005). Identity Tensions in Lesbian Intercollegiate Coaches. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 76(1), 67-81.
- Krane, V., Choi, P.Y. L., Baird, S. M., Aimar, C. H., & Kauer, K. J. (2004). Living the Paradox: Female Athletes Negotiate Femininity and Muscularity. *Sex Roles*, 50(5/6), 315-329.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterviewViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: SAGE.
- LeCompte, M. D., & Goetz, J. P. (1982). Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research. *Review of Educational Research*, 52(1), 31-60.
- Lee, L. (2012). Religion: Losing Faith? . In A. Park, E. Cleary, J. Curtice, M. Phillips & D. Utting (Eds.), *British Social Attitudes Survey, Volume 28* (pp.173-184). London: Sage.
- Lee, P.-W., & Meyer, M. D. E. (2010). "We All Have Feeling for Our Girlfriends:" Progressive (?) Representations of Lesbian Lives of the *The L Word*. *Sexuality & Culture*, 14, 234-250.
- Leighton, T. (2009, Sep 28). Football: Women's football: Super league to Launch in 2011. *The Guardian* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/244447194?accountid=15133>
- Lenskyj, H. J. (1986). *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality*. Toronto: Women's Press.
- Lenskyj, H. J. (1990). Common Sense and Physiology: North American Medical Views on Women and Sport 1890-1930. *Canadian Journal of History of Sport*, 21(1), 49-64.
- Lenskyj, H. J. (1991). Combating Homophobia in Sport and Physical Education. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 8, 61-69.
- Lenskyj, H. J. (1995). Sport and the Threat to Gender Boundaries. *Sporting Traditions*, 12(1), 47-60.
- Lenskyj, H. J. (1998). 'Inside Sport' or 'On The Margins'? Australian Women and the Sport Media. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 33(1), 19-32.
- Lenskyj, H. J. (2003). *Out on the Field*. Toronto: Women's Press.
- Lines, G. (2001). Villains, Fools or Heroes? Sports Stars as Role Model for Young People. *Leisure Studies*, 20, 285-303.
- Lowerson, J. (1993). *Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870-1914*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

- Magrath, R. (2015). Intersection of Race, Religion and Homophobia in British Football. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Online First.
- Magrath, R., Anderson, E., & Roberts, S. (2013). On the Door-Step of Equality: Attitudes Toward Gay Athletes Among Academy Level Footballers. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Online first 1-18. doi: 10.1177/1012690213495747
- Mangan, J. A., & McKenzie, C. (2000). The Other Side of the Coin: Victorian Masculinity, Field Sports and English Elite Education. In J. A. Mangan (Ed.), *Making European Masculinities* (Vol. 2, pp.62-85). London: Frank Cass.
- Marvasti, A. B. (2004). *Qualitative Research Sociology*. London: SAGE Publications.
- McCormack, M. (2011a). Mapping the Terrain of Homosexually-Themed Language. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58, 664-679.
- McCormack, M. (2011b) Hierarchy without Hegemony: Locating Boys in an Inclusive School. *Sociological Perspectives*, 54(1), 83-101.
- McCormack, M. (2012). *The Declining Significance of Homophobia: How Teenage Boys are Redefining Masculinity and Homophobia*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McCormack, M. (2014). The Intersection of Youth Masculinities, Decreasing Homophobia and Class: An Ethnography. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 65(1), 130-149.
- McCormack, M., & Anderson, E. (2010a). 'It's just not acceptable any more': The Erosion of Homophobia and the Softening of Masculinity at an English Sixth Form. *Sociology*, 44(5), 844-859.
- McCormack, M., & Anderson, E. (2010b). The Re-production of Homosexuality-Themed Discourse in Educationally-based Organised Sport. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 12(8), 913-927.
- McCormack, M., & Anderson, E. (2014). The Influence of Declining Homophobia on Men's Gender in the United States: An Argument for the Study of Homophobia. *Sex Roles*, 71(3-4), 109-120.
- McCormick, J. P. (2013, 6th February). Alice Arnold: Homophobia is Still Rife, Just Look at Twitter., *Pinknews*. Retrieved from <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/02/14/alice-arnold-homophobia-is-still-rife-just-look-at-twitter/>
- McDonagh, E., & Pappano, L. (2008). *Playing With the Boys: Why Separate Is Not Equal in Sports*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McDonald, B., & Eagles, D. (2012). Matthew Mitcham: The Narrative of a Gay Sporting Icon. *Celebrity Studies*, 3(3), 297-318.
- McGhee, G., Marland, G. R., & Atkinson, J. (2007). Grounded theory research: Literature Reviewing and Reflexivity. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 60(3), 334-342.
- McCloskey, J. (2014, Feb 11). England Women's Football Player Casey Stoney comes out as Lesbian. *Daily Star (Online)* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1497060978?accountid=15133>
- Melton, N. E., & Cunningham, G. B. (2012). When Identities Collide: Exploring Minority Stress and Resilience among College Athletes with Multiple Marginalized Identities. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 6(1), 45-66.
- Melton, N. E., & Cunningham, G. B. (2014a). Examining the Workplace Experiences of Sport Employees who are LGBT: A Social Categorization Theory Perspective. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28, 21-33.
- Melton, N. E. (2013). Women and the Lesbian Stigma. In M. L. Sartore-Baldwin (Ed.), *Sexual*

- Minorities in Sports* (pp. 11-30). London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Melton, N. E., & Cunningham, G. B. (2014b). Who are the Champions? Using a Multilevel Model to Examine Perceptions of Employee Support for LGBT Inclusion in Sport Organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28, 189-206.
- Mennesson, C., & Clément, J-P.(2003). Homosociability and Homosexuality: The Case of Soccer Played by Women. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(3), 311-330.
- Merriam, S. B. (1995). What Can You Tell from an N of 1? Issues of Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, 4, 51-60.
- Michael, B. (2013). "Just don't hit on me and I'm fine": Mapping High School Wrestlers' Relationship to Inclusive Masculinity and Heterosexual Recuperation. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Online First 1-17.
- Miller, C. (1995). In-depth Interviewing by Telephone: Some practical Considerations. *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9(1), 29-38.
- Miller, T. M. (2001). *Sportsex*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). The Development of Constructivist Grounded Theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 25-35.
- Monro, S. (2010). Sexuality, Space and Intersectionality: The Case of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Equalities Initiatives in UK Local Government. *Sociology*, 44(5), 996-1010.
- Mruck, K., & Mey, G. (2007). Grounded Theory and Reflexivity. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (pp.515-538). London: SAGE publications.
- Nathaniel, A. (2006). Thoughts on the Literature Review and GT. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 5(2/3), 35-41.
- Neddham, F. (2004). Constructing Masculinities Under Thomas Arnold of Rugby (1828-1842): Gender, Educational Policy and School Life in an Early-Victorian Public School. *Gender and Education*, 16(3), 303-326.
doi:10.1080/09540250042000251461
- Norman, L. (2008). The UK Coaching System is Failing Women Coaches. *International Journal of Sport Science & Coaching*, 3(4), 447-646.
- Norman, L. (2012). Gendered Homophobia in Sport and Coaching: Understand the Everyday Experiences of Lesbian Coaches. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 47(6), 705-723.
- Novick, G. (2008). Is There a Bias Against Telephone Interviews in Qualitative Research? *Research in Nursing and Health*, 31, 391-398.
- Ogden, D. C., & Rose, J. N. (2013). *A Locker Room of Her Own: Celebrity, Sexuality and Female Athletes*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Ogburn, W. F. (1957). Cultural Lag as Theory. *Sociology and Social Research*, 41(2), 167-174.
- O'Neill, R. (2015). Whither Critical Masculinity Studies? Notes on Inclusive Masculinity Theory, Postfeminism, and Sexual Politics. *Men and Masculinities*, 18(1), 100-120.
- Opdenakker, R. (2006). Advantages and Disadvantages of Four Interview Techniques in Qualitative Research. *Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(4), Art. 11.
- Osborne, B. (2007). "No Drinking, No Drugs, No Lesbians": Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Intercollegiate Athletics. *Marquette Sports Law Review*, 17(2), 481-501. doi:
<http://scholarship.law.marquette.edu/sportslaw/vol17/iss2/3>

- Park, R. J. (2007). Sport, Gender and Society in a Transatlantic Victorian Perspective. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24(12), 1570-1603.
- Peräkylä, A. (2004). Reliability and Validity in Research Based on Naturally Occurring Social Interaction. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice* (pp.283-304). London: SAGE Publications.
- Pfister, G., & Radtke, S. (2009). Sport, Women, and Leadership: Results of a Project on Executives in German Sports Organizations. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 9(4), 229-243.
- Pharr, S. (1997). *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*. Berkeley, CA: Chardon Press.
- Phillips, J., & Phillips, P. (1993). History from Below: Women's Underwear and the Rise of Women's Sport. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 27(2), 129-148.
- Pierman, C. J. (2005). Baseball, Conduct, and True Womanhood. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 33(1/2), 68-85.
- Plester, B. A., & Sayers, J. (2007). "Taking the piss": Functions of banter in the IT industry. *Humor*, 20(2), 157-187.
- Plummer, D. (2014). The Ebb and Flow of Homophobia: A Gender Taboo Theory. *Sex Roles*, 71(3-4), 126-136.
- Plymire, D. C., & Forman, P.J. (2001). Speaking of Cheryl Miller: Interrogating the Lesbian Taboo on a Women's Basketball Newsgroup. *NWSA Journal*, 12(1), 1-21.
- Polley, M. (1998). *Moving the Goalposts: A History of Sport and Society Since 1945*. London: Routledge.
- Pope, S. (2012). "The Love of My Life": The Meaning and Importance of Sport for Female Fans. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 37(2), 176-195.
- Postlethwaite, V. (2014). Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics and the Controversy of the Russian Propaganda Laws: is the IOC Buckling Under the Pressure of its own Incoherence in Thought? . *International Sports Law Journal*, 13, 264-274.
- Pronger, B. (1990). *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality, and the Meaning of Sex*. London: GMP Publishers Limited.
- Ravel, B., & Rail, G. (2007). On the Limitis of "Gaie" Spaces: Discursive Constructions of Women's Sport in Quebec. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 24(4), 402-420.
- Reiter, S., Stewart, G., & Bruce, C. (2011). A Strategy for Delayed Research Method Selection: Deciding between Grounded Theory and Phenomenology. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 9(1), 35-46.
- Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 5(4), 631-660.
- Richardson, D., & Monro, S. (2013). Public duty and private prejudice: sexualities equalities and local government. *The Sociological Review*, 61 131-152.
- Ripley, M., Anderson, E., McCormack, M., & Rockett, B. (2012). Heteronormativity in the University Classroom: Novelty Attachment and Content Substitution among Gay Friendly Students. *Sociology of Education*, 85(2), 121-130.
- Roberts, P., Priest, H., & Traynor, M. (2006). Reliability and Validity in Research. *Nursing Standard*, 20(44), 41-45.
- Robinson, R. (2012). Eleven Wretched Women. *Runnersworld*. Retrieved from <http://www.runnersworld.com/rt-columns/eleven-wretched-women> website:
- Rowe, M. P. (1990). Barriers to Equality: The Power of Subtle Discrimination to Maintain Unequal Opportunity. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 3(2), 153-163.
- Roy, G. (2013). Women in Wetsuits: Revolting Bodies in Lesbian Surf Culture. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 17(3), 393-343.

- Russell, K. M. (2004). On Versus Off the Pitch: The Transiency of Body Satisfaction Among Female Rugby Players, Cricketers, and Netballers. *Sex Roles*, 51(9/10), 561-574.
- Schippers, M. (2007). Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony. *Theory and Society*, 36(1), 85-102.
- Shaw, S., & Penney, D. (2003). Gender Equity Policies in National Governing Bodies: An Oxymoron or a Vehicle for Change? *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 3(2), 78-102.
- Snow, D. A., & Trom, D. (2002). The Case Study and the Study of Social Movements. In B. Klandermans & S. Staggenborg (Eds.), *Methods of Social Movement Research* (Vol. 16, pp. 146-172). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., Anderson, E., Polite, F. G., & Southall, C. (2009). An Investigation of Male College Athletes' Attitudes toward Sexual-Orientation. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, Special Issue*, 62-77.
- Sport England Equality Scheme (2012)
https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=5&ved=0ahUKEwimq4aulJ3MAhUplSAKHQfwB4MQFggvMAQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Farchive.sportengland.org%2Fsupport_advice%2Fidoc.ashx%3Fdocid%3Df823aaf4-95a2-4e64-9cf7-abe80817e827%26version%3D-1&usg=AFQjCNG6PzC4yCzUG3XKh6nszxeepOGloQ&bvm=bv.119745492,d.ZGg
- Starks, H., & Trinidad, S. B. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1372-1380.
- Steinberg, J. (2014, Oct 11). Football: Saturday interview: Casey stoney: 'the positives far outweigh the negatives. being gay isn't a choice ... I'm still the same person': The Arsenal Player Believes Revealing her Sexuality has Helped to Change Lives. *The Guardian* Retrieved from
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1610233616?accountid=15133>
- Stern, P. N. (2007). On Solid Ground: Essential properties for growing grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (pp. 114-126). London: SAGE Publications.
- Stevenson, D. (2002). Women, Sport, and Globalization Competing Discourses of Sexuality and Nation. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 26(2), 209-225.
- Stone, A. L., & Gorga, A. (2014). Containing Pariah Femininities: Lesbian in the Sorority Rush Process. *Sexualities*, 17(3), 348-364.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. London: Sage Publications.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Procedures and Techniques for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage.
- Sturges, J. E., & Hanrahan, K. J. (2004). Comparing Telephone and Face-to-face Qualitative Interviewing: A Research Note. *Qualitative Research*, 4(1), 107-118.
- Suddary, R. (2006). From the Editors: What Grounded Theory is not. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(4), 633-642.
- Sykes, H. (1996). Constr(i)u(ing) Lesbian Identities in Physical Education: Feminist and Poststructural Approaches to Researching Sexuality. *Quest*, 48, 459-469.
- Sykes, H. (1998). Turning the Closets Inside/Out: Towards a Queer-Feminist Theory in Women's Physical Education. *Sociology of Sport Journal* 15(2) 154-173.
- Sykes, H. (2004). Pedagogies of Censorship, Injury and Masochism: Teacher Responses to Homophobic Speech in Physical Education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36(1), 75-

- Sykes, H. (2006). Transsexual and Transgender Policies in Sport. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity*, 15(1), 3-13.
- Sykes, H. (2009). The qBody Project: From Lesbian in Physical Education to Queer Bodies In/Out of School. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 3, 238-254.
- Tallon, A. (2011). Tackling Homophobic Language: The Responsibility of all Staff. *British Journal of School Nursing*, 6(9), 426-427.
- Theberge, N., & Birrell, S. (1994). The Sociological Study of Women in Sport. In D. M. Costa & S. R. Guthrie (Eds.), *Women and sport: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Thomas, J. R., & Nelson, J. K. (2001). *Research Methods in Physical Activity*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Thorngren, C. (1991). *Homophobia and Women Coaches: Controls and Constraints*. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance., San Francisco.
- Tranter, N. (1998). *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain 1750-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Travers, A. (2006). Queering Sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 41 (3-4), 431-446.
- Travers, A., & Deri, J. (2010). Transgender Inclusion and the Changing Face of Lesbian Softball Leagues. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 46(4), 488-507.
- Tredway, K. (2014). Judith Butler Redux - the Heterosexual Matrix and the Out Lesbian Athlete: Amelie Mauresmo, Gender Performance, and Women's Professional Tennis. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 41(2), 163-176.
- Trier-Bieniek, A. (2012). Framing the Telephone Interview as a Participant-Centred Tool for Qualitative Research: A Methodological Discussion. *Qualitative Research*, 12(6), 630-644.
- Urquhart, C. (2013). *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Velija, P., Ratna, A., & Flintoff, A. (2014). Exclusionary power in sports Organisations: The Merger between the Women's Cricket Association and the England and Wales Cricket Board. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 49(2), 211-226.
- Veri, M. J. (1999). Homophobic Discourse Surrounding the Female Athlete. *Quest*, 51, 355-368.
- Vincent, J., & Crossman, J. (2007). Champions a Celebrity Crossover and a Capitulator: The Construction of Gender in Broadsheet Newspapers Narratives about Selected Competitors at Wimbledon. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 1, 78-102.
- Volkwein-Caplan, K., & Ray, J. D. (2005). Homophobia in Women's Sport. In K. Gilbert (Ed.), *Sexuality, Sport and the Culture of Risk* (Vol. 6, pp.91-102). Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Sport (UK) Ltd.
- Walker, D., & Myrick, F. (2006). Grounded Theory: An Exploration of Process and Procedure. *Qualitative Health Research*, 16(4), 547-559.
- Walks, M. (2014). "We're Here and We're Queer!": An Introduction to Studies in Queer Anthropology. *Anthropologica*, 56(1), 13-16.
- Washington, R. E., & Karen, D. (2001). Sport and society. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 187-212.
- Weed, M. (2009). Research Quality Considerations for Grounded Theory Research in Sport and Exercise Psychology. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 10, 502-510.

- Wensing, E. H., & Bruce, T. (2003). Bending the rules: Media Representations of Gender During an International Sporting Event. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(4), 387-396.
- White, P.G., & Vagi, A. B. (1990). Rugby in the 19th-Century British Boarding-School System: A Feminist Psychoanalytic Perspective. In M. A. Messner & D. F. Sabo (Eds.), *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order* (pp.67-78). Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books.
- Wignall, L., & McCormack, M. (2016). An Exploratory Study if a New Kink Activity: "Pup Play". *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Online First.
- Williams, O. (21st May 2014). England's Kate Richardson-Walsh on marrying her team-mate. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/hockey/27491319>
- Wilson, A. (2014a, May 07). Cricket: Full-time deals for England women's team. *The Guardian* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1521655461?accountid=15133>
- Wilson, G. (2014b, May 19). Helen Richardson-Walsh breaks silence over world cup snub. *Express (Online)* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1525837934?accountid=15133>
- Wilson, G. (2015, Apr 28). Helen Richardson-Walsh is back in the old routine with team GB. *Express (Online)* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1676205195?accountid=15133>
- Wolter, S. (2010). The Ladies Professional Golf Association's Five Points of Celebrity: "Driving" the Organization "Fore-Ward" or a Snap-Hook Into the Next Fairway? *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 3, 31-48.
- Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (2012) *Trophy Women? NGB Leadership Audit 2011/12*
http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/289/289/15f4784b7/original/Trophy_Wom en_ 2011-12.pdf
- Worthen, M. G. F. (2014). The Cultural Significance of Homophobia on Heterosexual Women's Gendered Experiences in the United States: A Commentary. *Sex Roles*, 71(3-4), 141-151.
- Wright, J., & Clarke, G. (1999). Sport, the Media and Construction of Compulsory Heterosexuality. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 34(3), 227-248.
- www.equalityhumanrights.com
www.gov.uk
www.itgetsbetter.org
www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2015
www.outsports.com
www.sportengland.org
www.TheFA.com/FAWSL2014
www.thinkprogress.org
<http://www.wsff.org.uk/>

Appendix 1: Memos

Memo 1 – initial thoughts

So far I have carried out 5 telephone interview and 3 face-to-face interviews. A variety of different sports have covered including on based in university setting. The questions in the interviews seem to be covering all the aspects of the athletes experience but the importance of follow up questions to clarify their answers has been noted as incredibly important.

The individual difference is something that has been noted in a number of the interviews. Numerous answers given about issues within sport has been concluded as individual differences between the participant and others. This has been noted in a number occasions saying that they just did not get on and it had nothing to do with sexuality. Numerous issues like the administration of teams or individual coaches seem to just be personality clashes rather than anything more especially homophobia.

The overall picture in people's current sports feels overly positive. However, interestingly a number of the participants have had previously negative experiences. These have all been dated experiences but could potentially show change in sport, depending on further results. The most interesting so far are two participants who have said that their experiences in football included 'predatory' lesbians. They both said that there had been suggestions and even an expectation to become a lesbian particularly on tour. This suggests that I need to speak to some footballers to see if they have had similar experiences.

One of the participants did not initially come out because of a bisexual team member who she perceived gave a bad image to lesbians she therefore only decided to come out when she was in a relationship as she was therefore not a threat. This is the only case of this that I have found so far and it is interesting that this is in a traditionally feminine and sexualised sport of cheerleading.

One interesting point that seems to be developing is that of team socials. It seems that in a number of interviews that girlfriends are welcome but not always men. It seems that during girls time of socials that women are accepted as partners but men aren't. This hasn't happened in all the sports in some cases where the men's teams are evident that it doesn't happen as much. One participant said that her girlfriend would be welcome but sport is their own time with their friends and they value the time apart.

Athletes have been assumed to be lesbian either from the choice of sport or because of the people surrounding them. The girls who have been accused of being a lesbian have not been offended in any way and have in some cases actually quite enjoyed the attention from the outsiders. Unfortunately I am not going to speak to

heterosexual athletes to find out if this perception is true but this is something for future research.

A few homophobic incidents have occurred mainly on socials but one point by the opposition. It seems that the value of winning took over and one of the participants used homophobic language. In all cases the homophobic behaviour has not been tolerated it has all been challenged either by the person being spoken to or teammates. When challenged people have tended to back down although there was one case where it continued because of alcohol intake.

But recent experiences by all participants so far has been very positive.

Questions/to do

- Get footballing participants
- Ask about men being welcome on nights out as well as women

Memo 2: Starting to code

As I am now starting to re-listen to and code the interviews that I have conducted so far the process is very rewarding.

Specifically of interest at the moment is, what happens if lesbians do get any issues on a night out and how the heterosexual athletes react to being labelled. In all the interviews carried out so far the athletes have experienced positive environments. Straight and lesbian athletes are heading out on nights out together and choosing which venue to go to not only whether they are gay or straight but on dress codes, atmosphere and music.

The environment that athletes are competing within is showing as very positive and very inclusive. In fact there are very few negatives that I am finding. Perhaps only occasionally from outsiders during socials in bars but even then teammates are providing support. I need to get a wide range sports to discover if this is the case in a number of sports not just the major team sports.

The line-by-line coding is very useful for keeping an open mind and allowing the data to yield results. This is especially important as I had already conducted the literature review and therefore had prior knowledge of research. Although this only the second memo it has been a helpful process to help with the process of reflexivity. I am looking forward to completing the rest of the initial coding process.

The athletes have said that the straight athletes have wanted to go to the gay bar or the straight girls are the ones on the dancing floor not worried about being labelled as a lesbian. Not to mention the fact that the athletes have claimed overwhelming support regardless of whether their team has been predominately lesbian or if they have been the only straight girl. There are no signs that lesbians are in fear or that lesbians are being targeted or victimised in anyway.

The data is showing a very consistently positive environment with the results so far. In fact some were upset that they couldn't give me anything negative. I used a variety of ways of questioning to discover if anything is negative but nothing. One respondent said "I would love to tell you something juicy but there just isn't anything" this was despite her moving clubs. She put it down to personality issues not sexuality. The coding is helping to keep an open mind having already done the literature review, this is very important.

Memo 3 – Reflecting

More interviews completed and this is helping to confirm the data of the original interviews. I am starting to see areas that are moving towards becoming saturated with all the positive aspects that participants are discussing. I know saturation is starting to occur because results are confirming previous interviews and aspects are starting to get repetitive. The women that I have spoken to seem to be strong in their views and on the whole are very clear about the environment that they are playing within. They are actively challenging homophobia, the little of it that they have face, and they are being supported by their fellow teammates. They are openly bringing their partners to social events without any hesitation and they are joining in socials. Most have said that they don't want to flaunt their sexuality but they are happy to be open about who they are seeing. This is an interesting point that athletes are happy to disclose their sexuality and even happy to bring their partner/girlfriend along but it is not something that they are overtly shouting about, showing off about or being political about. In fact it seems that the participants are seeing sexuality as a characteristic not the most important or the top most important characteristic of themselves. For some it is unimportant and they have a casual attitude that they happen to just be in love with someone of the same sex. The loss of the binary label of homosexuality and heterosexuality is interesting, this has shown the importance of using this coding procedure and I may have missed this if I had been using thematic coding with themes from previous literature.

Their inclusion extends to all aspects of the club socials, pitch time and the changing rooms. They are involved in practical jokes and have fun with their teammates. They are fully involved with banter, including sexual banter and banter about other women's bodies. All so far said that they are currently feeling welcomed by their club and have not felt any issues whatsoever. Some are even experiencing jealousy from the straight players about their relationships are the envious of the closeness that the lesbian couple have shown. The behaviour of heterosexual teammates definitely needs examining in the future to discover if these athletes are over emphasising the positivity of the environment that they are competing within.

Memo 4 – Head space

The summer and September have been particularly quiet in terms of participants to interview. Additionally it could have been due to it being the 'off season' for a number of sports or athletes may have been moving clubs. Although the results and the data so far has been exceptionally positive the down time has allowed me to consider if the results are positive because these are people willing to talk about their experiences. On the flip side considering that it is always negative responses that get people writing to companies and reviews on website. Perhaps these are too simplistic to consider but I need to find a broader range of experiences, sports, ages and geographical split would help too.

I have recently 2 international athletes and have another 2 willing to talk when their schedules allow. The data from these interviews are showing that while the team environment is positive the management is less inclusive with their behaviours. This data is the first aspect of negativity that can be easily coded. Interesting it does not fit into the categories that I had thought of in the previous memo as there are some negative aspects.

The other interviews that I have conducted have shown very similar results. The slow down of interviews has allowed space between myself and data which has been positive and has allowed me to go back to the interviews with an open mind as grounded theory suggests. I am also finding the memo process exceptionally useful for trying to make sense of the coding procedures. The stream of consciousness and simply writing is a very useful process for mapping how the data is starting to be organised. The initial coding procedure has been such a useful process in terms of getting to know the data and helping to let the data reveal the results.

Memo 5 – Nearing saturation

Aiming for a minimum of 30 interviews with 25 completed. I am nearing saturation, as the data is very similar for all the participants that have been spoken too. I have spoken to an elite athlete who had similar discussions about the organisation of the sport. The grassroots athletes are consistently positive. The environment that they are discussing is very inclusive and welcoming with no need for any intervention from captains or coaches regardless of ability. Athletes are able to come out without any sort of party or celebration they are dropping it into conversation and not making a big point of it and that seems to be consistent. The ability of the athlete seems unimportant in terms of their acceptance in fact numerous participants noted that other attributes such as personality were more important.

Interestingly some athletes are not the only lesbian on their team. In fact most have grown up in sports teams with openly lesbian athletes readily available to talk to and provide help and support. Although few athletes have actually used this process of support, which could be because of the number of athletes that are open has steadily increased. No longer is it just the one athlete that everyone looks up there are numerous athletes that are open and therefore the emphasis is not directed to one individual. This finding is inconsistent with some stating that they did ask for help and some not, although many have gone on to provide help and support of others. In a sort of passing the baton process, but without the pressure of being the only person that people can speak too because other athletes are out. Some of the younger athletes have mentioned about being the catalyst for others to come out but in one case this was in a school setting rather than a sporting setting. I think that this aspect of initial coding needs revisiting at the end as the results are unclear at the moment.

The data is still inherently positive and this is why I am pleased to have done the initial coding so in depth as ever with an open mind the results are exceptionally and consistently positive, which may not have been expected using other theoretical frameworks. Once the initial coding stage is complete it is essential that the data continues to tell the story and I must maintain the arm's length approach that has worked successfully so far.

Memo 6 – Focused coding

All the interviews have been conducted I had a few late offers for help so I reached 31 interviews in total. Having completed all the interviews and transcribed them I coded them all individually and then went over all the data again to ensure that I was familiar with it; this helped to remind myself of the original interviews that were some time ago.

Having completed the initial coding phase I have started to move towards focused coding. According to Charmaz (2006) this is where you take the most prevalent and noteworthy codes. Having done the line-by-line process throughout initial coding and having revisited early interviews to ensure consistency and that the data is grounded the move to focus coding has been quite straightforward. Using grounded theory has been exceptionally useful here as it is essential that previous research and any potential categories are ignored. Allowing the data to lead the way has been a rewarding process and has made me comfortable with the categories.

The focused coding has allowed me to start to piece together the most frequent initial codes. I have revisited Charmaz's book on a practical guide before starting this phase and this has helped with the development of this coding phase. I have been able to group together the more frequent a common codes that have come out of the data. Charmaz (2006) notes that it is important to "compare data to data" when creating a focused code (p.60). I can see examples of this being a useful process for example when participants have talked about not having a party about coming out – this has been mentioned by a number of different people. Having used this idea, I was then able to repeat this process with other of the data.

The main themes are:

- While the majority of the findings are exceptionally positive I am definitely go to need a section on the aspect that are not entirely positive. Particularly role models and sexism. There are a few odd comments about promoting lesbianism but these are all dated.
- Some interesting findings about people coming out have been shown in the data for example the number of people that discussed the lack of a party when they came out.
- It seems that ability is only important for international athletes whereas others put their acceptance down to other attributes such as personality
- Many of the participants did not want to use the word lesbian as they felt that they didn't want it to define them.
- Athletes felt safe to participate within but some do still get support from athletes that are out. However it is clear that they also get support from their heterosexual teammates. Some have provided support to younger or closeted athletes but this seems to depend on individuals rather than support. It is clear that the number of openly lesbian athletes has affected the climate and the way in which athletes need/seek support for coming out.

This area needed revisiting after the last memos and now all the interviews have been conducted this was a useful process as the initial coding showed that there were numerous aspects here.

- Athletes did not face homophobia from their peers and perhaps most interestingly when they have faced any homophobia they have challenged it as have their teammates.
- Language has been shown to be important in the process of acceptance – I need to consider where this fits into the results.

Memo 8 – Theoretical coding

Theoretical coding has been more difficult than the focused coding stage. It has taken a number of drafts to try and link the focused codes together to form relationships. However, this process has been useful for linking the groups together and moving towards a theoretical direction. Again I revisited Charmaz's (2006) practical guide; she stated "...these codes not only conceptualize how your substantive codes are related, but also move your analytic story in a theoretical direction" (p.63). Although it took a number of drafts it was a useful process. I used my A3 note pad to move the different focused codes around to link together before settling on drafts that I then typed up. Between each attempt at theoretical coding I left the codes for a number of days, revisited aspects of the focused codes before going through the process again. Initially I didn't have titles to the different aspects of theoretical coding but this occurred after a number of attempts of focused coding. I also used this opportunity to have a catch up with my supervisor to discuss the codes and how they may be organised into theoretical codes and the organisation of result chapters.

Draft 1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Inclusive sporting setting – socials • Easier out than in • Jealously from straight teammates • No homophobia • Full integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability not important • No need for safe space • Support from others • Positive community • Coming out quietly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging homophobia • Straight teammates pretending • Positive banter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cliques • Role models international • Sexual predators • Promotes lesbianism • Association through sexuality
--	--	--	--

Draft 2

Environment	Closet – non-existent	Changing times	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Inclusive sporting setting – socials • Positive community – family • No homophobia from teammates or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No closet • Safety 'out' • Easier out than in • Support from others • Supporting others – paying forward • Coming out quietly • Inclusive banter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging homophobia • Straight teammates pretending • Positive banter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cliques • Role models international • Sexual predators • Promotes lesbianism • Association limited – perception of lesbian athletes • Sexism

coaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any homophobia from outsiders is challenged Full integration Ability unimportant non-issue Jealously from straight teammates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image whatever comfortable 		
---	--	--	--

Draft 3

Environment	Homophobia	Support	Coming out	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Positive community Changing rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None Challenged Inclusive socials Positive banter Changing culture/society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support given to others – paying it forward Support from lesbian teammates Safe space not required Role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easier out than in Coming out quietly Ability Dismissing labels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cliques Role models Predators Promotes lesbianism Sexism Association

Appendix 2

Interview schedule – italics show questions added after initial interviews

Aims:

- 1) To identify the types of homophobia that openly lesbian athletes might face while participating in community sport
- 2) To examine how these athletes navigate homophobia and/or heteronormativity in sport
- 3) To establish the locus of homophobia and whether it is internal or external to the team
- 4) To discover how homophobia has differently manifested throughout their playing careers
- 5) To examine the extent, type and acceptance of homophobic behaviour within and outside team sports
- 6) To examine for the use and effectiveness coping strategies
- 7) To examine cohort differences in homophobic experiences

Background	Team culture
Aim 1, 4	Aims 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Ethnicity • Sport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Length of time playing in total ○ Length of time of the team ○ Level of team in the league structure ○ What is the highest level played (national etc) ○ Why this team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you discuss your partner on nights out? • Do you have team socials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you wear? ○ Where do you go? ○ Is your partner welcome? ○ <i>Do heterosexual mates bring their boyfriends?</i> • Is there any banter in the changing rooms? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What kind of things are said? ○ Examples ○ Is the banter different in the changing room compared to going out on socials?
Coming out	Teammates/coach
Aims 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	Aims 1 2, 5, 6, 7

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you a regular starter? Are you important to the team • Do you think your ability has affected your acceptance? • What does being openly lesbian mean to you? • <i>Do you use partner/girlfriend?</i> • How did you come out? • What happened? • Had people come out before you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did this affect you? ○ How were they accepted • Have more people come out since you have? • How do you know your teammates accept you? • Have you ever experienced any homophobic language or behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outsiders ○ Teammates 	<p>Teammate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the heterosexual members of your team ever get labelled as a lesbian? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do they react? ○ Have they spoken to you about how they feel when this has happened? <p>Coach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe your coaches' attitude towards you? • Has their attitude changed since you have been on the team? • Do they ever use homophobic language?
--	---

Appendix 3

Coding example

NETBALL – Participant J – Brooke		
Rachael	Ok can you tell me a bit about your background first, so your age, ethnicity and location.	
Brooke	Yes. I am 32, white British, brought up in (town name) and live in (town name) now.	Background information Born in 1980s
Rachael	And a bit about your sporting background.	
Brooke	Played when I was younger, kind of you know very young up to about 11 and 12 played a lot of football and then through school played football and hockey. At university played some football, some cricket and then after, and netball sorry at school as well, and then after university I mainly played netball.	Sporting Background High sporting prowess Played a variety of sports Settled on netball
Rachael	So how long have you been playing netball?	
Brooke	Well I played through school and played for a club during school and played for the satellite kind of set up that we had at secondary school and then I kind of stopped at uni so it must be about 8 years in the last kind of before since university 8 year's worth.	High level previously Stopped for a period of time Been playing for a long time
Rachael	How long have you been on your current team?	

Brooke	I have played for the club since, for probably about five years and I have played for three different teams within that five years	Average time with team Variety of experiences in different teams
Rachael	And what kind of level is the team is the team that you generally play for?	
Brooke	Um so is that this time round?	Level of team
Rachael	Well, the one you've played for most probably	
Brooke	I have played in the (county name) Prem the most and that's probably, I'm coming back from injury so that's probably where I think I will probably end up so	High level in terms of grassroots Injury issues at the moment
Rachael	Is that like a regional league?	
Brooke	It's so it's all of (county name) so you've got obviously (names three towns) so it's the County I suppose it is a County League there isn't such a necessarily a discreet County squad but I guess it is the top County league. There's a (names neighbouring county) league and I think after that it goes up to Regional. So it is basically like the actual Prem where the England players play, there's then Regional 1, Regional 2 and then there's (county name) Prem	New level for grassroots Top county team Explanation of league structure
Rachael	OK	

Brooke	I guess it's whatever the fourth flight	Explanation of league structure
Rachael	But is it the top County league that you can play?	
Brooke	Yes	
Rachael	What's the highest level you have played? You said satellite is that like County?	
Brooke	It is the old kind of set up for County	
Rachael	OK. And why did you pick this team that you play for now?	
Brooke	Um I played for (team name) when I was at school and when I first came back from uni I played for them but they were a quite small club. As I moved to (town name) just location wise it became a bit of a pain and one of the players, who I play with now, she got asked to, was head hunted I suppose by (club name) and that kind of it coincided when I moved schools as well to work for (town name) and (team name) originally trained at (town name) so it kind of made sense if I played for that club. I think there were five or six of moved from (names both clubs). I suppose the starting point of that was (players name) getting head hunted.	<p>Played locally</p> <p>Chose team on location</p> <p>Moved with friends and for logistical reasons</p> <p>Mass movement to new club</p>
Rachael	Did you all move at the same time then?	

Brooke	Yeah	Moved with friends
Rachael	Did you all end up in the same team?	
Brooke	No	Friends separated at new club
Rachael	So you went to the same club and you were split up?	
Brooke	Hmm hmm (yes)	Between teams
Rachael	Between the teams?	
Brooke	Hmm hmm (yes)	Split up friendship groups
Rachael	And on the team that you are currently on, do you regularly start when you are not injured?	
Brooke	Yeah	Regular starter on the team
Rachael	Do you think your ability has any impact on your acceptance onto the team?	
Brooke	Um what do you mean?	

Rachael	So the fact that you are a key player, did that help you get accepted as a lesbian athlete?	
Brooke	Um yeah er I don't know. Um this is a good question to ask. I suppose do I think they accept me more? I don't think so to be honest. I don't think it has any odds to them. To me it might um but I don't think it does to them. What does it matter?	Sexuality no impact Ability and sexuality not linked Dismissing sexuality as unimportant
Rachael	The fact they knew you were gay and you know the fact that you are a starter – did those two things have any correlation?	
Brooke	I don't think so no.	Ability and acceptance not linked on the team
Rachael	OK. And on your team do you go out for socials?	
Brooke	Yeah	Socially active club
Rachael	What kind of things do you do?	
Brooke	Um so obviously we've had the Christmas do and then the end Season do and then the, that's kind of as a Club and then friends within that Club we all go out for somebody's birthday so we are going out next week for someone's birthday. Um you know Christmas dos generally a curry, bring your own drink and then going out afterwards. End of Season's do generally hire somewhere, have a meal and drinks and then presentations.	Wide variety of socials at the club Variety of venues and events

Rachael	If you go out after the curry night, what kind of places do you go to?	
Brooke	Um kind of posh, straight kind of girly bars I guess	Venues are heterosexual no gay bars
Rachael	And do you ever go to gay bars?	
Brooke	There aren't any in (town name) so. I don't know whether we would do if there were. I can't imagine they would mind but we don't.	No access to gay bars locally Potential inclusive socials – untested
Rachael	What kind of things do you wear when you go out?	
Brooke	Um I wear leggings and a top, dress, skirt and a top.	Wears feminine clothing to social events
Rachael	When you go out on socials is your partner be welcome?	
Brooke	Yes	Partner welcome at socials - inclusive social
Rachael	Do other people take their boyfriends?	

Brooke	Um at the kind of, not at the presentation evenings or the Christmas dos but obviously any birthday parties or we often like one of girls has got a tradition to do something at the races on the races and then partners would go but not at the Club. No-one's partners would go for the Club stuff.	Inclusive socials – apart from club events Casual socials – everyone is welcome
Rachael	So girlfriends or boyfriends?	
Brooke	Potentially they have met us out afterwards but not kind of involved in the whole thing.	Team socials – team only
Rachael	And why is that?	
Brooke	I think it is because we are a really big club – there's five teams and each team has got you know a ten person squad, that's 50 and then there are some people who just train so you're looking at, if everyone's there, 60 people so that's quite a lot if you then have everybody bringing other halves it would be a massive you'd need a massive venue and everything else. I also think that sometimes when you bring partners in it changes the dynamics and actually you want to and you know it's maybe not as fun for them in terms of you want that evening to be about you and your club and you talk about netball and you talk about stuff you would talk about with your club mates you wouldn't necessarily have your partner there.	Team only – because of logistics Large numbers – logistical issues Team celebration – partners not involved in sport About the club/about the sport
Rachael	If your partner was welcome would you take her with you?	
Brooke	Yeah	Happy to take

		partner to events
Rachael	Do you feel happy discussing her on a night out with your teammates?	
Brooke	Yeah because when we were on tour the people I shared a room with probably spoke to (girlfriends name) more than I did. Any time she rang they wanted to, they would run and answer the phone and talk her through what we'd done in the day and then pass me over when they'd had a chat with her.	Discuss relationship with teammates Teammates supportive of relationship
Rachael	So you felt that they like that they actively wanted to speak to your girlfriend?	
Brooke	Yes	Open about sexuality – teammates interested in partner
Rachael	Did you find that a bit strange?	
Brooke	No I liked it!	Enjoyed the attention of teammates – acceptance of relationship
Rachael	Why did you like it?	
Brooke	Because it's a very, you know not that I would have any reason for them not being OK with it but it is a very clear overt way of showing their support and you know their acceptance of it	Teammates accepting and supporting the relationship

Rachael	And when you were on tour were there any issues about sharing a room with you?	
Brooke	No	Teammates happy to share rooms
Rachael	And did you have single beds?	
Brooke	It was bunk beds. No not at all. I mean like the girls I shared with are the girls I would consider I'm closer to in terms of friends they're very, they are quite relaxed in terms of how they are. So they would walk round with very little clothing on. One of them waxed the other one's armpits whilst we were there. We had to be head to toe in body paint so we body painted each other from our underwear.	Accepting teammates Undressing not an issue No distance in sleeping Friends – more than teammates Physical contact not a problem
Rachael	Were there ever any comments about the fact that you are a lesbian?	
Brooke	No, no.	Acceptance from teammates
Rachael	What about banter? What's the banter like?	
Brooke	Um yeah, yeah fairly brutal! Fairly brutal.	Banter within the team evident

Rachael	In what way?	
Brooke	<p>It centres around netball and playing so you know they will be brutal about if you've made a mistake or you've played crap or even if you haven't played crap but you've done one thing wrong it's fairly you know significant and they are quite competitive in terms of ... so yesterday (teammate name) who is kind of a big personality within the, she's in the first team, big personality in the club and she was banging on about the fact that she's been given Player and you know kind of in a jokey way um and I couldn't go on because I was injured and you know they were saying to me "Oh you're not a game changer so it doesn't matter (participants name), you're not a game changer!" It's that kind of thing. You know I was injured and had gone and spent £45 on a physio to get myself fit for the game but couldn't, I did the warm up and it my calf wasn't having it, so they were giving it "Oh we thought you'd fake an injury! Oh!" you know it's that kind of thing and in a fairly relentless kind of way!</p>	<p>Sport related banter</p> <p>Banter about the game</p> <p>Team banter about being injured and unable to play</p> <p>Team banter about injuries and no able to play</p>
Rachael	So do you have to have quite a lot of self confidence to be part of the team?	
Brooke	Yes	High self-confidence due to the team banter
Rachael	And does the banter vary, when you're getting changed to when you're kind of out on socials?	

Brooke	Um, um not really! I'm just thinking of when er there was a lady who was within the club, an older lady, who was quite dishevelled and er me and another player happened to go to the loo and we were going through the changing block and when our friend came out of that this woman had no clothes on and so and because my friend had bent down to pick something up she looked up and was kind of eye level with the crotch and so from then on, for months, we were saying that [players name] has never been the same and she did kind of look quite a bit different so there was a bit of like that sort of banter about that for quite a while! It was fairly hilarious. But we don't tend to change, I mean with netball because you turn up in your dress and you go home in your dress um you know. On a night out er they talk and they have quite a, I suppose you would describe it as quite a masculine kind of banter when they go out so I think their boyfriends have told them about this thing called 'cock blocking'. So if you are talking to a girl and then you know you are kind of getting in there and then a male friend came along and that would be a 'cock block' or something and so when they're out that kind of group, again ones that I would probably sort of think myself as friends with, they talk about 'cock blocking' and they'll talk about you know that sort of thing.	<p>Banter in variety of venues</p> <p>Banter about bodies</p> <p>Sexual banter occurring in changing rooms</p> <p>No changing facilities for the team</p> <p>Banter defined as masculine</p> <p>Banter about relationships</p> <p>Banter about relationships with men</p>
Rachael	Typically people would kind of associate netball with being a more feminine kind of sport, does your team fit that stereotype?	
Brooke	Absolutely not. Absolutely not!	Banter different from expectation of netball teams

Rachael	What kind of banter is there? Do topics like sexuality or bodies come up?	
Brooke	Yeah they talk at length, at length they talk about attractive women and if they're on, if we are about to play a team they will eye them up and they'll if there's somebody stands out to them that they think is attractive, they will either be jealous of whoever's playing against them or you know or like say something along the lines "oh make sure you give her some contact" or something like that. These are all women in relationships with men and they will talk about having netball crushes on various people so three or four of the [opposition team name], no four of the [opposition team name] girls came over to (current club) after the (previous club name) lot had come a couple of years ago and two of them are really quite attractive and so they will be like "Oh I had a netball crush on (players name)" and they will openly say it now to (players name) face, (players name) just laughs and says "yeah I had a netball crush on (different players name) or whatever	<p>Banter about female players</p> <p>Banter about same-sex attraction for heterosexual players</p> <p>Banter about same-sex attraction</p> <p>(context of banter – heterosexual players)</p> <p>Banter about same-sex attraction</p> <p>Banter about same-sex attraction</p>
Rachael	So they openly talk about having like netball crushes on other people?	
Brooke	Yeah	Banter about same-sex attraction
Rachael	And that's just laughed about?	
Brooke	Yeah	Banter about same-sex attraction – comedy on the team

Rachael	Nobody minds?	
Brooke	I don't , no not that I can see no.	Banter about same-sex attraction. Inclusive regardless of sexuality
Rachael	And obviously netball is a non-contact sport but you have quite a lot of contact with other people - do they ever mention anything about the fact that obviously you are openly gay when there is physical contact?	
Brooke	No I mean no not at all. If ever they've mentioned anything about me contacting it's not in a, they don't kind of associate within like any kind of sexual way, it's more like a you know in a kind of "Bloody hell! You just smacked into me" kind of way	Physical contact – not sexual Physical contact sport related
Rachael	You obviously don't get changed or anything but when you are getting ready on the court, is there any banter about but is there any kind of banter that relates to changing?	
Brooke	Um, yes sometimes. You've got for example (players name) will wear a normal bra for netball and then other people who have got who are bigger busted will you know comment on that. One of the (opposition team name) girls (players name) will always put my front bibs on which means that she to like touch my chest area! and that's her little thing that she does and if she's not there then I'll be "Ah gutted nobody is going to put my front bibs on!!" as a kind of a joke. And you know I hurt my calf I said to (players name) "I'm going to need a massage here" and then on	Banter – about clothing Banter – about bodies Banter – physical touching Banter – physical contact

	Saturday when I saw her she said “I’m warming my thumbs up to give you a rub down (participants name)!” and again she’s got a fiancé who’s a man	Banter – physical touching Heterosexual teammates – physical contact
Rachael	And so obviously putting your front bib on obviously there’s quite a lot of physical contact there, do you need help putting your front bib on?	
Brooke	No it happened because you have to have help putting your back bib on so I gave her a bib and then was carrying on talking and then she put it on the front and so we laughed and then it’s now become a kind of a thing	Banter – physical contact Banter – physical contact
Rachael	What if anyone else puts your front bib on?	
Brooke	In a joking way she would say “hands off! I do that. That’s my job” kind of thing	Banter – jealousy of teammate
Rachael	And how do you feel about that kind of banter?	
Brooke	I think it’s funny. I like it.	Positive banter – acceptance being shown
Rachael	It doesn’t offend you in any way?	
Brooke	Absolutely not, no.	Positive banter

		acceptance being shown
Rachael	And do the rest of the team find that quite funny?	
Brooke	Yeah	Environment is relaxed and jovial
Rachael	So on your team, like you have obviously mentioned quite a lot of them are in relationships or married - are you the only gay person on your team?	
Brooke	That I know, yeah. That I know of. No-one else is. People might be gay and not be out but	Only open player in club
Rachael	And what about in the rest of the club?	
Brooke	Yeah	Only open player in entire club
Rachael	So you're the only openly lesbian athlete?	
Brooke	To my knowledge yeah. Like I said there may be somebody who is but it's not common knowledge	Only open player
Rachael	And when you first kind of came out was that at uni then or afterwards?	
Brooke	No it was after uni	Came out later

Rachael	And were you playing on the team that you play on now?	
Brooke	Um no I played on a different team	Came out to different team
Rachael	And were there any openly gay players on that team?	
Brooke	No	Only open player previously – not a new experience
Rachael	So have you ever had it where there has been an openly gay player on like a football team that you have played for at uni or anything that you have kind of looked up to?	
Brooke	Um yeah I suppose so. At uni there were a number of girls who were gay with other you know with girlfriends and obviously very calm about it and were happy with it	Other open players at university when closeted
Rachael	And did that affect you in any way how you were feeling?	
Brooke	Um I suppose it, um because I wasn't at that stage so I wasn't my family didn't know and I hadn't really kind of accepted it to myself um so I suppose seeing them it was and seeing how you know normal their life was um it I don't know I kind of I suppose it I kind of used them to work out what I thought about it and whether I thought it	Coming out debate – self acceptance needed Not comfortable coming out – self

	was odd or whether I thought it was OK and how you know like um learning vicariously through them like how other people treat them when they are talking about their girlfriends and you know kind of working out what consequences there are by watching what happens to them and then you weigh up whether it is safe or not I suppose.	acceptance Used open athletes in the decision making Learning through open athletes Coming out debate
Rachael	Did they seem accepted? Did it seem like it was safe to come out?	
Brooke	Yeah, yeah	Environment was safe
Rachael	And did that affect your thought process in any way?	
Brooke	Um yeah but it also, I don't know whether it was because it was at uni, I lived with the captain of the football team who was straight um. It also it seemed like a quite a big thing, I don't know whether it was at uni and it's the age that you are but that almost seemed to define them. Rather than anything about them as a person "it's so and so is gay, she plays centre forward", her girlfriend is.... rather than so and so does this at university is like this oh and she has a girlfriend so in a way it kind of put me off slightly or maybe it's because you know because that was going on in my mind I perceived that was the main thing about them so I kind of filtered it to just be the main attribute people talked about was the fact that they were gay. Maybe that's my perception, not what	Labelling was negatively perceived Labels became definitions of individuals Labelling negative experience Labels –defining

	actually happened but it felt like 'god this is, it's a massive thing, a different, almost like a different person because they're or that choice that they've made has defined them' as opposed to anything else	individuals Self acceptance links Disassociation from labelling Coming out became an issue
Rachael	Did you ever talk to them about that?	
Brooke	They would talk to me about it as opposed to the other way round because I think they thought I was in a bit of conflict so they would come and speak to me and try and kind of reassure me but I wasn't in a place to really want to hear so I didn't really listen or really take on board or anything	Support from lesbian teammates at uni
Rachael	Did they try and offer some support?	
Brooke	Yeah, yeah	Support from teammates at uni
Rachael	Do you think that the fact that you perceived as that was an important thing, hindered you coming out the closet?	
Brooke	Yeah that would have done. Yeah I think it would have done. Although they were accepted they were also, completely defined by it whereas now I don't feel like that at all	Label was important Lesbian became identity
Rachael	Do you think it was to do with your age?	

Brooke	Yeah it might well be. I think it is an age thing but it is also the people that were there at that time and the and it just so happened that (teammate), who I lived with who was the captain who's straight, and she played football at home and so all of her friends were gay and I think she got frustrated by it, because um and you can imagine you know if you are in a big friendship group and then there's five of you and four are gay then the chances are there's going to be in relationships within that group and then they break up and as the kind of straight person that's certainly out of it you'd be the one who has to deal with it all so I think she got frustrated with the gay scene and I think she so then so I think that kind of having that in the mix kind of changed it and made it so er so it was a more maybe more negative thing. Um I don't know whether it was a uni thing or it was the fact that you know you had her as the captain which mixed it up slightly	Age important factor Lesbian cliques formed in teams Friendship groups issues surrounding sexuality at uni Tension in friendship group at uni Friendship group issues Tensions in the team about sexuality
Rachael	Do you think it was more the straight people defining the gay players?	
Brooke	Yeah	Labelling was done by heterosexual players
Rachael	Did the fact that you lived with them have an effect?	
Brooke	Yeah	Labelling became important Closed environment – living, studying,

		playing together
Rachael	And when you did decide to come out how did it happen on your team? How did you come out?	
Brooke	Um I think um I think I basically I'd told some of my friends that I had a girlfriend er some of my close friends I wasn't playing netball with one of those close friends I do play netball with so I told her and then and then I think (friends name) just came to watch me play and then I think (friends name) had then said "Oh Brooke's girlfriend is coming to watch" and that was how, that was it. I didn't kind of have a big, you know, coming out party!	<p>Coming out – talking to friends</p> <p>Coming out – friends first who were teammates</p> <p>Coming out – friends outted</p> <p>Coming out – no party, in conversation</p>
Rachael	And is that on your current team?	
Brooke	Yeah	Coming out on current team
Rachael	Did you come out on the team you played for before?	
Brooke	No	Previously closeted first team to be open on
Rachael	So would you say it is relatively recent then that you have come out?	
Brooke	I'm 32 now and I was 27 (so it's 6 years)	Coming out –

		mid/late 20s
Rachael	So some people might consider that quite old?	
Brooke	Yeah	Coming out, mid/late 20s
Rachael	In terms of coming out?	
Brooke	Yeah	Coming out mid/late 20s
Rachael	Do you think that that affected you in anyway, the fact that you were a bit older?	
Brooke	Maybe.	
Rachael	Do you think you dealt with it in a different way because you were older?	
Brooke	Maybe. I wasn't ready at any other stage to do it so.	Personal struggle to come out
Rachael	And when you came out to your team or your girlfriend came to watch did you get any comments from anyone? Did anyone say anything?	
Brooke	No, just nice things. Just "Ah she's nice" and that's it.	Supportive teammates

Rachael	And have you ever experienced homophobic language from any of your teammates?	
Brooke	No	No language issues – supportive teammates
Rachael	What about outsiders or people watching or opposition?	
Brooke	Er no I can't think of anything	No homophobic language
Rachael	Never in netball?	
Brooke	I'm just trying to rattle through ... No, no	No homophobic language
Rachael	How do you know your teammates accept you?	
Brooke	<p>Um well that's a hard question. By many different ways. Um they ask me about (girlfriends name) in the same way they would ask about anyone else's boyfriend so. I've been off injured and when I came back they were like "Oh you still with (girlfriends name)?" "Yeah" "Oh are you moving in together?" "Oh not at the minute" "Oh right you're taking it a bit slow, that's good" you know like that it's in terms of how they ask a question it's not any different.</p> <p>I wonder whether the fact um going back thinking of uni I wonder whether because everybody's straight apart from me I'm just treated the same</p>	<p>Supportive teammates – interested in relationship</p> <p>Supportive teammates – showing no difference for lesbian athlete</p> <p>Asking about relationship – interested/supportive</p>

	<p>whereas if um with at uni everyone was gay pretty much apart from (friends name) so and she wasn't prepared to be, she didn't want to be treated the same because she wasn't gay, she didn't want to go to the gay places do you know what I mean? Whereas I'm quite happy to go to whatever place I'm not bothered by that. I wonder whether that makes it?</p>	<p>Minority group at netball</p> <p>Change from previous teams – majority – difference in environment</p> <p>Equal treatment important</p> <p>Fitting in with majority</p>
Rachael	So she was in the minority when you were at uni?	
Brooke	Yeah. Because I'm in the minority I'm not threatening, I'm not you know I'm happy to go along and with whatever	<p>Fitting in with majority</p> <p>Following majority</p> <p>No threat</p>
Rachael	Do you think the fact that you are not threatening allows to people to have different banter with you?	
Brooke	Yeah maybe because, yeah maybe. I don't know whether I think they are, really very, I don't think they see me as any different at all	<p>No threat</p> <p>No difference (sexuality lost importance)</p>
Rachael	And would you use the term girlfriend or partner?	
Brooke	Um depends who I was talking to.	Language dependant

		on audience
Rachael	In what way?	
Brooke	Well if I was talking to my team if I was talking to people I feel happy with knowing I would say "my girlfriend" because I prefer that as a term. If I was talking to like and I had to ring up the doctors to ask if (girlfriends name) could pick up my prescription I said "other half or partner" because then it could be a man or a woman	Language dependant on audience Teammates supportive of relationship Not open about sexuality in mainstream
Rachael	Would you ever use boyfriend or change pronouns to cover up your sexuality?	
Brooke	No, no.	No change in pronoun
Rachael	So what does being openly lesbian mean to you?	
Brooke	Um er! It just means that! I mean it means that to me that your family, but I don't know, I guess your family know but I think I don't know if that's my definition of it but the definition I've been you know people have kind of told me it's when your family know which is a big thing	Labels connected to coming out Coming out to family means open
Rachael	Do you think that that's it is just when your family know?	
Brooke	Well no because your family you could not know	Coming out difficult

	your family whatsoever so maybe people that are close to you know or maybe it should be defined by actually people you don't know when you introduce somebody as a girlfriend not as a friend. Is that being open? Holding their hand down the street. I don't know.	to define Change in language to show openness Openness means physical contact
Rachael	Do you hold your girlfriend's hand down the street?	
Brooke	Um I do but not in the middle of town but that's because of my work as opposed to being about, If I'm in a city I would hold her hand.	Open? Not out at work Open when not known
Rachael	So are you not out at work then?	
Brooke	No	Open? Not out at work
Rachael	And why is that?	
Brooke	Um I don't, I don't want to, I don't feel strongly enough to deal with the you know I think it would overall I think it would be a very positive thing for a teacher to come out and I would be in full support of teachers who do. However I don't feel strongly enough about the plight of coming out and that sort of thing to deal with the there would obviously be some kind of upset, you know. There's 1,500 people in the school at least two of them I'm sure would have a comment to say which is perfectly normal and whatever I don't, I don't it, doesn't, I don't care, not that I don't care, care is not the right word but I'm not bothered enough I don't feel passionately enough to want to have to	Open/labelling – not significant Not significant issue Not political/strong feelings Fear of fall out – still homophobia present? Fear of minority Sexuality – not

	say this is who I have chosen to be with enough to deal with the two that would not be happy about it.	significant/not an issue Avoiding openness Non-political stance
Rachael	But you said your club is based at where you work, are there any problems there that if you have students playing on the same team as you?	
Brooke	Um yeah so some of them found out and knew so some of the 6 th form know	Some student know Openness contradictory
Rachael	But there have never been any repercussions from that or anything?	
Brooke	No, no	No homophobia from students/parents
Rachael	What do you think about the fact that like some people might suggest that you could be a really good role model?	
Brooke	Yeah I think I probably could be. but I think I probably would be because I don't think I'm necessarily I don't think necessarily the kids at school would think I was gay and their I think you know sometimes people have not so much now today but certainly when I was younger they'd have a you know little type fit in their head of what a gay person looks like or a gay woman looks like and I don't think I would fit that so I think that in a sense would be good for them to not judge people and not be stereotypical but I'd rather I don't care enough about the fact that I like girls I'd	Role model not to do with sexuality Does not fit stereotypes Changing perceptions of stereotypes

	rather be a role model in terms of being kind and decent and treat people with respect and you know admitting to my mistakes. I'd much I think those sorts of things are much more important than actually who I choose to spend my time with is unimportant and almost potentially if I were to come out and you know at school and be this kind of role model I think that is almost making a bigger deal out of it. It doesn't actually matter who somebody spends their time with as long as they are kind and a decent person I think it's fine. But sometimes if I were to do that it would almost make it make it a bigger issue than it actually is.	Not political or important Sexuality – unimportant Other personality traits more important Relationships – unimportant Coming out – drawing attention to one aspect of personality Dismissing labels Non-issue
Rachael	Do you think that goes back to what you said about the people at uni being defined by their sexuality?	
Brooke	Yeah could be	Avoiding labelling from university
Rachael	The fact that if you came out at work you'd potentially be defined by it?	
Brooke	Yeah maybe	Avoiding labelling at work
Rachael	So the lesbian label would that be something that you don't subscribe to?	

Brooke	Yes definitely	Not subscribing to lesbian label
Rachael	Because?	
Brooke	Yeah	
Rachael	Do you think it's important?	
Brooke	Because I don't, um I just, I don't, I don't know I don't think er you know if you say the terms of gay and lesbian and things there is like almost like a category you know lots of different qualities that can then sort of can be attributed to them and I just I believe in people being individuals and actually it's a bit like the religious thing I'm not religious but if you looked at how I lived my life it is probably quite a Christian way in terms of I think I am quite thoughtful of other people and I'm kind and I don't judge people but I wouldn't subscribe to being religious because I wouldn't want all I don't want I want to define it myself not by you know. Do you know what I mean?	<p>Dismissing labels, sexuality unimportant</p> <p>Dismissing label</p> <p>Other attributes more important</p> <p>Avoid all labels – religion</p> <p>Labelling – avoid defining groups</p> <p>Becoming an individual</p>
Rachael	Yes	
Brooke	I'm not being very clear	
Rachael	So you don't want to be defined by a label?	

Brooke	Yeah because if there's you know if say the label lesbian had ten qualities attached to it seven of which I may support the other three I may not. I don't want it, I want to be, I want it to be bespoke – an irritating word – I want it to be bespoke so actually this is who I am. I don't, it's not because of anything else	<p>Individuality important</p> <p>Dismissing application of labels</p> <p>Labels – stereotypes</p> <p>Not defined by label</p> <p>Individual characteristics</p>
Rachael	So do you just see it as part of your personality?	
Brooke	I don't think it is part of my personality, I think it is just I think it is just who I feel comfortable with being with	<p>Sexuality label unimportant</p> <p>Person first, individual</p>
Rachael	And have you ever had anyone ask you for advice like either on your netball team or at school? or asked you about coming out or anything to do with being a lesbian?	
Brooke	No - sorry	No support given
Rachael	No you're alright. You don't have to be sorry. When you are kind of out and about do your or on the side of a netball court do your teammates ever get labelled as a lesbian?	
Brooke	No	No labelling of teammates as a

		result of open sexuality
Rachael	Because they play sport?	
Brooke	No	No labelling in sport
Rachael	And do you have a coach?	
Brooke	Yes	Coach evident
Rachael	And how would you describe your coaches attitude towards you?	
Brooke	Um in what sense? In relation to me having a girlfriend?	
Rachael	Yeah	
Brooke	Um she's I don't know, nothing. Absolutely zero. No there's, there's nothing either way support or she doesn't acknowledge it in any way.	No change in coaches behaviour in relation to openness
Rachael	Do you think that you are treated the same as everyone else?	
Brooke	Yes	Coach acceptance – treated as everyone else

Rachael	Has she ever used homophobic language at all?	
Brooke	No	No homophobic language from coach
Rachael	And would you describe your experience then in your current team as wholly positive?	
Brooke	Yes	Wholly positive experience
Rachael	And do you think there's anything else that might be useful for the study?	
Brooke	No	No additional comments

Appendix 4 – ethical consent form



Participants' Information Sheet and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Changing times: Discovering how openly lesbian athletes navigate team sports

Thank you for expressing an interest in this project. Please read the following information sheet ***carefully*** before deciding whether or not to participate in the project. If you choose to participate in the project, we thank you. As a participant, prior to taking part in any testing, you will be required to:

1. Carefully read this ***Information Sheet*** which will outline the procedures and the potential risks to yourself;
2. Complete and sign a ***Consent Form***

The Consent Form can be found at the end of this document.

If you do not decide to participate in the project there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

1. What are the aims of the project?

The aim of the present project is to investigate the effects of homophobia in women's sport.

2. What type of participants does the project require?

The present project hopes to recruit an approximate total of 30-40

3. What will the participants be asked to do?

Individuals who volunteer to participate in the present project will be asked to be interviewed for approximately 1 hour. Participants will be asked questions relating to their experiences in sport to discover if they have faced homophobia during their playing career.

4. What are the potential risks and discomforts of the project?

None

5. Other general health and safety considerations

None

6. Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?

Individuals may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage of any kind.

7. What information will be collected, and how will it be used?

Data from the testing procedures described in Section 3 will be collected and used to for a PhD thesis. This data will be stored securely in a lockable filing cabinet in the Department of Sports Studies. Only the Project Supervisor and Investigator will have access to the data. All data will be anonymous and destroyed after a period of five years.

The results of this project may be published, but the information will not be linked to any specific person. A copy of all your personal information, including results, supplement type and dosage will be given to you after completion of testing.

8. What if participants have any questions?

If you have any questions about the project please feel free to contact either:

The Investigator

Name: Rachael Bullingham Email: rachael.bullingham@winchester.ac.uk

Supervisor

Name: Dr. Eric Anderson Job Title: Professor of Sports studies

Email: eric.anderson@winchester.ac.uk

Participant's Consent

I _____ consent to take in part in the research
study titled:

Changing times: Discovering how openly lesbian athletes navigate team sports

The investigator has explained the full details and parameters of all tests and procedures to me, and I have read the Information Sheet. I confirm that I have understood what participation will involve, and confirm that I have been made aware of all the potential benefits and risks of participation.

I would like to be provided with a copy of the following for my personal records
(please tick):

Information Sheet

☐

Consent Form

☐

Signature _____

Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____