

BIPHOBIA IN SPORT – SEXUAL IDENTITY AND EXCLUSIONARY PRACTICES

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Brunel
University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

School of Sport and Education

April, 2013

Abstract

Research in the field of bisexuality has identified that bisexuals experience a unique kind of phobia, in that phobic responses to their sexual preferences appear from both mainstream *and* LGBT communities. However, little research in the UK has been conducted within the arena of sport culture to cater for the particular welfare needs of bisexual athletes. As an additional consequence, there is little theorisation of bisexuality available within the context of sport sociology. This research contributes to debates in the politics of identity by exploring a fairly new landscape within sport culture using a Foucauldian analysis of power. Discourse analyses have been utilised to interpret thirteen semi-structured interviews conducted with British athletes on the topics of bi-invisibility and the general problem of homophobia. This research also contributes to discussions concerning the mobilisation of power through discourse – certain discursive practices function to legitimize normative over non-normative sexualities and queer/fluid/bisexual identities are further stigmatized and othered. The main findings suggest that exclusions are mobilised most effectively, ironically, through sport cultural practices of inclusion, in that they are almost exclusively sexual identity-based. Additionally, this study offers a theoretical explanation for the peripheralisation of bisexuality in sport culture which can shed new light on bisexual theory in mainstream culture. It makes important suggestions as to the new directions future research can take in order to advance the current knowledge bases concerning the effects of bantering. This research proposes that practices of bantering can be just as marginalising as those of bullying. In the resultant climate of *covert* exclusions, organizational sporting bodies could benefit from paying close attention to the disempowering effects of biphobic and homophobic language, whether humorously intended or otherwise. This is with particular respect to youth footballing academies and spectator communities.

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Acknowledgements

Might I take this opportunity to thank those very special people who have been there for me along this amazing journey, from the bottom of my heart. At one point in my PhD journey I described the experience as akin to that of building a house, one brick per day. There have been times when I have hit walls, and my closest friends, family and Angels have been there to help me break through them and conquer my fears. Many obstacles have been circumvented by love alone, and for that love I am eternally grateful. My soul-family has shown me unrelenting love and patience and needless to say, I have learnt that patience is a virtue. I would like to thank all those who have been patient with *me* along the way. I am proud of this thesis, but also so proud of each and every person who in one way or another has helped me to stay strong and positive, and complete it.

To my family; Mum, Dad, Linnie, Rob, Sam, Will, all my extended family, all my family in Heaven that I have felt helping me along, Dr Mairi Bew, and Nicky Lemon, I cannot thank you enough. Mum, you've always believed in me and you've taken many's a weepy phone call from me at goodness-knows-what o'clock to help soothe and reassure me. Dad, you've always been there to fly the flag and tell me that everything is going to be alright and also that I can indeed organise a booze-up in a brewery, if I put my mind to it. Caroline, thank you for being there on the end of a phone through the trying times and for being there to help me celebrate the good times, too. Rob, thank you for satisfying your big-brotherly duties and ribbing me endlessly for doing *yet another* degree. Your voice at the end of a phone has always been a comfort. Thank you to my nephews for smiling through skinto-Christmas-after skinto-birthday-after skinto-Christmas over the last five years, and for their happy faces, whatever the weather. Thank you, all. I could not have done this without you. I am truly blessed, and I know that somebody up there really does love me because I have all of you, as gifts. I thank all my family in Heaven, too. I have felt you all smiling down. Much love.

To my supervision family; what patient souls you have been! My dearest thanks to Professor Celia Brackenridge, for allowing me to veer off on my Queer Theory-shaped tangent and make this project my own. Thank you for having faith in me, and thank you for allowing me to be myself. I recognise that I was never going to be the most linear student and I thank you dearly for celebrating my quirks. I genuinely appreciate your love and support, and the trust you have invested in me to give me such space to grow and develop my own ideas. Thank you, Celia. I would like to proffer a heartfelt thank you also to Dr Pam Alldred. Pam, you have been there for me, to offer me kind words of reassurance and positivity when I have felt utterly idiotic and brainless. You have brought me back to earth countless times over coffee and cake, and have reminded me that I do indeed know what I am doing. Thank you for your love and support. Many thanks also to Professor Ian Rivers, who gave me important direction and made me realise that my research was important. Thank you, Ian. The support of my supervision team has been absolutely essential throughout this process and I am so very grateful to you all. Thank you all for the many hours you put into this project. I am eternally grateful.

A very special thank you to my sponsorship family, The Football Association, especially Sue Law and Funke Awoderu. Your support and engagement with my project has been fantastic and is much appreciated, thank you.

To my Brunel family; to all the people in Offices 268, 269 and 270! Dr Jo Brown, you have taught me always to remain optimistic, even in the toughest of circumstances; Dr Christina Gibson, you have taught me that whenever I get knocked down, I have to get back up again, with pride and face the music with my head held high; Dr Harry Lim, you have taught me to keep organized and to always keep smiling; Dr Laura Green, you have taught me to always wear my heart on my sleeve and to thoroughly believe in myself; Dr Michael Whelan, you have taught me to remember what's important in life and hold that close to my heart; Dr Craig Johnson, you have taught me that PhD's are not easy to attain, but they're worth having because there is a lot of good that can be done with theme; Dr Eric Storr, you taught me that it's a marathon and then a sprint at the end, but ultimately, it's so very worth the sweat and you can still work out with a smile on your face, so thank you for your cheeky grin. In fact, whilst we are on the subject, thank you to the following beautiful people for their cheeky grins and happy faces: Dr Nawaf, Dr Nicola Theis and Dr Charlie Waugh; and Dr Danielle Adams. Thank you to everybody whose love made office life fun and light-hearted. Thank you all for your support and feedback, for your friendship, kindness and collective belief in me. I am eternally grateful to you all.

To one particular office-mate and dear friend, Dr Glen Wintrup, I must dedicate this section. Glen, you have been not only a marvellous friend, but a silent supervisor that didn't get paid to listen to me fret. You just listened to me for free and gave me very sage advice that has absolutely, one hundred per cent gotten me here, to the positive and

happy space I am in today. I want to thank you for believing in me and always having time for me, whether I had a crisis or some good news to share, you have always been on hand for coffee at any time and any place. Your support has been vital to my process, and I want you to know that I couldn't have done this without you. Thank you so much, Glen.

A very special thanks to the delightful, the soulful, the delectable, the beautiful Dr Teresa Noguera – thank you so much, Teresa, for your heart-warming friendship. You are an inspiration to me, you really are. You have always been there to offer a shoulder and to celebrate my triumphs. You have seen me at my best and at my worst, and yet you have always given me beautiful, spiritual insight that has made even the tallest mountain seem like a walk in the park. I thank God for you, Teresa, thank you.

Incidentally, I would also like to thank Dr Christina Gipson for teaching me that you *can* eat pizza if you are allergic to cheese: you just order it without cheese. Thanks Chris, I now enjoy such culinary vices on a regular basis, and have also developed a mild addiction to TV's *Come Dine With Me*, which is just rubbish but strangely watchable when you have a chapter due.

To my soul-family; what beautiful souls you are! Just your beautiful souls have gotten me through; Sarah Hirsch, Sharanjeet Flora, Flo Finch, Jen Bacon, Mamps Sandu, Warren Schenk, Nick Gant, Alessandro Porrino, Jordan Summers, all the cast of Little Shop of Horrors '09, Warrick Howell, Cat Kelly, Ruth Merrifield, Laura Galinanes-Garcia and the whole Galinanes gang, the Shaunaks – Meera, Shivani, Vijay and Nilu, Jennifer Jay, Sarah Sharkey, Allegra Shock, Meg Cavanagh, Alex Berger, Alex Wong, Julianne Carroll, Sarah Friend, all my friends in San Francisco, my special Angel in New York, Johnny, Elliott, Amy, Kurt, Georgie, Olivier Daley, 'Dem Dawgs' Lily and Banjo, and the delightful Raevannan Husbands. Special love to Jackie Bromberg who I know is shining through the chimney tops. Thank you for your blessings.

To Rae I dedicate a special paragraph as she has been one of my biggest supporters. Rae, you are my greatest teacher and dearest friend. You have been a pillar for me over the last five years, and even when you have been going through hard times yourself, you have made time to lift my spirits with much needed reassurance, positive vibes and Angels. Thank you, Rae, for being there unrelentingly, from start to finish. Your angels have meant the absolute world to me, as has your friendship, music and soul-family solidarity. Many blessings I send to you, always.

To my Brunel staff family; the following people have offered me much love and support over the years, either in terms of getting me organised, or with respect to getting my project to be the best that I can make it. Many thanks Dr Simon Bradford, all my peers at CYWS, Julie Bradshaw, all the staff at the RFO, Genevieve, and the fantastic Dr Daniel Rhind! Daniel, you are an absolute star, and I have thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about the finer things in life, such as music, song-writing and international stardom. You have honestly brightened up my PhD experience and I thank you. A special thanks to Louise Cole who stepped into her new role just as I was finishing and offered me crucial guidance and support. Without Louise, all the margins and spacings would be wrong in this thesis. Thank you all.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank Brunel University for granting me this PhD bursary – thank you for everything this experience has taught me, and thank you for the opportunities it now affords me. I am so very grateful to all of those academics on the board, including Professor Celia Brackenridge, who collectively decided to give me this scholarship. I am privileged and forever grateful.

Being that I believe in Angels, I would like to say a very, very special thank you to all of my Angels, indeed to God and the Heavens, and to the Universe for all of its beauty, synchronicity, serendipity, positivity and creativity. Thank you so very much, this has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience which has taught me that I could do so much more than I previously thought I could do. Thank you for up-turning rocks that I had previously overlooked, and thank you for your unrelenting faith, support, spiritual guidance and most of all comfort. I could not have done this without my beautiful Angels, so thank you Angels for your light and love, and for the love of my family, friends and colleagues through which you eternally shine.

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This introductory chapter will explain the source of my interest in both homophobia and biphobia, and indeed my motivation for seeking out a course of doctoral study in this area.

‘If those of us who work in sport on a daily basis are ever to move beyond the immediacy and shock of personal anecdote and into effective and sustainable prevention work, then we must pay attention to the efforts of researchers to develop adequate theoretical models of exploitation. Only then will we be able to predict, and eventually to manage, the risks that give rise to this problem.’

(Brackenridge, 2001, p. 3)

Throughout my academic career I have found, as Celia Brackenridge so poignantly states in the quote above, that there is a need for greater cultural understandings of sexual orientation based discriminations. The creation of new knowledge bases can help us better understand processes of exclusion and marginalisation, and can additionally inform new policies and initiatives within sporting bodies. New ways of conceptualising the range of sexual identity based exclusions creates new potential for the development of resources that can contend with their complexity. In the next section, I shall give a brief history of how I came to investigate homophobic bullying, bisexual invisibility and practices of exclusion in sport culture.

1.1 Source of interest

For the completion of my Masters degree in Special Education Needs (SEN) I conducted a piece of research into the management of sexuality in a British Special Needs secondary school. During this course of study I researched the disempowerment of children with special educational needs. Children with physical and intellectual disabilities had been traditionally de-sexualised by discourses of dependency and eternal infancy that conceptualized them both as asexual and as incapable of understanding their own sexual identities. Research showed that such constructions of disabled children had informed practice in SEN education and had only served to restrict their access to sex and relationship education. With my research investigation I explored the available discursive resources upon which teachers drew when dealing with student sexuality and sexual identity at the school. It became very important to me during this period to examine the vital connection between the ways in which people spoke about minority and disadvantaged groups and the ways in which they inevitably treated them.

From a personal perspective, I myself identify as bisexual and have experienced sexual orientation discrimination in my own life experience. This took on two forms: homophobia from

the outside world when I was in a relationship with a woman; and biphobia from a more closeted political environment. Research into bisexual invisibility holds personal significance for me as a result, and of course I am invested in the academic-based challenge of it. I know how it feels to have my identity misrepresented as greedy and disingenuous and am consequently situated in this research.

Having submitted my Masters dissertation I subsequently searched for a PhD course that would focus upon sexual orientation discrimination. When I was granted the doctorate bursary at Brunel I set to work on several commercial projects under the supervision of Professor Celia Brackenridge and Dr Pam Alldred. One of these projects was *A Literature Review of Sexual Orientation in Sport*, which was carried out for the organization Sport Scotland. One of the key findings in this review was that bisexuality was both under-researched and under-represented in the sport sociological literature. As bibliographer I found, much to my dismay, that out of the several hundred references cited in the project only two pertained to bisexuality. Over the course of my first year of doctoral study, I decided to steer my research into the direction of practices of exclusion - instead of purely homophobic practices - as they pertained to bisexuals, as well as to lesbians and gay men in sport.

At that time, in the popular media, it appeared that bisexuality was a ubiquitous concept throughout the spheres of television and film. However, the notion of bisexuality seemed not to appear so frequently within the conceptual, academic arenas of sexual orientation and identity research. As a result, there was less research activity into bisexual experience and consequently less theorisation around non-binary identity. Being that theory is used to explain experience, I decided to develop a research question that would attempt to bridge this apparent gap in the literature.

1.2 Aims and research question

The purpose of this research is to explore the exclusionary practices around non-heterosexual minorities in sport culture, through a particular focus on the treatment of bisexuality.

Firstly, my first motivation for 'bridging' this knowledge gap is to provide some modicum of visibility for bisexual athletes or individuals who prefer not to label their sexual identities. In this way, I aim to create new discussions around the range of exclusionary practices in sport and the variety of individuals affected by them. It is important for the sport sociological field to increase its understanding of the many ways in which homophobia manifests itself and the kinds of identity-based exclusions that are currently under-researched within the discipline. Throughout

the 1980's and 1990's, homosexual male athletes and lesbians were researched quite thoroughly by such researchers in the United Kingdom. Little research, however, has been carried out within British sport sociology/psychology, into those issues particularly affecting bisexuals or non-labelled participants in sport. Research into bisexuality tends to be American, and our sporting cultures are arguably not the same. Indeed, Meg Barker's psychology-based research (2004/2008) suggests that bisexuality is under explored because of its taboo status.

In addition to this academic imbalance, there is a practical issue that needs to be addressed: there are currently no openly homosexual or bisexual players in British professional men's football. In order to address both research-based and reality-based issues, I developed two analysis questions which are as follows:

1. How does homophobia operate in the context of sport?
2. How does bisexuality operate in the context of sport?

Being that there is a lack of understanding around bisexual experiences – in both the mainstream and LGBT football leagues – I developed the following research question:

'How can we theorise bisexuality in the context of sport?'

My reason for choosing the term 'theorise' here was to create new explanations. It appears to me that whenever there is a lack of theory around a topic, there is also a lack of explanation accompanying it. In the case of bisexual visibility and the representation of the broader scope of non-heterosexual identities in sport, I felt it would be beneficial to try and explain exclusionary practices overall, and indeed how they operate in culturally othering ways.

1.3 Objectives

'Research which changes nothing – not even the researcher – is not research at all. And since all social research takes place in policy contexts of one form or another research itself must therefore be seen as inevitably political.' (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002, p. 12)

This research is part-funded by the Football Association as they as an organization wish to advance their policies on homophobic bullying in football and develop new resources with which to combat this form of discrimination. Therefore, my research is situated within a very real policy context, as the data garnered from this thesis will be used to inform their new policies and practice. One of my two main objectives is thus to contribute new ideas towards the expansion of their current anti-homophobia plans. In so doing I aim to make recommendations of a practical nature, in terms of their equality-based initiatives and

educational resources, and to offer new insights into the range of exclusionary practices currently affecting footballers in the UK.

My other main objective is to create a new conceptual way of understanding sexual identity-based exclusions in sport culture, given that bisexual invisibility research occurs mainly in the fields of psychology and education, and not in sport sociology.

It is important to consider who this research might affect. Potentially, I could influence how bisexuality in sport is talked about as the publication of articles from this thesis could spark new debate on this under-researched area. Bearing this in mind, I will have to exert some caution during the data analysis stage when representing my participants' views. Some interviewees may appear to harbour prejudices against bisexual individuals, or indeed towards individuals of a non-labelled persuasion. It is imperative to remain reflexive and try to acknowledge when such declarations have impacted upon me on a personal level. In this way I can chronicle those instances whereby my experiences have served to shape my interpretations somewhat. It will be important to refrain from political contestation during each interview. My participants are entitled to their opinions and all of their data help to answer my research questions. It is crucial that each individual's integrity is respected and thus it would be wholly unethical to misrepresent any interview as bigoted or narrow-minded just because I happened to disagree with them.

In terms of broader communities, this research could have a positive impact upon the visibility of the bisexual community by opening up new academic and popular discussions on the nature of equalities research in sport and its potential for pro-diversity change. Exclusionary practices affect us all in some way and this thesis aims to contribute new understandings of how sexual minority exclusions operate in sport culture, through a dual exploration of homophobia and bisexual in/visibility in football.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into nine chapters, the first of which is this introduction. Chapter 2, the Literature Review, is split into two halves which both deal with sexualities research. Chapter 2a focuses on homophobia research in sport and 2b examines research into bisexual identities in areas *outside* of sports literature. Chapter 3, Methodology, will explain the aims of my research, the research design, the research question and my chosen epistemological standpoint. Chapter 4, Theoretical framework, will discuss post-structuralism, Queer theory and Foucauldian approaches, as well as my particular theoretical position. Chapter 5, Methods and Procedures,

will explain the data collection methods used, the ethical implications associated with my project and my choice to employ discourse analysis as my method of data analysis. Chapter 6 will present the first half of my Findings and Analysis – findings pertaining to bisexual identity. Chapter 7 will presents the second half of my findings, those pertaining to homophobia. Chapter 8, the Discussion of the findings, will relate the key findings back to the existing literature and posit my suggestions for new theorisations of bisexuality. Chapter 9, Conclusions and Reflections, will summarize my key contribution to knowledge, the research-based limitations of this process and my personal reflections on the research journey, with my recommendations for further research.

1.5 Summary

This chapter has introduced my research topic – bisexuality and homophobia in sport – and my reasons for choosing it. I have summarized my research questions, aims and objectives, and have given an idea of how the overall thesis will proceed from here. The next chapter, Chapter 2a, will present a review of the sociological research pertaining to homophobic discrimination in sport.

Chapter 2a: Literature Review – Homophobic discrimination in sport

2.0 Introduction

The culture of sport comprises a melting pot of folklores, identities, stereotypes and diversities. As a culture, sport is competitive, inclusive, exclusive, integrative, prejudiced, congratulatory and discriminatory. Its parameters are shaped by social and political influences including nationalism and traditionalism. At the same time it is also shaped by media influences and popular culture. Discourses of fair-play and sportsmanship depict the nature of sport as being grounded in fairness and ethical conduct. Discourses of bullying, discrimination and inequality paint a very different picture, however, casting light on the more unforgiving and impenetrable aspects of sport as a gated community. By definition, Coakley (1998) argues that sport necessarily comprises activities that discriminate – they are physical, competitive and precipitate a winner. Sport is its own an institution which changes along with the surrounding sociological rules and rituals as they too evolve in the broader culture. Sport involves the ‘socially invented ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that emerge in particular groups as people try to survive’ (Coakley, 1998, p. 3). For many, sport is a way of life. For many others, the key to surviving a professional life within sport lies in a successful navigation of its prejudiced culture. One of the most prevalent forms of discrimination in sport is homophobia. This section will review aspects of the sports sociological literature on homophobia which have researched homophobic exclusions, traditional masculinity, and the gendered nature of sexual orientation-based bullying.

2.1 Homophobia research in sport sociology

Homophobic motivations

Sport evolves through its own discourse and plays a meaningful part in the lives of its broader audience. Looking at the ways in which people talk about sporting events and personalities, Polley (2003) observes how athletes can quickly become so-called national treasures through a collective social fondness of their desirable characteristics. These can be considered desirable on the basis that they satisfy cultural conceptions of success and competitiveness or indeed that they comply with traditional standards pertaining to physical appearance, sexual orientation and lifestyle. Indeed, Rojek (2006) suggests that being a recognisable sportsperson can mean being a cultural icon:

‘The leading sports stars, in common with the leading celebrities from celebrity culture, are adopted as role models by fans and their lives are followed as parables of normative behaviour.’
(Rojek, 2006, p. 674)

Jarvie (2006) highlights the inevitable relationship between athletes’ bodies and social conceptions of norms. In sport, the body is always on some sort of display. When cultural understandings of the ideal masculine or feminine body are projected onto sporting celebrities the effect further reinforces what Coakley terms as ‘athletic fraternity’ (1998, p. 156). By this he means the already established climate of male, heterosexual and heterosexist camaraderie which in sport history has resulted in homophobic discrimination.

Defining homophobia

In terms of the ways in which homophobia is defined, there has been some debate surrounding the difference between homophobia and homonegativism. In the late 1970’s and 1980’s, psychologists and sociologists sought to discriminate a difference on the basis that resources designed to contend with one would not necessarily alleviate the other. MacDonald (1976) defined homophobia as an experience of distress – that is to say, a fear of homosexuals experienced by individuals identifying as heterosexual. Hudson and Ricketts (1980) asserted that there was an important difference between homonegativism – an intellectual negative attitude towards perceived homosexuals, and homophobia – the actual fear of being in the presence of homosexuals. Fear, as an affective response, has the capacity to induce anxiety, which can correspond to anxious behaviours in others. Lorde (1984) added the notion of hate to the definition of homophobia, that being ‘the fear of feelings of love for members of one’s own sex and therefore the hatred of those feelings in others’ (Lorde, 1984, p. 45). Adams, Wright and Lohr (1996) concluded that the most important characteristic of any definition of homophobia was its inclusion of the *effects* of fear and hatred:

‘the only necessary requirement for the label of phobia is that phobic stimuli produce anxiety. Whether the individual exhibits avoidance or endures the anxiety often depends on the nature of the stimuli and the environmental circumstances.’

(Adams, Wright & Lohr, 1996, p. 440)

In terms of the ways in which homophobia has *manifested* itself, Kirby, Greaves and Hankivsky (2000) suggest that homophobia has not necessarily been based upon, or drawn from, the kinds of fears the above academics hypothesize. They cite Dorothy Strachan, who argues that oftentimes homophobic standpoints are adopted by male athletes, not because they are intrinsically homophobic. Instead, their motivation is to comply with those homophobic attitudes held by their managers or coaches in an act of adherence: ‘coaches with considerable

power may even enable athletes to “become something they are not” or to take on the role of ostracizing each other’ (Kirby *et al.*, 2000, p. 120). This is a similar idea to Rose’s (1990) ‘self governance’, whereby individuals shape their viewpoints to somewhat subconsciously fit the ideals of their surrounding institution. Although governmentality occurs in a different school of thought to sport sociology, the notion is arguably helpful here in drawing together Kirby *et al.*’s contention that homophobic bullying is sometimes phobia-less and Coakley’s idea that athletes will do what they need to do to *survive* sport. Homophobic bullying is not always homophobically motivated.

In the 1980’s and 1990’s, homophobia in the sports sociological literature focused on acts of violence and abuse, as directed towards homosexuals and lesbians, or those expected to be non-heterosexual (Anderson and Nieberding, 1989). Violence and abuse constituted the unfortunate lived experiences of many athletes during those decades, being that the climate (in Britain and America) was homonegative. As Griffin (1995, p. 55) suggests, that kind of ‘homonegativism’ in American sport culture had its roots in traditional American family values and ideals of masculinity. Sex-appropriate behaviours were then transferred onto sports field spaces which became culturally characterised as the kind of ‘training ground where young boys learn masculine skills’. Duncan (1999) added that the term ‘gay’, as used in high schools, was considered to be the most demeaning derogatory term with which to undermine another student. Again, the pejorative use of this term was often stated irrespective of the targeted student’s perceived sexual orientation:

‘the most prevalent and hurtful accusation levelled at boys by both sexes was to be called ‘gay’. Like its counterpart, ‘slag’, the accusation was virtually impossible to refute without a dramatic change in social behaviour and it could be deployed on a continuum of severity or seriousness, from throwaway jocularly to ultimate degradation of the victim, whether true or not.’
(Duncan, 1999, p. 106)

Lenskyj (1991) asserted that, at that time, the climate was such that homophobic violence was institutional amongst many pillars of Western culture. She argued that violence was not always physical: ‘Institutions such as the church, the courts, and the educational system are responsible for homophobic violence when, for example, they bar lesbians and gay men from holding office, or deny them custody of their children’ (Lenskyj, 1991, p. 61). Here, she cited Moraga’s (1983) definition of heterosexism, that being the privileged normalisation of heterosexuality within the core value systems of these institutions, the result of which being ‘the view that heterosexuality is the ‘norm’ for all social/sexual relationships’ supporting the ‘institutionalization of heterosexuality in all aspects of society’ (Moraga, 1983, p. 105).

Building on this notion, Pronger (1990) proffered a further definition of 'heteromascularity' which incorporated the resultant pressure placed upon boys and men, to be outwardly masculine in order to be perceived as heterosexual. At this time, research in the United Kingdom showed that boys felt under pressure, not only to behave in stereotypically heterosexual and masculine ways but also to be seen to disassociate from other pupils who failed to meet these outwardly macho pre-requisites – for example, effeminate boys or peers suspected as being gay (Epstein, 1997; Plummer, 1999). Epstein (1997) argued that homophobic discourse was born in schools as a direct response to this requirement – to affirm heterosexual image and reputation within school culture – and that homophobia manifested itself in numerous ways, either through outright bullying or humour. Similarly, Kehily and Nayak (1997) studied British school environments during this era and found that homophobic humour was intrinsic to the portrayal of heterosexual masculinity and to the repudiation of homosexuality: 'The crucifix performance is, then, an attempt to purvey a coherent masculinity by ridiculing others through questioning their gender and sexuality' (Kehily & Nayak, 1997, p. 82).

Changing climate and new legislations

At the turn of the Twenty-first Century, sport sociologists were still reporting cases of heteromascularity-informed homophobia. Swain (2000) found that male students who expressed a lack of interest in sports were called 'poofs' and 'queers' by fellow students. Wendel, Toma and Mophew's (2001, p. 470) findings suggested that heterosexual athletes were 'unwilling to accept and confront homosexuality'. Commenting on this cultural tendency towards what Hekma (1998) termed as 'hyper-heterosexuality', Gough (2007) stated that: 'Clearly, such a discursive climate works to oppress and exclude gay sexualities from sport and makes it very difficult for gay athletes to come out' (Gough, 2007, p. 158). His research in part focused on the dangers of non-heterosexual disclosures in this 'climate', and the tendency for gay-identifying male athletes to gravitate towards individual rather than team sports for fear of reprisals should they choose to 'come out'. However, Gough indeed problematizes the notion of 'coming out' in sport as a negative experiences in all cases, by making reference to Plummer's (1995) research, where 'coming out' was found to have positive potential for gay athletes. When several individuals disclosed their sexual identities, athletes felt that they could then find community and eventually would be able to experience a greater sense of acceptance in sport.

However, as we have moved into this current decade, many researchers have highlighted a shift in the apparent cultural acceptance of sexual diversity. In the late 1990's, the zeitgeist was that of homonegativity, according to Krane (1997), who incidentally defines homonegativism as

‘negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination against nonheterosexuals’ (Krane, 1997, p. 145). Ten years on, Krane and Kauer (2007) acknowledged that the Western inclination towards homonegativity had begun to dissipate. Previously, the so-called ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ culture of paranoid self-silencing had somewhat inhabited institutions such as sport and the American military throughout the 1990’s (Griffin, 1998; Krane & Barber, 2005). In the more recent climate, the societies surrounding sport had started to evolve in the direction of equalities and human rights and so too had some areas of sport culture:

‘We seem to be in a period of transition – today’s young people have been exposed to media attempting to normalize lesbians (e.g. television shows like Will & Grace, Ellen and the L Word (in the USA) juxtaposed with social rhetoric condemning ‘amoral lifestyles’. In sport, there has been gradual movement from intolerance to grudging acknowledgement, and in some settings, to complete acceptance of sexual diversity.’
(Krane & Kauer, 2007, p. 275)

However, as Ahmad and Bhugra (2010) now highlight, just because the climate of Western *television* popular culture has softened to the idea of non-heterosexuality, this does not necessarily mean that homophobia is no longer as prevalent. Nor does this shift necessarily reflect on, or correspond to, an accurate *measure* of homophobia by which researchers can gauge its disappearance. Ahmad and Bhugra (2010) assert that the collective impacts of feminism, LGBT involvement in popular media and recently de-stigmatized medical understandings of the HIV virus, have all combined to portray an altogether more Utopian view of Western culture. However, these impacts ‘keep moving the goal posts’, meaning that ‘whilst being gay in a developed country is less miserable than it was, how do we gauge whether homophobia has reduced?’ (Ahmad & Bhugra, 2010, p. 447). Their perspective is housed within the discipline of psychotherapy and psychiatry and not sport sociology, however they raise an important question as to the new ways in which homophobia manifests itself *today*, despite these progressive developments.

Research carried out by Dick (2008) and the Stonewall organization found that one in five non-heterosexuals had experienced a homophobic hate crime, and three out of four *had not* reported these incidences to the authorities. This would seem paradoxical in light of the introduction of much new legislation designed to protect the LGBT community from homophobic abuse. These are, for example, the equal age of consent (Sexual Offences Act, 2003); the repeal of Section 28 (under the Local Government Act, 2003 in the UK/2000 in Scotland); the legalisation of same-sex adoption (under the Adoption and Children Act, 2002); the right for same-sex partners to marry (under the Civil Partnership Act, 2004); and the prohibition by law of sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace (originally under the

European Union Directive and subsequently part of the Equality Act, 2010). Interestingly, Dick (2008) made reference to the hate crime paradigm, the advent of which some researchers have taken issue with, in terms of its appropriateness for explaining the often *nuanced* nature of homophobia.

From their research into the discursive constructions of sporting space with non-heterosexual Canadian athletes, Ravel and Rail (2007) found that the dynamics within gay-friendly space – so called ‘gaie’ sporting subcultures – were complex. Although these women managed to negotiate the otherwise heteronormative nature of sport culture by developing their own sexual subjectivities – mixing together ‘fragments of discourses that are circulated in their sport, in the gaie community and in society’ – there still remained fragments of heteronormative discourses that othered butch lesbians within those spaces (Ravel & Rail, 2007, p. 417). Their argument is also made by van Ingen (2003), that sexual subjectivities are ‘constituted in social space’ and being that they are ‘constructed through dominant as well as marginal gender and sexuality discourses... sexuality and spatiality are inextricably intertwined’ (ibid.). Ravel and Rail appear to concur with Gough’s (2007) statement that discursive climates work to exclude certain sexualities within sport spaces.

Building upon research such as Sam Dick’s (2008) survey, Browne, Bakshi and Lim (2011) assert that the hate crime paradigm is insufficient for explaining the diversity and complexity of abuses as they occur within particular spaces. Citing Reavey and Warner (2003, p. 1) who define abuse within space as ‘a matter of translation, debate and politics’, they suggest that hate crime legislation has a reductive effect on the explanation of, and subsequent social understandings associated with, homophobic abuse. Morgan (2002) highlights a similar problem with the way in which hate crime legislations construct homophobia. The Criminal Justice Act (2003) posits two pre-requisites with which to define a hate crime – firstly, that a motivation of hate that can be ascertained, and secondly that a difference between the aggressor and the victim can be discerned – depending upon constructs of culpability and sexual orientation, which are highly contestable and culturally embedded. Indeed, Browne *et al.* (2011) warn that legislative change does not necessarily equate to LGBT safety:

‘Despite greater formal acceptance of sexual and gender diversity, surveys of LGBT people continue to point to high levels of reported and, moreover, unreported ‘abuse’ related to victims’ gender and sexual identities.’ (Browne, Bakshi & Lim, 2011, p. 740)

Importantly, they also urge that different individuals respond differently to abuse, meaning that ‘understanding how definitions of abuse are socially located (Reavey and Warner, 2003) allows

an engagement with what abuse *does* within particular social and discursive contexts' (Browne *et al.* 2011, p. 746). This statement echoes that of Foucault, in Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, p. 187): 'People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does'.

The above research highlights how the change in Western cultural attitudes towards non-heterosexualities has meant that homophobia has changed in nature, too. Trying to conceptualise nuanced forms of exclusion and othering within criminal justice paradigms, therefore, has become problematic. (The connection between spatiality and sexuality will be further explored in the second half of this literature review, Chapter 2b). It would seem that where abuse used to be overt and violent in the 1980's and 1990's, it appears that more covert manifestations exist today. The next section will explore the changing nature of masculinities in this new climate, showing the debates in recent research which contend with the possibility, or lack thereof, that homophobia can in fact have 'dissipated'.

2.2 Traditional masculinity and banter

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's, sports sociologists characterized sport as a homophobic culture on the basis of its inextricable association with masculinity and the performance of heterosexuality. Indeed, at the time, Messner and Sabo (1990, p. 9) asserted that *hegemonic masculinity* served a purpose in sport culture in the Twentieth Century, that being to 'bolster a sagging ideology of male superiority'. Dunning (1999) posited that the association between sport and masculinity, particularly in football, had its roots in the British Industrial revolution. Ideals of strength, physical power and prowess became culturally attached to local footballers of nearby teams, whereby the concept of fandom was born. Dunning (1999) suggested that as a result, traditional values of football culture were steeped in traditional notions of masculinity. In the climate of the early 1990's, Messner (1992, p. 34) claimed that 'the extent of homophobia in the sport world is staggering. Boys (in sport) learn early that to be gay, to be suspected of being gay, or even to be unable to prove one's heterosexual status is not acceptable'. In response to the heterosexist and homophobic culture of the 'sport world', Connell (1987) devised *hegemonic masculinity theory*, whereby ideals of masculinity were stratified according to their hierarchal levels of perceived social capital. At the top of the hierarchy was the sexist, homophobic and athletically competent man who had access to the most social capital and hence experienced fewer questions raised above his sexual orientation. This was because his outwardly masculine behaviours demonstrated his heterosexuality rendering it un-refutable. Connell (1995) went on to assert that, in that climate, heterosexual men were culturally placed

at the top of the hierarchy, and homosexual men at the bottom of it. Homophobic hostility was one of the main ways through which this kind of archetypal masculinity was sustained throughout that time.

Anderson (2009) argues that hegemonic masculinity is historically contingent because it occurred as a direct consequence of the pressure placed upon men in that decade to assert and provide proof of their heterosexual identities. This era he describes as a time of 'homohysteria' – a cultural climate of fear directed towards homosexuals during and after the AIDS epidemic. Anderson (2009) posits a new theory of masculinity, inclusive masculinity, which he asserts better suits the more recent, LGBT-inclusive, post-homohysteria epoch. Looking critically at Anderson's theory, it is worth mentioning that some of his participants were American collegiate athletes, and so it was not exclusive to British culture, but more representative of broader Western culture. His (2009) findings were quite illuminating, in terms of the positivity expressed by Undergraduate students at the idea of same-sex tactile behaviours. Male students felt able to express same-sex touch that previously, Anderson posits, in the 'homohysteria' period, would have endangered both their sexual orientation statuses and placings in the hierarchies of traditional masculinity. Inclusive masculinity postulates that different kinds of masculinities can co-exist alongside one another, as opposed to one being privileged above the other. For example, masculinities involving practices of 'homosocial bonding', in collegiate sport at least, were conceptualized as being on a par with the stereotypical heteromascuinities. Clayton and Harris (2009) suggest that this new era of male-bonding is explainable by the advent of the 'metrosexual' man and how male-preening has become more acceptable in popular culture. That is to say, stereotyped behaviours that had previously pertained to gay men, such as the use of cosmetic products, were no longer culturally held to indicate homosexuality.

Cashmore and Cleland (2012) concur that the influences of the Internet and media have transposed into altogether more positive attitudes towards non-heterosexual identities and/or behaviours. Their research into spectator culture in Britain elucidated some interesting results: of over 3000 recipients to their on-line survey concerning homophobia in football, 93% stated that performance is more important than sexual orientation and that sporting organizations need to do more to combat homophobia because it is an archaic practice that should no longer be tolerated. Only 7% of respondents expressed homophobic views. Cashmore and Cleland interpreted their data through Anderson's (2009) inclusive lens, and attributed the 93% of participants who endorsed diversity to also be supporting notions of inclusive masculinities. In

contrast, the remaining 7%, who expressed homophobic attitudes, were aligning themselves more with traditional masculinities. In conclusion, they state that their data represent ‘the existence of a more permissive and liberal culture of association football fandom towards homosexuality and masculinity than the existing literature indicates’ (Cashmore and Cleland, 2012, p. 371). On a critical note, it would be interesting to see whether future research could problematize this seemingly linear relationship between non-homophobic ideologies and inclusive masculinities. It could possibly be the case, after all, that a ‘metrosexual man’ could harbour hostile views towards non-heterosexuals. Indeed, a traditionally macho male fan could choose to behave in ways concordant with Connell’s hegemonic masculinity and yet manage to remain critical of homophobic practices.

Building on his theory of inclusive masculinity, Anderson (2011) goes on to explain why the disappearance of homophobia in popular culture has attributed contributed to the reduction of homophobia in sport culture:

‘Homophobia used to be the chief policing mechanism of a hegemonic form of masculinity, but there no longer remains a strident cultural force to approximate the mandates of one type of homophobic masculinity.’ (Anderson, 2011, p. 571)

Recent research in the discipline of physical education has also suggested that high school attitudes towards the term ‘gay’ have improved and indeed the climate has become more conducive to expressions of same-sex intimacy (McCormack, 2010; Anderson, 2009, 2011; McCormack & Anderson, 2010; Anderson, Adams & Rivers, 2010). However, McCormack and Anderson’s research studies have both been carried out in educational environments. Within British professional footballing environments, the situation seems not to be so inclusive.

Inclusive masculinity?

According to a study carried out by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) charity organization Stonewall, the climate of men’s professional football is yet to be so progressive. Their publication ‘Leagues Behind’ (2009) appears to support McCormack and Anderson’s (2010) research, in that many respondents to the UK-wide survey stated that homophobia was no longer acceptable. Many believed that those fans whose choices of behaviour or chanting involved homophobic abuse should face punitive responses from the footballing authorities. Stonewall (2009) reported that ‘five out of six football fans support the charging of fans in connection with the alleged anti-gay abuse’ (Stonewall, 2009, p.12). The kinds of abuse being recalled varied from derogatory slurs to abusive chants. The following example demonstrates the nature of these chants, only in this quote I have removed the name of the professional

footballer to whom the abuse was solely directed: ‘...wherever you may be; you’re on the verge of lunacy; we don’t care if you’re hanging from a tree; cos you’re a Judas c*** with HIV’ (Stonewall, 2009, p. 12).

Vicars (2006, p. 357) states that abusive chants are foundational for the continual reproduction of hetero-masculinities in men’s sporting arenas: ‘Pejorative utterances remain powerful tools in the arsenal of heteronormative practices and culture, in that they continue to constitute what is and what is not considered “normal”.’ Kian, Clavio, Vincent and Shaw (2011) concur, that while Anderson’s (2009) theory of inclusive masculinity may explain the recent array of alternative masculinities, it does not theorize whether or not new masculinities pose any real challenge to the traditional kinds that perpetuate homophobia in football. Together they researched American football online messaging boards and found that although ‘only a minority’ of individuals participating in those conversations engaged with hegemonic masculinity ‘few contest it. Thus, homophobia, misogyny, and sexism are still somewhat permissible within the popular Rivals.com main board, in a way that racism no longer is acceptable’ (Kian, *et al*, 2011, p. 696).

In contrast, Cashmore and Cleland (2011) conducted an online survey with British football fans in order to explore whether or not traditional masculinity was so inextricably linked with homophobic football culture after all. They posed a cogent question: ‘does football enforce this code of exclusive masculinity, or is it a widely held but false belief perpetuated by an assembly of governing organizations, clubs, publicists, agents, and scholars inured to established critiques?’ (Cashmore & Cleland, 2011, p. 423). Certainly, their findings suggested that not only were the majority of football fans in favour of professional footballers ‘coming out’ but that many also expressed frustration at the British media’s unflattering portrayal of their community as homophobic and Neanderthal. The true ‘bigots’ were postulated to constitute only a small minority of spectators, and their pejorative terms, chants and gesticulations were considered by many to be offensive.

Interestingly, Cashmore and Cleland claim that ‘more than 90% of respondents suspected the reasons there are no openly gay players in football had their origins in market considerations. Another 45.85% identified clubs as the prohibitive element’ (*ibid.*, p. 431). The argument being made is that new inclusive masculinities give rise to more accepting attitudes towards non-heterosexuals in football and hence, research into masculinities needs to diversify and progress, lest it remain politically aligned with the now, they suggest, out-dated notion of homophobic hegemonic, homophobic masculinity.

Banter or bullying?

That begs another question, however: if the terraces are evolving and becoming more accepting of LGBT footballers, why are there no openly LGBT footballers? Cashmore and Cleland's (2011) answer is that more factors are at play when a British professional footballer considers making a public disclosure about his non-heterosexual identity: family pressures, media scandals and the fear of sponsorship losses all have an impact upon a player's perception of risk and safety. Indeed, their results showed that just under half of their respondents suspected that managerial pressures were responsible for the continued silence around even the possibility of gay players in the UK. Anderson (2011, p. 571) does not seem to account for these pressures, however. He even goes as far to suggest that because traditional masculinities have diversified and no longer operate hierarchically, non-heterosexual sportsmen no longer have to fear such traditionally associated homophobias: 'This is evidenced by the outright acceptance of gay male athletes today'. Looking at this statement critically, it could be argued that Anderson's research would benefit from a more multi-dimensional theoretical framework, perhaps an intersectional perspective, because it seems to be that the concept of masculinity is somewhat dominating his understanding of homophobia in football. Thus, his focus, dare I say, appears to monopolise his explanations of it.

Caudwell (2011) asserts that the problem of homophobia is still very real in British footballing culture. Her research focuses on the fine-line between banter and bullying. Adding to the problem of chanting raised by Dick (2009), she found in her study of the terraces that homophobic gesticulations are not only common amongst supporting communities but considered in many cases to be humorous. Drawing on the work of Pronger (1999), who posits the idea of the 'territorial anus' – making a connection between the humiliation of losing as sexually passive and the success of winning as sexually aggressive – Caudwell (2011) conceptualises homophobic chanting in terms of its spatiality. She suggests that because gay men's bodies are the sites of these practices of homophobic 'ridiculing and shaming' in football – for example, fans in the crowds bending over at suspected non-heterosexuals on the pitch – footballers' bodies have become 'spaces (which) are central to both verbal/sonic and visual animations of homophobia' (Caudwell, 2011, p. 129). Importantly, one of her key points is that homophobia, through her queer theoretical perspective, operates *discursively*, through such practices of berating and chanting. The difficulty for academics and sporting organization alike is to know where to draw the line between bantering and bullying. Indeed, Caudwell's research

illuminated that many homophobic chants, such as ‘does your boyfriend know you’re here?’ go ‘unchallenged by the authorities’ (ibid., p. 128).

In the aforementioned studies, both from sport sociology and educational disciplines, homophobia presents researchers with a very complex problem. Indeed, modern masculinities appear to be diversifying in this less overtly homophobic climate but homophobic discourses still pervade and give rise to the kinds of discursive practices that Caudwell and Vicars highlight. The issue of homophobic discrimination in sport is further complicated by gender relations, and discriminations, as I will explore in the next section.

2.3 Gendered nature of sexual orientation discrimination

Homophobia in sport affects all athletes of whatever gender. Griffin (2002) argues that this is partly due to the presence of gate-keeping strategies in the organizational structures of sport which function to maintain both the sexist and heterosexist status quo of its culture. Women, particularly, she argues, are underrepresented in sports media and their achievements receive less coverage. This is unless they are competing in sports culturally associated with classic conceptualisations of femininity. Individual sports such as tennis and figure skating are more likely to receive press attention than team sports such as women’s rugby and football, which are more commonly associated with masculinity (Pirinen, 2002). Griffin (2002) argues that one of the main strategies within sport that serves to maintain women’s marginalised status is the mobilisation of homophobia. She asserts that women who become successful in sport are ‘always one lesbian scandal away’ from being dismissed and discredited (2002, p. 195). The term ‘lesbian’ is often used pejoratively to tarnish a female athlete’s reputation: the association being made is that she is only successful because she is masculine anyway.

Brownsword (1991, p. 37) asserted that ‘simply stated, the assumption has been, “sports are masculine; therefore, women in sports are masculine; therefore, women in sports are lesbians”’. Sabo (1993) also suggests that women in sports have exhibited a tendency to apologize for their perceived masculinity, and in order to shake the lesbian association have taken to ‘hyperfeminizing’ as a solution. Ideologies of this nature only serve to further stigmatize the non-heterosexual community within sporting arenas and also function to double the obstructions faced by women in sport. Women have to circumnavigate the already sexist institution of sport in order to gain credibility. Additionally, they have to battle with the homophobic culture of sport in order to maintain that credibility (Griffin, 2002; Lenskyj, 2003).

Lenskyj, Hemphill and Symons (2002, p. 2) highlight the pressure placed on female athletes to appear in ways that are physically consistent with 'heterosexual femininity'. Failure to conform to heterosexual standards of femininity means stigmatization with the lesbian label, the pejorative use of which Lenskyj *et al.* suggest is symptomatic of a transcendence of 'appropriate sex role behaviour' within sport culture. Baks and Malecek (2004, p. 6) argue that 'sport is an extremely heterosexual dominated social context where discrimination and homophobia seem to be structurally embedded' and that this hostility has been responsible for lesbians remaining silent about their sexualities over the last few decades.

However, Messner (1996) argues that sport is so intersectional that there will always be potential for transformation and progression towards sexual identity diversity. He conceptualizes sport as: 'a political terrain characterized by internal contradiction and paradox that leave room for the play of oppositional meanings, and potentially for the organization of collective resistance and institutional change' (Messner, 1996, p. 225). Broad (2001) supports Messner's optimism. In her work with women's rugby teams, she argues that, where men's rugby is misogynistic, women's rugby poses a challenge to misogyny and traditional binary conceptions of sexual identity categories. The athletes in her study embrace masculinity without apologizing for it, as Wheatley (1994) suggested they might. Broad stated that women's rugby represented something of a subculture which she asserted was 'defined by sexual multiplicity... women's rugby was also a culture of sexual fluidity, where new players were carefully socialized (through songs and rituals) to see sexual practices outside the confines of identity categories' (Broad, 2001, p. 194).

However, in a similar study on British women's football subcultures and sexual fluidity, Caudwell (1999, p. 400) found that female players were afraid of the 'butch' label, and not just the lesbian label. She quoted from participants who reported typical comments from the side lines: 'for example, "Well we don't think that number 9 on the other side's female"... To be read as women, players are compelled to embody femininity'. Indeed, the queer theorist Warner (1993) suggests that traditional conceptualizations of sexual intercourse – as designed for the purpose of reproduction – underlie heteronormative assumptions that unambiguous classifications of male and female can actually exist. Practices of homophobia in women's sport are different to those operational within men's sport, insofar as female athletes pose an already marginalised group that is further marginalised by lesbian stigmatization. However, there appears to be a similar fixation with the construction of masculinity that both spheres have in common: male athletes have classically been charged with the requirement to prove theirs; female athletes

have traditionally been challenged to refute theirs. Caudwell's work will be explored in more detail in the next half of this chapter.

2.4 Summary

This half of the Literature review has been designed to show something of a chronology, with respect to the history of sport sociological research into homophobia. In demonstrating the changing climate of homophobia in sport and popular culture, I have considered the tensions between modern conceptualisations of homophobia, masculinity and gender discrimination, and how they manifest themselves in today's society. The fine line between banter and bullying, particularly in British professional men's football, continues to create problems for legislators and academics, in terms of how its ambiguity should best be theorized and legislated around. The next half of this chapter will focus on theorisations of bisexual identities and the apparent lack of research available to explain them in sport literature.

Chapter 2b: Literature Review – The missing B in LGBT?

2.5 Introduction

This half of the chapter will trace the beginnings of bisexual theory right through to its modern conceptualisations and sites of contention. Particularly, this chapter will demonstrate the theme of bisexual invisibility as it manifests in several areas of research and social theory. The chapter will conclude with bisexuality research particular to the context of sport, showing how such a focus is relatively recent and still burgeoning.

2.6 Theorizing bisexuality

Havelock Ellis (1905) was one of the first theorists to identify three distinct categories of sexual orientation: homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual. Freud's (1905) theory of psychosexual development similarly posited three identity categories, with bisexuality representing the phase between homosexuality and its healthier counterpart, heterosexuality. Sketel (1922) postulated that bisexuality was a natural stage within the period of adolescence, again, leading to a more natural state of heterosexuality in adulthood. Freud's psychoanalytic perspective theorized homosexuality not only as a stage of psychosexual development but as a state of sexual repression. Homosexuals were consequently pathologized as 'inverts' within the discipline at this time.

During the 1940's however, Alfred Kinsey's research shed important new light on the concept of homosexuality and bisexuality. Given that he was a botanist, he based his understandings of human sexual diversity on those of plant sexual diversity, thus removing the pathologizing stigma of the 'abnormal'. Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin (1948) conceived of the seven-point 'Kinsey Scale' – a continuum of sexualities ranging from homosexuality to heterosexuality and with a range of bisexualities in between. The scales ranged from 0-6, with 0 representing total heterosexuality, 6 signifying total homosexuality, and 3 representing bisexuality. However, all of points 1-5 represented some degree of bisexuality. Out of the 5,300 male participants in Kinsey's studies, 46% acknowledged some modicum of homosexual contact. Kinsey *et al.*'s (1948) most notable contribution to popular culture was the finding that one in ten male participants identified as homosexual. Importantly, their idea of variance – as a *natural* occurrence in and of itself – was to have a lasting impact on Western conceptualisations of non-heterosexuals:

'The world is not divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories.

Only the human mind inverts categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes.’
(Kinsey, *et al.*, (1948, p. 639)

Building upon Kinsey’s scales, Klein (1978) and Klein, Sepekoff and Wolf (1985) devised the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG), another seven-point scale based upon past, present and ideal scores. The scales ranged from 1-7, with 1 representing other-gender only and 7 representing same-gender only. Klein *et al.* (1985, p. 35) explained that they had added emotional preferences to the sexual preference scales to ‘better demarcate and understand the complexities of human sexual attitudes, emotions and behaviours’. There have been criticisms of such sexual behaviour scales, most notably on the grounds that the abstraction of one element of humanity marginalizes all others. Udis-Kessler (1999, p. 53) suggests that such instruments are inherently problematic because ‘self-reporting methods tell us only about someone’s self-perception, not necessarily about her behaviour, motivations or unconscious influences’. Importantly, the Kinsey and Klein scales have contributed a sense of validation to both psychological and sociological conceptualisations of bisexual and non-binary ways of identifying sexuality.

Following on from the developments of sexuality theory in the 1970’s, Ronald Fox developed his bisexual typology. Fox (1995) stipulated eight subtypes of bisexuality: defence bisexuality; married bisexuality; ritual; equal; Latin; experimental; secondary; and technical bisexuality. From studying autobiographical accounts – from psychology based research into the experienced well-being of individuals coping with their ‘coming out’ processes – Fox identified four main experiential difficulties that he argued were unique to bisexuals. These were: isolation due to a lack of community; alienation from both mainstream heterosexual and marginalised homosexual communities; apprehension concerning the ‘coming out’ disclosure; and the fear of openness during existing or future relationships (Fox, 1995, p. 72). Fox asserted that the situation in society, of identifying as bisexual, was different from that of being hetero or homosexual:

‘For bisexual men and women, the predominance of a polarized view of sexual orientation and the relative lack of a visible community complicate the task of coming to terms with concurrent heterosexual and homosexual attractions’ (Fox, 1995, p. 72)

The theoretical models posited by Kinsey *et al.*, Klein *et al.* and Fox, allowed for the advent of theorisation of bisexuality, that not only de-pathologized social scientific understandings of it but that served to open up entirely new discourses of bisexual realities. As Klein himself propounded, ‘a threat is best dealt with if it is dismissable’ (Klein, 1978, p. 9) and consequently, these studies aided the bisexual community of that time by raising their profile and visibility.

However, although *The Bisexual Option* was intended to both popularise the notion of bisexuality – as a genuine state of being – and to pose a challenge to limiting, dichotomous understandings of sexuality. In all actuality, the reception experienced by the bisexual community in the broader political culture was to be altogether more hostile. In the next section, I shall explore the literature on bisexual invisibility.

2.7 Invisibility and exclusion

During the era of *The Bisexual Option*, Klein (1978) and Ponse (1978) both reported findings suggesting that bisexuals were encountering antagonism within the gay community. Indeed, Blumstein and Schwartz (1974) claimed that the views of Radicalesbians were stigmatizing bisexuals on the grounds that their identities posed a threat to the impact of the gay liberation movement. Prior to the collection of their data, Radicalesbians (1972) had lambasted the bisexual community for being so-called political fence-sitters, whose presence in the gay community fostered both political and personal disquiet. Altman (1982) yielded similar findings that lesbian feminist attitudes at that time were such that bisexual disclosures were almost taken personally. A basis for the exclusion of bisexuals appeared to be forming in the literature. However, writers prior to the 1970's had stigmatized the very notion of bisexuality as something of a cop-out identity, or indeed as a 'heterosexual excuse' for deviant behaviour: 'some self-styled bisexuals are... basically homosexual but seek to minimize their conflicts and sense of deviance by having occasional heterosexual episodes' (Hunt, 1974, p. 324). Going back even further, and in spite of the publication of Alfred Kinsey's research in 1948, Bergler's (1956) writings on homosexuality revealed an altogether more vitriolic construction of the nature of bisexuality:

'Bisexuality – a state that has no existence beyond the work itself – is an out-and-out fraud... The theory claims that a man can be – alternatively or concomitantly – homo and heterosexual. Nobody can dance at two different weddings at the same time. These so-called bisexuals are really homosexuals with an occasional heterosexual excuse.'

(Bergler, 1956, p. 80-81)

Bergler's logic appears to have been informed by essentialist understandings of sexual identity which stipulate that they must either occupy a normative, heterosexual space, or a transgressive homosexual space. Logic of this kind would suggest that perhaps 'a man' cannot dance at two different weddings. This also suggests that the advent of multivariate approaches for the study of sexuality, like Kinsey's and Klein's, made an important contribution to knowledge: that 'a man' *can*, however, dance with two different people at the same wedding.

That is not to say that all branches of feminism were biphobic. Bode (1973, p. 33), a pro-bisexual feminist, highlighted an important point that bisexuals can often find themselves gazing out of 'another closet' when their identities are further subverted by feminist communities they would otherwise enjoy solidarity with. Blumstein and Schwartz (1976b, p. 340) theorized from their research why it was that bisexuals posed such a political/personal threat: they propounded that bisexuality 'does damage to an otherwise neat and uncomplicated conceptual apparatus'. By 'uncomplicated conceptual apparatus', they were referring those binary Freudian conceptualisations of normative/transgressive sexualities.

Since the 1970's research findings have continued to show that bisexuality remains largely misunderstood and/or invisible. This is seemingly irrespective of the formation of the Bi Academic Network, a community of activists and academics who have held conferences in the United Kingdom since 1993 (subsequently re-named the Bi Academic Intervention in 1994). This collective sought to theorize not only bisexuality/ies, but also invisibility. Hemmings (1995) identified one of the main contributors to the lack of bisexual visibility in the UK as the community's all but absent history. This she terms a 'genaology', the until-recently missing foundation upon which bisexual theorists could build. For Hemmings, bisexual invisibility represents a paradox, in that bisexuals constitute an 'othered' community within an 'othered' community: 'Otherisation is a profoundly complex process: you need the very thing that you are unable to accept' (Hemmings, 1995, p. 49).

The findings of Rust's (2000) qualitative research into American lesbian's attitudes towards bisexuals reveal that something of the threat element still persists. Rust analyses her data through the psychological lens of Inter-group relations theory and theorises the dynamic she refers to as 'intraminority relations' (Rust, 2000, p. 471). According to Rust the so-called 'threat' of bisexuality is maintained by two predominant ideologies, which function to 'de-politicize' bisexuality. The first one positions bisexuals as transitory and untrustworthy; the other positions bisexuals as 'inauthentic' lesbians who lack political integrity:

'These beliefs dismiss bisexuals as confused individuals, traitorous lesbians, or interloping heterosexuals; they are not subordinates with unique political interests and needs of their own that might differ from both lesbians' and heterosexuals' interests.'
(Rust, 2000, p. 492).

Angelides (2001) agrees that bisexual interests have become subordinated beneath those of political lesbian and gay organizations because they are difficult to conceptualise. He suggests that bisexuality represents the 'structural Other to sexual identity itself' (2001, p. 193). This position has restricted the development of new understandings, with respect to the bi

community's unique political needs. Thus, they have remained marginalised and largely peripheral. In much the same way, Troiden's (1988) findings suggest that bisexual othering is another product of heterosexism. In much the same way that homosexuals have traditionally been subjugated beneath the weight of heteronormative ideologies so too have bisexuals, he claims. It can be equally as challenging to create a recognisably non-heterosexual identity within mainstream culture as a bisexual, despite radical feminist assertions that bisexuals enjoy heterosexual privilege:

‘The unwillingness of people in general, and significant others in particular, to acknowledge bisexual preferences makes it more difficult to maintain and validate these preferences than heterosexual identities, which are supported continuously by sociocultural institutions.’
(Troiden, 1988, p. 82)

On the topic of institutionalised invisibility, Meg Barker has provided an important body of work on the exclusion of bisexuality in psychology. Barker (2007) carried out a qualitative analysis of twenty-two American and British Undergraduate psychology textbooks. These spanned the areas of biological, developmental, and social psychology. Only one textbook proffered an explanation of the problematic nature of non-binary identities and overall Barker found only an average of 4.6 references to bisexuality, compared with Simoni's (2000) – albeit smaller scale study – which found an average of 3.5. According to Barker (2007, p. 112): ‘Dichotomous understandings of sexuality erase bisexuality as a category and this may well contribute to discrimination experienced by many bisexuals and the myth that bisexuality is only ever ‘a phase’ en route to a mature heterosexual or homosexual identity.’

Research of this nature shows us that heteronormative understandings have broader implications when one considers, as both Barker and Simoni warn, that psychology teachers around the Western world are teaching heterosexist and normative versions of sexual identity theories. This has serious implications for the understandings of LGBT issues in the generations to follow. (Barker's work will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: Methodology, under the heading ‘Queer and bisexual epistemologies’). The next section focuses on bisexuality research in sport sociology.

2.8 Bisexuality in sport

The following section explores how the recognition of bisexuality contributes to the important critique of exclusions in sport. As the sport sociologists Stein and Plummer (1994) propound, sexualities have to be understood in terms of their particular contexts: ‘Modern sexuality is a product of modern discourses of sexuality. Knowledge about sexuality can scarcely be a

transparent window onto a separate realm of sexuality; rather, it constitutes that sexuality itself' (Stein & Plummer, 1994, p. 183). Up until recently, two main sports sociologists have investigated queer and bisexual identities within sporting contexts: Jayne Caudwell in the United Kingdom, and K. L. Broad in the United States. Two further studies have recently been published – Drury's (2011) research into sexuality and gender discourses within UK women's football, and Anderson and Adam's (2011) study into bisexuality within American collegiate soccer teams.

With her ethnographic research into queer resistance amongst American female rugby players, Broad (2001) found a 'blend' of sexual subject positions in existence within their subculture. Her aim was to see whether women's rugby offered a site of resistance to the concept of the so-called 'female apologetic' – the idea proffered by Sabo (1993) that female participants in classically male team sports hyperfeminize in order to counter, or 'apologize', for their masculine physicality. This research was based on Wheatley's (1994) assertion that on the contrary, although such an apologetic might be true of mainstream working-life contexts, sport culture offered an alternative culture within which female athletes could resist 'gender constraints'. Broad (2001) conducted field research which consisted of nine in-depth interviews and three hundred surveys, garnered from ten rugby teams across America. Her findings concluded that this context did indeed provide a site of queer resistance to both gender identity and sexual identity categorizations, which she calls 'regimes of normativity':

'Women's rugby was not only sex positive, but also challenged the heterosexual/homosexual binary through assertions about the multiplicity and fluidity of sexuality, as well. Most teams were a blend of women who sometimes identified as lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual.'

(Broad, 2001, p, 194)

Broad (2001, p. 181) asserts on the basis of her findings, however, that further research needs to be conducted within sport sociology 'to examine the extent to which gendered queer resistances are new and the degree to which they are specific to the institution of sport'. This paper is very significant because it is one of few in sport sociology whose research focus has been the range of bisexual, queer and fluid identities within sport. From the previous half of this chapter we can see that there has been a proliferation of literature on the experiences of gay men and lesbians in sport, so queer/bisexual experience is still something of a fledgling research interest.

Caudwell's body of work was explored earlier on in this chapter, under the heading 'banter or bullying?' In this section I shall discuss her work in terms of its contribution to the critique of sporting exclusions. Caudwell (2007) explores the range of sexual identities and relations

amongst a lesbian-identified football team in the UK. Quite cogently, she cites Wheaton (2002, p. 240) who reminds researchers (like Caudwell and myself) that 'there are some private worlds, including certain sport cultures, where only insiders have access to respondents'. Prior to this study, Caudwell (2003) had experienced difficulty in garnering participants, many of whom expressed disdain and reluctance when presented with the idea of taking part in sexual identity based research. Caudwell concluded that these football players were irritated because for them, the broader stereotypical association between lesbian identity and women's football left them feeling not only judged, but judged on the basis of identity and not ability.

Caudwell's (2007) findings showed that femme identities were othered within the complex identity dynamics of her lesbian football site of study. Indeed, she claims that such othering was symptomatic of the focus placed upon physical appearance within that subculture: 'It is evident that football spaces are where power is materialised and where women's bodies are controlled and regulated; the football fields are places where processes of Othering occur' (Caudwell, 2007, p. 188). Interestingly, femme-appearing/identifying footballers were not the only demographic to be othered. Bisexual identifying players were also largely invisible, with the topic of bisexuality remaining something of a non-topic: 'The silence surrounding bisexuality might best be understood in relation to prevailing stereotypical notions that position bisexuality as inauthentic: a sitting on the fence' (ibid., p. 193). In her studies, Caudwell has found that women's football subcultures are indeed lesbian-friendly spaces, or as she terms 'dykespaces' (Caudwell, 2004). However, lesbian, butch, femme and bisexual identities are complex and require further investigation. In her 2003 study alone, she identifies many alternative sexual subject positions, such as 'woman-boyish lesbian, woman-boyish-heterosexual, woman-masculine/ butch heterosexual' (2003, p. 383).

Drury (2011) builds directly upon Caudwell's assertion that further research needs to be conducted in order to better understand the identities and exclusions within UK women's team sport cultures. Indeed, she states that her research aim is to bridge the literature gap between the gendered dynamics in mainstream sports and those occurring within supposedly 'LGBT friendly' football teams. Her premise is that power relations work through the discursive practices associated with inclusion meaning that ironically, some members of 'inclusive' LGBT sporting spaces remain as peripheral as they were in the mainstream:

'The relations of power that exist within sports spaces inexorably construct and disrupt social boundaries, thus creating opportunities for the normalization of certain identities and subjectivities, and the marginalization of others.' (Drury, 2011, p. 422)

The findings from her qualitative study support Caudwell's (2006) suggestion that so-called 'dykespaces' are not completely anti-normative. In her research femme lesbians felt marginalised and butch identities were considered to be more normative. Drury's findings also supported Pronger's (2000) Derridaen/Foucauldian explanation of the limits of gay sporting contexts, insofar as, 'discursive practices that serve to limit and restrict the operation of sex, gender and sexuality continue to prevail' meaning that bisexual identities occupied a 'particularly marginal discursive space' (Drury, 2011, p. 432).

The key finding from Drury's research into these complicated discursive practices was that the structural level of organized sport does not account for the discursive level of sporting space, where many unlegislated exclusions occur. This is a similar assertion to that made by Browne, Bakshi and Lim's (2011), that the structural nature of the hate crime paradigm is inappropriate for the conceptualisation of homophobia because it does not account for the discursive practices associated with abuse. Drury (2011, p. 434) concludes that further research needs to be carried out as to the experienced safety of sporting spaces – that are advertised as 'friendly' – because exclusionary practices often operate in covert, discursive ways: 'It is apparent, then, that the appropriation of marginal identities and subjectivities within structural objectives of sports spaces does not simplistically result in their automatic access to the social relations that govern that particular space'. Inclusionary objectives do not necessarily transpose into inclusionary practices.

In complete contrast to Drury's work, Anderson and Adams (2011) have found that the reduction of so-termed 'homohysteria' in men's team sport culture has not only impacted on the reduction of homophobia, but also of biphobia. Sixty interviews were conducted with American collegiate athletes and the findings indicate an altogether more positive and less stigmatized attitude towards non-heterosexual identities. Significantly, Anderson and Adams report that many participants stated that not only were they against homophobia and biphobia, but that they had never considered themselves to be homo/biphobic in the past. So, exposure to non-heterosexual friends and communities in the University environment was not the only explanation for this positivity. Instead, they simply had not been cultured to harbour phobic views. This, Anderson and Adams assert, is again reflective of the post-homohysteria era:

'today's youth are growing up in a culture (influenced by the media and the visibility of homosexuality on the Internet) in which young men are not socialized into homophobia the way previous research shows they once were.' (Anderson & Adams, 2011, p. 10)

Their participants appeared to conceptualise their sexualities through a queer lens, meaning that binary understandings were avoided and instead replaced with notion of multiplicity, variability and choice. (Incidentally, Queer Theory will be explored in some depth in Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework, under the subheading 'Adopting a Queer/Post-structuralist lens').

There is quite a significant contrast between Drury's findings and those of Anderson and Adam's (2011). This is perhaps because Drury studied women's grass roots football spaces in the UK, and Anderson studied University level attitudes in the US. They each paint a distinctly different picture as to the persistence or decline of biphobia. Within men's team spaces, Anderson asserts that biphobia is disappearing along with homophobia. Whereas, within women's spaces homophobia has arguably never had grounds to manifest, being that women's team sport is gay-friendly. Biphobia and exclusionary practices of non-normative identities, however, have consistently posed a problem for women's sport culture, as the findings of Caudwell, Broad and Drury all suggest. Clearly, more research needs to be conducted to further explore, and better explain, the intricacies of these discursive practices and their consequent relationship dynamics.

2.9 Summary

The second half of this literature review has focussed on research pertaining to bisexuality, bisexual invisibility and also on the complications associated with practices of bi in/exclusion in lesbian sporting spaces. The next chapter will focus on my methodology, research aims and design, and the reasons for my chosen epistemological standpoint.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss my research aims, research design and chosen epistemology. At the end I will summarize the issues relating to the trustworthiness and generalizability of my data. Chapter 4 will then go on to explain my choice of theoretical framework.

3.1 Research *is* methodology

Research is the systematic investigation of an area of interest or concern, or into a topic about which little is known, using either quantitative or qualitative methods of inquiry. Research can be used to test existing theory, or to develop new theory through rigorous exploration of the topic. This is for the overall purpose of furthering our understandings and generating new ideas and perspectives from which to see the world. According to Clough and Nutbrown (2002, p.4) 'all social research sets out with specific purposes from a particular position, and aims to persuade readers of the significance of its claims; these claims are always broadly political'. Indeed, given that social research sets out to propose new versions of the world, we need to consider the political implications the research will potentially have for our participants (Alldred, 1998; Alldred & Gillies, 2002). Goodwin and Goodwin (1996, p. 5) state that 'research results in the creation of knowledge' so I will have to be mindful of the knowledge I create from this research. My research takes place in a policy context: I have informed the Football Association of my findings in order to aid them with their four-year plans regarding homophobia and diversity-based incentives. This is inherently political because the knowledge I create could effect change, be it policy change or additions to educational resources and curricula. One contribution that I have made is the idea that not every athlete is heterosexual, and that not every non-heterosexual athlete is homosexual. This is with particular regards to the treatment of young people and up and coming athletes in sporting academies and centres of excellence. Future educational resources look set to include this viewpoint and it stands to have a real impact upon the approaches of coaching staff, managers and teachers alike. Working collectively with the principle that not every child is straight will surely give rise to increased diversity in sport.

3.2 Aims of the research

Aim: The purpose of this research is to explore the exclusionary practices around non-heterosexual minorities in sport culture, through a particular focus on the treatment of bisexuality.

The overall aim of this research has been to investigate how exclusionary practices such as homophobia manifest themselves in sport culture. This is to help explain why minority sexual identities are still met with stigma. In recent history, much research has been carried out into the experiences of gay men and lesbians in sport but little has been carried out on the particular experiences of those identifying as bisexual in this arena. Consequently, there is little known about the sporting lives of those falling 'in between' the hetero-homosexual binary. I aim to generate new insights into the understanding of bisexuality in sport by exploring how bisexuals/ minorities-within-minorities fit into this culture, and why there still appears to be such silence around taboo identities. The purpose of this research is to better understand the workings of the 'in-between' identities in sport and to theorise exclusionary practices. My aim, subsequent to the submission of this thesis, is to stimulate debate on this largely overlooked topic in sport sociology. By exploring how exclusionary practices function to position, and perhaps undermine those who do not 'fit' inside the 'gay-straight' dichotomy, I hope that this investigation will move the general body of knowledge on homophobia forward, showing how sexual orientation discrimination can manifest itself in many forms.

3.3 Research question

'How can we theorize bisexuality in the context of sport?'

In order to create a practical focus for the analysis process I devised two further analytical questions to help answer the above research question. They deliberately centred around the operationalisation of exclusions in sport so as to help me focus in on the means by which exclusionary practices were mobilising both biphobia and homophobia:

- 1. How does homophobia operate in the context of sport?**
- 2. How does bisexuality operate in the context of sport?**

3.4 Research design

In terms of research paradigms, I situated this study within the critical paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) separate out research approaches into three sections: Normative research, which seeks to generalise the specifics of social research, is objectivist in nature and hence requires quantitative methods; Interpretive research which is more qualitative, in that it uses social scientific methods such as phenomenology to investigate individual perspectives and meanings – the 'micro'; and Critical research, which has a more emancipatory interest in investigating either underprivileged groups, or in problematizing un-critiqued, taken-for-granted ideas in underlying cultural ideologies –the 'macro' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p. 35).

A critical approach was chosen for the purpose of adding to the current critique on culturally taken-for-granted notions of sexual identity. Through interrogating the otherwise generally assumed categories of homosexual and heterosexual, I aimed to generate new ways of speaking about sexuality, and ways that would allow for increased diversity and respect in sport culture.

This investigation was designed to be small scale and qualitative in that interviews were chosen to explore athletes' – mainly footballers' – accounts of bisexual visibility, homophobia, and practices of exclusion in sport. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because new questions were being raised. Bisexuality is not popularly studied in football, so some modicum of control was warranted in the interview schedule to make sure bisexuality was raised as a topic of interest. The terms 'bisexuality' or 'bisexual' could well have been new concepts for some of the participants. A predetermined schedule organised around key topics such as visibility, invisibility, stereotyping and the line between banter and bullying was devised. The broader issue of homophobia in sport was also addressed, with particular reference to the elements of current sporting culture that participants felt needed to change. In considering which topics to include, it was also important to recognise which issues had been left out, as Miles and Huberman (1994) point out all social researchers have certain expectations of what it is they expect to find. For example, I was expecting to hear about bullying in the sense of violence.

'Study design decisions can, in a real sense, be seen as analytical – a sort of *anticipatory data reduction* – because they constrain later analysis by ruling out certain variables and relationships and attending to others. Design decisions... prefigure your analytic moves.'
(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 16)

To my surprise, not many participants gave accounts of physical bullying. At the design stage however, I did not know what to expect and so had to remain receptive to alternative accounts where exclusionary practices were circumvented altogether. There could well have been some very positive accounts shared, whereby participants had perhaps never seen homophobia in their sports at all. Likewise, bisexuality could have been more visible than the existing literature on visibility predicted it to be. Also, I chose not to include all communities under the LGBT umbrella, in this case, transgender athletes. This was because transgender issues in sport, although possibly similar to those of non-heterosexual identifying athletes in terms of exclusionary practices, I felt required a different literature search and arguably a different approach. My concern was that of misrepresenting the issue of transphobia as another branch of homophobia and so chose to make biphobia the main focus of this research.

Discourse analysis was carried out in order to examine the workings of dominant discourses in sport culture, and how they functioned to shore up support homophobic and exclusionary

practices. I analysed the inter-relationships between those dominant ways of conceptualising non-heterosexuals in order to see how these practices maintained processes of marginalisation. This study was designed to be mainly inductive in nature. However, there was a deductive element in that I started out with the questions I wished to answer. My exploration was guided somewhat by that which I expected to see. Wolcott (1982) argues that although some inductive research tends to favour 'grounded' approaches whereby the research questions emerge from the fieldwork process, instead of from the minds of the researchers, is still subject to some deductive reasoning. It is 'impossible to embark upon research without some idea of what one is looking for and foolish not to make that quest explicit' (Wolcott, 1982, p. 157). Hence, there was an inductive element to my research design, in that I aimed to examine an under-researched area within sport culture, and so had to ask initial questions to open up new areas of debate. The most interesting questions raised of this new research area arguably came from my interviewees (see Chapters 6 and 7 for the full analysis).

3.5 Epistemology

Epistemological and ontological standpoints

Epistemology is an element of the philosophy of knowledge and concerns how we come to know what we think we know. After all, as Sikes (2004, p. 23) states, 'research *is* a philosophical endeavour'. In particular, an epistemological standpoint refers to the philosophy of the *nature* of inquiry, also – be that positivistic or interpretive/critical – and having a direct impact on the methods chosen to conduct research:

'Epistemology is the theory of knowledge. The discipline examines what is knowable, what should count as knowledge and whether knowledge is certain in fields including science.'

(Horrocks & Jevtic, 1997, p. 18)

The epistemological stance one adopts depends on one's interpretation of the nature of the object being studied. This is the difference between ontology and epistemology: ontology refers to the nature of things, where epistemology concerns the nature of inquiry into the nature of those things (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Burrell and Morgan (1979) conceptualise social reality into two ontological camps: realism and nominalism. The former depicts social reality as external to the researcher, as measurable and outside of the limits of an individual's control; the latter depicts social reality as internal, and dependent upon individuals' interpretations of their own realities. Two corresponding epistemological camps are presented, namely positivism and anti-positivism. Positivism is a standpoint built upon the realist idea that

human nature is controlled by the external world, and thus believes that knowledge of human nature can be acquired by natural scientific, or quantitative methods or observation, given that the ontological basis of positivistic inquiry is that social life is indeed measurable. On the contrary, anti, or post-positivism is an alternative epistemological standpoint that advocates an interpretivistic or critical kind of inquiry, being that knowledge is personal to and dependent upon the individual. Therefore, post-positivist inquiry requires methods that are qualitative in nature, to keep in line with the ontological basis that researchers cannot assume anything about the individual, except the assumption that human beings are unique in nature. In short, realism and positivism depict human nature as lacking agency, where nominalism and post-positivism depict individuals as exhibiting agency, in terms of their ability to make personal choices and articulate their own experiences. For further discussion on the particular research methods being used in this study, see Chapter 5, section 5.2 Qualitative research methods.

Criticisms of positivism

The main criticisms of positivism are that it overlooks the importance of subjectivity in research – that of the participants and of the researcher – and that it presents the knowledge it creates as being *factual*. Popper (1980) raises the issue that positivistic research, with its resultant objectivist truth claims, fails to examine its own nature which is both value and theory-laden (Young, 1981). Similarly, Cohen *et al.* (2011) suggest that positivistic approaches underestimate humankind's own ability to theorise about our world. Indeed, Kierkegaard (1974) posited that objectivist perspectives are in danger of dehumanizing humanity, by denying subjective accounts the same legitimacy as objective data on human experience. Ions (1977) adds that quantification of human nature demeans it and demotes it to the level of just another mathematical exercise. As Alldred and Burman (2005) remind us, the researcher is embedded in the picture they are investigating, even if they take an objectivist approach. Siraj-Blatchford (1994) also raises concern with the resultant ways in which such positivistic researchers justify their claims to truth as they are made under the influences of their value systems which are not always acknowledged:

‘What is at issue philosophically and politically is not the quantification itself but the meta-theoretical claims that are subsequently made regarding the status of the knowledge obtained...(and) the fact that researchers' values and understandings inevitably influence their choice of appropriate theory from which the research hypothesis is deduced.’
(Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, p. 10)

I chose to adopt a critical epistemological stance because I felt it was the most appropriate vantage point from which to critique existing notions of sexual identity in sport culture. This

decision was made with a view to exploring how current conceptualisations in popular discourse were giving rise to both inclusive and exclusionary practices in sport. However, despite the argument that a critical perspective would be the most fitting for an investigation into social inequality, this approach is not without its own epistemic concerns. These I have carefully considered and the resolution I reached is discussed below.

Queer and bisexual epistemologies

When embarking upon the research design stage I had to consider the following potential epistemic conflicts. Firstly, by exploring exclusionary practices around non-heterosexual minorities through the particular treatment of bisexuality, I had to wonder whether or not that would even be possible, given that Barker *et al.* (2009) found through their research with the UK Bi Research Group, that not everybody considering themselves as bisexual wished to outwardly identify that way:

‘...though 85% of respondents listed “bisexual” among their identities, 51% of respondents ($N = 93$) identified with the term *queer* as well as *bisexual*. A smaller group of people reported that they did not like using specific labels to describe their complex and fluid sexuality; they tended to be more comfortable with the term *queer* than *bisexual*.’
(Barker, Richards & Bowes-Catton, 2009, p. 366)

Indeed, this process of choosing a label for one’s identity is further complicated by differing definitions of the same term ‘queer’, as Rodriguez-Rust (2000) highlights. *Queer* can mean an anti-conventional sexual identity. Queer can also represent the umbrella term for all sexual minorities under which queer itself can be thought to fall. Although many people find a way to assimilate the term queer into their identities, Barker *et al.* (2008) found that nevertheless, even those who spoke of themselves in terms of diverse and plural sexual identity attributes ‘found it difficult to talk about their sexuality without reference to dominant binary discourses of gender and sexuality, despite their explicit rejection of these elsewhere in the discussion’ (Barker *et al.* 2008, cited in Barker *et al.*, 2009, p. 366).

Ault (1999) found a similar situation in that her participants similarly rejected orientation binaries, and yet they had to explain their various rejections in terms of these binaries. Importantly, this has implications for exclusionary practices *within* non-heterosexual communities, as Barker warns: ‘Bisexual activists need to remain aware of the constraints implicit in the language of ‘bisexuality’ and to consider who may be excluded, as well as included, by this label (Barker *et al.*, 2009, p. 376). The use of the term *bisexual* can therefore be problematic for researchers who wish to investigate the bisexual *scene*, because not all those

identifying as bisexual will necessarily reside in those places, or attend those bi-community events.

Hemmings (2002) adds a further twist to this debate – on the need for more diversity within bisexual theorisation, and the political need for a label to organise under to increase visibility – by suggesting that it is important to analyse the impact of bisexual discourses irrespective of the fact that bisexual identities might be difficult to define and therefore bisexuals difficult to investigate:

‘... bisexuality has discursive impact both with and without the presence of bisexual subjects. Bisexuality is thus worthy of investigation not because bisexual realities have been misrepresented or elided, but because narratives of bisexuality constitute an affective discourse in their own right, on that shapes meaning as well as becoming shaped.’
(Hemmings, 2002, p. 35)

This was an important issue for my research design, given that bisexuality and bisexuals could ultimately be difficult to find. As Hemmings goes on to add, ‘bisexuality is a trope for “something else” – typically confusion, madness, or greed’ (ibid., p. 35). Although the issue of invisibility bolstered my decision to research the workings of biphobia with more rigour than any other sexual identity phobia in sport, it also provided one of the grandest obstacles to my overall process. (See Chapter 5, section 5.3 for the difficulties I faced in recruiting bisexual-identifying participants).

On the topic of stigmatization, Barker *et al.* (2009) also point out that *queer* is problematic as an umbrella term because at some point, there needs to be a decision made as to the terms, identities and practices – such as BDSM, kink, and polyamory – that should be included under that umbrella. This also applies to expressions of identity such as *bi-curious*, *gender-oblivious*, and gender orientation statuses such as trans men and women (Richards, 2007). On this note, Gurevich *et al.* (2009, p. 237) propound that bisexuality can be conceptualised differently, not so much as an isolated island, but as interactional and dynamic: ‘We consider bisexuality not merely as an identity or a practice, but as a key epistemological register from which to disassemble the polarized axes of gender and sexuality’. However, bisexuality is not always conceptualised as representing of fluidity and versatility, as Barker and Langdridge (2008) assert: just the term bisexual itself reinforces binary gender categories, in the sense that it infers one’s sexual preference for *either* one gender *or* the other.

However, there is another reason that those identifying as bisexual or queer may feel intimidated to do so openly, even within their supposed safe spaces of the LGBT community. Barker *et al.* (2009, p. 372) argue that bisexual identities can be met with stigma *within* the

community: 'This was evidenced at the 2008 London Pride March where the bisexual banner was met, by some portions of the crowd, with chants of 'make your mind up' and 'pick a side''. Similarly, Piontek (2006) points out that although queer is an acceptable term within the American and British academies and activism communities, it is still seen as a pejorative term in Australia, which complicates its appropriateness as a respectable label in their activism discourses. Given the stigmatized nature of some terms, Serano (2007) suggests that the queer label is problematic one, because invisibility is a dangerous possibility for the multitudes of unique identities that are lumped together under it.

Barker and Langdridge (2008) echo this concern, suggesting that because the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Fronts refrained from popularising bisexual identities, they risk being homogenized under the more recent queer umbrella, without first being adequately theorised or that is to say, theorised in as sophisticated as way as gay and lesbian identities subsequent to those movements. They suggest that although Queer Theory as a project serves to create new discursive spaces within which to combat heteronormative sexuality and gender categories, it nevertheless poses a risk to the further investigation of bisexuality, being that it necessarily has to reject all categories as essential, as a part of their deconstruction. I argue that by rejecting heteronormativity, Queer Theory can actually be harnessed in a useful way for the exploration of bisexual, fluid, or non-binary identities for this very reason, for it analyses and challenges the normative ways in which sexual orientations are dichotomised, even within the LGBT community.

In a practical sense, a 'queering' of sport culture has meant the posing of a challenge to the binaries of male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual that are present, not only in the sport sociological literature but in the accounts of the participants I have interviewed. Categories of sexual orientation exist because they are 'talked into existence' (Willig 1999), so I have sought to examine the cultural resources that are drawn upon when people talk about the various inclusive or exclusionary practices associated with non-heterosexual minorities. Again, see Chapters 6 and 7 for a full breakdown of the discourse analysis of my interview transcripts.

3.6 Trustworthiness of qualitative data

Quantitative procedures such as laboratory experiments are usually carried out on large scales to ensure their generalizability. Data collected are subject to three main tests to validate their

scientific 'rigour': these are, *internal validity*, which gauges the effectiveness of a research tool; *reliability* which examines the extent to which a test procedure garners consistent results when repeated over time; and *external validity*, which evaluates the degree to which results can be generalised to broader population from which was taken (Rolfe, 2006). Similarly, qualitative research studies require validation in order to be considered *trustworthy*. Four components are used to evaluate the level to which qualitative research findings can be trusted, as stated in Lincoln and Guba (1985):

1. *Dependability*, which is the qualitative equivalent of reliability, in that it concerns the way contexts and settings change throughout the research process, affecting its ability to be replicated
2. *Transferability*, which is the qualitative equivalent of external validity, and refers to the extent to which findings are applicable to, and can be transferred to, other social or cultural contexts
3. *Confirmability*, which is the appraisal of the extent to which a qualitative, subjective account can actually be corroborated by others involved in it – this also involves the extent to which a researcher has been reflexive throughout the analysis procedure in and acknowledging their own cultural voice
4. *Credibility*, which loosely corresponds to the positivistic test of internal validity, which is to ascertain the extent to which a participant's perspective has been effectively articulated through the researcher's voice and lens, that is to say, how much authenticity the writer has tried to give the speaker in the research.

In order to ensure the credibility of results, Guba and Lincoln (1989) argue that researchers must have further contact with participants in order to make sure their accounts have been appropriately represented. They urge that member checks are 'the single most critical technique for establishing credibility' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 239). However, Sandelowski (1993, p. 3) argues instead that reality in qualitative research is 'multiple and constructed' anyway, so it is not necessary to seek repeatability in order to substantiate credibility. Prior to that, Sandelowski (1986) suggested an alternative idea, that a qualitative researcher leave a 'decision trail', so that the reader of the research paper could reach their own conclusions as to the level of the study's trustworthiness, based upon the decisions made concerning data omissions and indeed additions. As long as a qualitative researcher attempts to chronicle their choices throughout the research process the audience can decide on how replicable the data are to other social or cultural contexts.

Another aspect affecting the trustworthiness of qualitative data is the issue of *outsider status*: that is to say, the outsider status of the data collector with respect to the participant (Gratton and Jones, 2010). I did not disclose my sexual identity to all of my participants so it is possible that I had a certain insider status in some interviews and a possible outsider status in others (see Chapter 8, section 8.2 where I discuss the implications for methodology with respect to presumed insider status).

However, I could also have been considered to be an 'outsider' on the grounds that I am not an athlete but a researcher. Although I am a member of the LGBT community I am not a member of the sporting community and so my interviewees could potentially have feared that I would not understand their cultures given that they were so nuanced and particular to their sporting contexts. Further research into biphobia in sport could benefit from being carried out by athletes or ex-athletes. This would perhaps help to alleviate the effects of such discrepancies between insider and outsider perceptions in future studies.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has explained my research methodology, the aims of this research, my research design and epistemology. The next chapter, Chapter 4, will explain my theoretical framework and my reasons for the choices I have made.

Chapter 4: Theoretical framework

4.0 Introduction

This chapter explores post-structural perspectives and Foucauldian approaches. I discuss the implications of adopting these lenses and finish the chapter by summarizing my chosen theoretical position.

4.1 Adopting a Queer/ Post-structuralist lens

Queer theory provides a framework for the exploration of the culturally acceptable and subversive, through a deconstruction of what is believed to be normal and abnormal. Foucault's philosophies of power, knowledge and discourse provide researchers with valuable conceptual tools with which to investigate and theorise cultural power dynamics. For the purposes of this study I chose to utilise two particular elements of his approaches, namely 'procedures of exclusion' (Foucault, 1981) and 'conditions of possibility' (Foucault, 1972). Post-structuralism offers a perspective on the power inherent within language. The ways in which certain groups are positioned – by the language most commonly used to conceptualise them – can influence the taken-for-granted understandings of who they are at broader cultural levels. While these understandings, or lack thereof, remain largely un-scrutinized and unchallenged, individuals falling within the boundaries of the acceptable sphere are therefore privileged over those disbanded to the subversive outskirts. The post-structural angle has the potential to show how taken-for-granted in the language of sport function to shore up empowered and disempowered subject positions, such as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transgender and even 'closeted'. The adoption of a Foucauldian theoretical framework was deemed appropriate for my research as this perspective sheds light on the relationship between power and cultural legitimacy, which is critical for the examination of sexual identity dynamics and discriminations within sport culture today.

In keeping with this theoretical framework, I adopted a discourse analytic approach for the analysis of my data, as the purpose of this thesis is to investigate the underlying cultural practices of sport, indeed those which prove to be exclusionary. I chose this approach to explore the resources pertaining to sexual identity that currently inform, shape and/or limit sexual orientation diversity. The idea was to analyse the data in terms of the discourses available for athletes to draw upon, when explaining issues of homophobia, bisexual visibility and exclusionary practices in today's climate. For example, homophobia research throughout the 1980's and '90's revealed that it was commonplace then to utilise discourses of contamination,

HIV/AIDS and paedophilia, when describing non-heterosexual identities. These were powerful ways of undermining, stigmatising and disempowering the LGBT community. In order to see which powerful discourses are currently informing sport culture I combined these Foucauldian, Queer and Post-Structural lenses to further explain the workings of exclusionary practices and how they play out with today's sexual minorities.

4.2 Defining discourse

There are many different definitions of what exactly constitutes a 'discourse'. In some forms of linguistics, a discourse is simply a sample of spoken dialogue. In text analysis, a discourse is an excerpt of written word, where the point of study focuses on the actions of the dialogue, for example, patterns of turn-taking and conversational beginnings. In more common forms of linguistic analysis, according to Widdowson's (1979) view of discourse as text-and-interaction, a discourse can be either spoken or written, but the focus of examination is the exchange of *interpretations* between speaker and listener. Moreover, it is the qualities of these interactions that are explored, the so-called 'higher-level organizational features' of language (Fairclough, 1992, p.3). In the context of discursive, qualitative research, discourses can be thought of as conceptual bubbles, so to speak, that define the perimeters of a cultural meaning: 'Discourses are frameworks of meaning produced in language' (Alldred & Burman, 2005, p.3). This means that a discourse is a group of statements that define objects, such as identities, what they come to mean, and how these meanings and constructions function to shape the social world.

In much the same way, Burr (1995, p. 48) defines a discourse as 'a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events'. Parker (1992, p. 5) defines a discourse as 'a system of statements which constructs an object'. Burr (1995) also cites Kitzinger (1987/1989) whose works on the social construction of lesbianism showed that her participants drew upon different discourses to assert their positions in society. These were most notably discourses of romance with which to validate their relationships in the Thatcherite climate of the Section 28 legislation. This legal act meant that lesbian families were conceptualised as nothing more than 'pretend families', with its polemic terminology that utilised discourses of naturalness and unnaturalness (Burr, 1995, p. 74). Burr suggests that the lesbian community drew instead upon discourses of liberal humanism in order to assert their rights to happiness and self-fulfilment. Discourse is thus theorised to function in such a way that it effectively paints a particular picture of events, which can include people and communities – indeed minorities – serving to represent them in a particular light, be that favourable or otherwise.

4.3 Discourses of sexuality and 'coming out'

Discourse can be thought of as a body of ideas, and this body of thought has the potential to shape and/or influence entire demographics. Take for example, Hunt & Frankenberg (1990), who cite their example of the 'Disney child', whereby traditional Western discourses of childhood depict children as two-dimensional and vulnerable. Of course, these images can translate into cultural practices that affect children's treatment. Although the uptake of these 'Disney child', innocence-based discourses can reflect nothing more than a well-intentioned, protective endeavour – as child sexuality in parenting discourse is often associated with the *loss* of innocence – Kitzinger (1990) points out that parents who restrict children's access to sex education paradoxically render them more vulnerable to abuse. Discourses of childhood can effectively *construct* children and their experiences. Those who make decisions on their behalves have the power to restrict or enable the knowledges to which they are exposed. This in turn shapes the kind of child they are able to *be*: independent, dependent and/or informed. Indeed, 'a child is ignorant if she doesn't know what adults want her to know, but innocent if she doesn't know what adults don't want her to know' (Kitzinger, 1990, p. 161). Put simply, the current ways of understanding a child in the broader culture inform the current ways of treating a child in the classroom. In much the same way, understandings of non-heterosexualities inform how people within the LGBT community are ultimately treated.

Tierney (1995) asserts that it is important to realise the relationship between discourses and institutions, and how their interplay has repercussions for the possibility of new understandings of sexuality at cultural level:

'Thus, to understand sexual orientation, we must situate our work in present social contexts and analyse how sexual identity has been institutionalised. We need to come to terms with how sexual identity gets defined and how such definitions vary or are in congruence with previous definitions so that we do not merely accept a transparent gay identity.'

(Tierney, 1995, p. 13)

Willig (2008) illustrates this relationship with her analogy of the doctor-patient dynamic: medical-biological discourses position the individual requiring treatment as the *patient*, and this reinforces institutional practices of – sometimes invasive – bodily examination, which informs medical discourse. She asserts that in this way, 'discourses are bound up with institutional practices... while discourses legitimate and reinforce existing social and institutional structures, these structures, in turn, also support and validate the discourses' (Willig, 2008, p. 173).

Discourses can in this way facilitate social practices, especially when their intrinsic claims to expertise go un-critiqued.

On the topic of declarative claims and sexuality discourse, Lloyd (2005) raises a similar issue with respect to 'coming out' discourse. She adds that our 'truths' are historically situated, in much the same way as Tierney suggests, and that it has become quite normal for individuals to disclose an identity that they feel they intrinsically occupy. So, coming out discourse is essentialist in nature, insofar as: 'performative productions of the self such as '(be) coming out' involve the postulation of 'truths' of the self – that is constative claims that are seen as expressions of what we are – even as those 'truths' may be revealed to be historically generated constructions'(Lloyd, 2005, p. 58).

That is to say, that 'coming out' as a process involves the declaration of a personal sexual identity-based truth that had been previously made unclear, or had remained undisclosed. 'Coming out' discourse is therefore arguably essentialist in nature, insofar as 'constative claims' such as 'I am gay', or 'I am bisexual' depict homosexuality and bisexuality, and indeed heterosexuality, as discrete and mutually exclusive. However, this has not posed a problem for my research – as I will discuss later in the sections on Queer Theory and Post-structuralism – because it was still possible for me to deconstruct the *impact* of these discrete categories without needing to concern myself too much with their respective ontological natures.

Ontological concerns with the relativist nature of discourse

On the topic of ontological nature, Brackenridge (2001) raises an important issue with regards to not only the natures of sexual orientation and sexual abuse, but that of the research perspectives chosen to investigate them. She argues, importantly, that if we as researchers make academic the very real effect of discrimination and abuse on people's lives, then we are in danger of completely missing the point of research, arguably, in favour of polemics:

'The power of discourse is undeniable... but it is not detached from the material circumstances of rape, assault or other forms of sexual violence in sport that athletes experience on a daily basis. Sexual exploitation in sport – whether manifested in discrimination, harassment or rape – is much more than just a 'discursive formation'.

(Brackenridge, 2001, p. 4)

This research aimed to explore the practices of exclusion around non-heterosexual minorities in sport, with the objective of generating new ways of *eliminating* them. This could be through the attribution of these new understandings to educational resources in sporting academies, and/or to the development of anti-bullying incentives in sport governing bodies in the UK. As I will

explain, my intention of adopting a queer, post-structuralist, Foucauldian perspective was to draw together the strengths of these viewpoints to present an in-depth explanation of how discourses of exclusion have very real effects on those participating in sport. In doing so I have harnessed the relativistic side of Foucauldian discourse analysis for the purpose of problematizing these relationships and intersections between dominant and peripheral sexual identities. The pragmatic intention of this theoretical choice was to show how these positionings can have an effect on the *quality* of athletes' life experiences in sporting contexts.

4.4 Foucault

Michel Foucault's philosophies on power and knowledge have provided a helpful apparatus for my exploration of the discursive constructions of non-heterosexual and minority sexual identities in sport culture. They have enabled me to analyse the various discursive strategies used by my participants when talking about homophobia and bisexuality in their sports. The aim of this Foucauldian approach was not only to examine how such powerful discourses functioned to shore up certain notions of sexuality but also to analyse how the power was being deployed through current knowledge bases. Foucault termed this the 'micro-physics' of power (Foucault, 1981, p. 85). Howarth (2000) too concurs that powerful texts and narratives influence which versions of culturally accepted truths, or taken-for-granted, become the dominant commentaries on certain subjects. For example, scientific texts on anatomy and physiology are central to reading lists in Western medical schools (Deacon, 2002). Hayter (2007) highlights how incompatible ancient discourses on herbal healing are with current, dominant discourses of medicine:

'At a certain point in time the healing properties of certain herbs and plants belonged to medical discourse, but as scientific medicine developed these discourses came to be seen as outside the discipline of medicine and therefore outside medical discourse – subsequently becoming minimized and side-lined.' (Hayter, 2007, p. 360)

Foucault argues that it is within the disciplines themselves that this power is housed. This is because their claims to expertise have the effect of marginalising alternative ways of understanding their subjects that are non-conformant with their core ideologies. As Foucault (1972, p. 32) proclaims, 'nothing has any meaning outside discourse', meaning that discourse functions to effectively control which topics are deemed meaningfully enough to be spoken about, and which are de-legitimized or rendered less significant at that time. Hence, Foucault (1981) depicts discourse, and indeed the power to be legitimized within discourse, as 'the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized' (Foucault, 1981 p. 211).

Procedures of exclusion

With his 'procedures of exclusion', Foucault (1981) theorises the ways in which some discourses come to be accepted and others prohibited, through two main discursive mechanisms:

- 1) Definition and prohibition: These procedures define the thinkable and the sayable
- 2) Division and rejection: Certain topics can become othered and excluded, depending on the level of importance attributed to them at that time
- 3) Authority and power of knowledge: Powerful narratives influence the dominance of discourses in lay culture, through the discursive practices of institutions and disciplines

Claims to truisms and falsities are measured by certain cultural standards, an effect that Foucault terms 'the will to truth' (1981, p. 62). This can mean that entire bodies of knowledge are dismissed in favour of those culturally considered to ring true. In terms of sexuality, 'division and rejection' refers to the difference in importance of dominant and marginalised notions of sexuality. Indeed, Foucault argues that sexuality is one of the topics that have been prohibited throughout recent Western history. Using the aforementioned contrast of ancient herbal and modern scientific medicine, this procedure of exclusion refers to the ways in which not only dominant discourses, but domineering positions of prominence associated with those discourses, create power imbalances. For example, a psychiatrist's explanation of their patient's hallucinations would be largely assumed to hold more credibility than the patient's explanation of their belief in shamanism. In a Western medical, scientific context, where the discipline of psychiatry is adorned with almost un-scrutinized authority in lay Western culture, incompatible spiritualistic notions of illness are largely dismissed (Hayter, 2007). Twigg (2002) highlights how cultural practices of exclusion come to be 'normalised': 'populations and individuals are classified and grouped according to normative categories, so that the sane are separated from the insane, the deserving from the undeserving, and the normal from the deviant' (Twigg, 2002, p. 432). Kendall and Wickham (1999) echo this idea, adding that the reason behind this incompatibility is down to the 'rules' concerning production of such psychiatric/shamanic statements: 'the rules by which 'scientific psychiatric statements about sexuality are produced disallow statements based on magic and witchcraft, statements that would have been sayable under a discourse based on 'the flesh'' (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 44). This means that certain discourses of sexuality will facilitate statements pertaining to queer/fluid/bisexual/othered sexual orientations, where other discourses may function to limit such conceptualisations, on the grounds of what it is indeed possible to *be*.

Foucault (1998, p. 100) reminds us, however, that the analysis of discourse is never so black and white. He urges that 'we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies'. This particular analysis of power was important at my analysis stage. I needed to remember that the discourses themselves were not simply being compared for their connections and relationships but for the effects these interplays had on lived experience. Discourse analysis was chiefly employed here to examine the repercussions of the ways in which systems of discourses (of sexual identity) impacted upon the legitimization, or lack thereof, of their subsequent subject positions. Importantly, Foucault asserts that 'discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy' (Foucault, 1998, p. 100).

Analysing my data using these tools allowed me to explore how differing levels of value were attributed to different discourses of sexual identity, thus impacting on the ways in which it was possible for them to be *understood*. But this is notwithstanding the fact, as Foucault points out, that discourses can be sites for resistance, too. Again I bore this in mind when attempting to be as reflexive as possible during the analysis stage, lest I failed to see any instances of resistance to, and circumvention of phobic practices.

Conditions of possibility

Another of Foucault's philosophies on the topic of power within discourse is that of possibility: the possibility for that subject to be spoken about at that time.

'The conditions necessary for the appearance of an object of discourse, the historical conditions required if one is to 'say anything' about it, and if several people are to say different things about it, the conditions necessary if it is to exist in relation to other objects'.
(Foucault, 1972, p. 49)

As Howarth (2000) describes, he is 'interested not in the actual truthfulness of statements (their 'correspondence to reality'), but in the conditions in which their truth or falsity can be decided' (Howarth, 2000, p. 63). This was an important analytical tool for my discourse analysis, because I was looking for the ways in which non-heterosexual minorities were being conceptualised in today's sport culture and as a result, which kinds of understandings were deemed *possible* on the basis of those available constructions. Using this notion, I was able to ask questions of my data, such as 'are bisexual identities possible within this particular cohort of discourses?' and 'who is othered by the missing possibility to opt out of conformity with dominant identity

categories?’ Indeed, these questions echo Berlant and Warner’s (1998, p. 548) ‘aspirations of queer culture’, whereby they outline the new possibilities that could be opened up if only heteronormativity could be unseated. This new mainstream culture would represent not only ‘a safe zone for queer sex but the changed possibilities of identity, intelligibility, publics, culture, and sex that appear when the heterosexual couple is no longer the referent or the privileged example of sexual culture’ (ibid., 1998). Warner is a Queer Theorist, and this also shows the link between Foucauldian philosophy and the feminist/queer movements that followed, in deconstructing hegemonic discourses that indeed serve to de-limit the possible within Western culture. Berlant and Warner, incidentally, define heteronormativity as ‘the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientation that make heterosexuality not only coherent – that is, organised as a sexuality – but also privileged’ (1998, p. 565). It is this notion of heteronormativity that I have attempted to explore and deconstruct within my analysis, to see how intrinsic such practices of exclusion are within the *institution* of sport.

In terms of the transformative potential of post-structural, Foucauldian and queer research, Tierney (1995) argues that new possibilities for the understanding of non-heterosexual subject positions are paramount for social change. He recommends Foucault’s philosophies on power as a useful facilitator of this change: ‘Foucault offers the possibility for individual and group resistance and explains the contingencies of power. He argues for the necessity of a micropolitics in which multiple groups contend for power’ (Tierney, 1995, p. 169). However, Foucault is not without his critics, which I shall outline and discuss in the next section.

Criticisms of power discourse

For Foucault, power is inhabited with the workings of discourse and hence, is inextricably linked with those practices and processes:

‘Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance.’ (Foucault, 1998, p. 101)

Foucault explains how the ‘deployment of sexuality’ works by pointing out that although Eighteenth Century ‘sodomites’ were burnt at the stake, they were nevertheless *tolerated* in the army. Rendering certain subject positions as secretive is therefore a cultural practice in itself. However, Fraser (1989) criticises Foucault’s use of the word ‘power’ on the grounds that he uses it to a multitude of different ends and purposes and in so doing, ironically neglects to ‘deconstruct’ it for the possibly conflicting meanings, and conflicting functions:

‘Foucault’s notion of a power/knowledge regime covered a highly heterogeneous collection of phenomena... The problem is that Foucault calls too many sorts of things power and simply leaves it at that... Because Foucault has no basis for distinguishing, for example, forms of power that involve domination from those that do not, he appears to endorse a one-sided, wholesale rejection of modernity as such.’ (Fraser, 1989, p. 32-33)

Fraser’s contention is not only that the term ‘power’ is used in too much of an all-embracing fashion but that Foucault fails to reject modernist notions of power ‘without any conception of what is to replace it’ (ibid.). I would argue, however, that there are still merits to Foucault’s idea of a discursive form of power, despite the fact that his ideas do not necessarily constitute a formal or systematic theory of power. Certainly, for the purposes of this study, his conception of the ‘rules that delimit the sayable’ was very much incorporated into my analytical recipe as the fourth of four Foucauldian discourse analytic steps (see Chapter 6, section 6.5 for a breakdown of these analytic stages). The rules that ‘de-limit the sayable’ also have an effect on the mobilization of taboo identities and their social silencing (Henriques, 1984, p. 106).

4.5 Queer Theory

For the purposes of this study, I have explored the treatment of bisexuality as something of a ‘test case’ of exclusionary practices in sport culture. This choice was partly made because exclusionary practices, as they particularly pertain to bisexual identities, are seemingly under-researched and certainly under-represented in sport sociology. I believe my focus can benefit sport culture as a whole, especially if new research seeks to investigate the other possible forms of phobia still remaining in un-specified ways (under the *homo*-prefixed issue of phobia).

Defining Queer Theory

Early Queer theorists pointed to the disempowering effects of sexual orientation binaries, as well as the effects of gender dichotomies. In particular, the feminist Teresa de Lauretis (1991) – the first academic to formally introduce the term ‘Queer Theory’ – raised the concern that theorisation of sexuality, based on un-scrutinized and dichotomous understandings of sexual and gender categories, only served to further the lack of understanding around them, being that their many intersections were inevitably overlooked, or misrepresented as linear. Consequently, such theorisation also served to reinforce power imbalances reinforced by un-critiqued binary conceptualisations:

‘In a sense, the term “Queer Theory” was arrived at in the effort to avoid all these fine distinctions in our discursive protocols, not to adhere to any one of the given terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead to both transgress and transcend them – or at the very least problematize them.’ (de Lauretis, 1991, v)

As mentioned earlier, *queer* can be an identity as well as a personal choice of resistance against specifying sexual categories. Queer Theory is a critique of sexual identities as they are bandied about in social discourse. Where feminism examines the constructions of the natural (and their antitheses, the unnatural), Queer Theory seeks to deconstruct the very idea that these notions are oppositional. This is important, because, as Weeks (2011) suggests, it is through critiquing these binaries that their conflicts appear, and this offers the possibility of developing new ways of constructing those who fall outside of, or in-between those dualities: 'For queer theorists, the perverse is the norm at the centre of the normal, giving rise to sexual and cultural dissidence and a transgressive ethic, which constantly works to unsettle binarism and to suggest alternatives' (Weeks, 2011, p. 207). Halperin (1997, p. 62) defines the project of Queer Theory in a similar way, as a critique of the normative, particularly the *heteronormative*: 'whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant'. Grace, Hill, Johnson & Lewis (2004) highlight the post-structuralist nature of Queer Theory in that its epistemological standpoint is inherently post-positive, being that queer labels are designed to be fluid, plural and unquantifiable:

'Queer is a term that is often used to signify the total community of otherly gendered or sexual outlaws, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexual people... Queer knowledge is knowledge that refuses to be complete. Queer epistemology leads U/s to believe that W/e cannot know anything with certitude or finiteness.'
(Grace *et al.*, 2004, p. 302)

Hennessy (1993) echoes this point that the purpose of a queer project is to critique the lenses through which we carry out research projects, so as not to reinforce culturally taken-for-granted categories. She asserts that: 'Queer Theory calls into question obvious categories (man, woman, Latina, Jew, butch, femme), oppositions (man vs. woman, heterosexual vs. homosexual), or equations (gender = sex) upon which conventional notions of sexuality and identity rely' (Hennessy, 1993b, p. 964).

Using Queer Theory to explore bisexuality

Gurevich *et al.* (2009, p. 254) assert that 'it is precisely queer theory's self-reflexive leanings and the capacity for appraising its own discursive procedures and their limits... that makes queer theory an obvious ally in the deconstructive project of theorizing bisexuality.' This is because a Queer project aims to unpack the ways in which some knowledges, in this case bisexual/fluid/in-between knowledges, are culturally adorned with legitimacy and others are not. This concerns the ways in which constructions or conceptualisations of identity are validated within a culture, as Weeks (1995, p. 49) propounds: Queer Theory is 'a form of politics that is simultaneously

deconstructive (contesting what is arbitrary and restrictive), and reconstructive (asserting the validity of desires and ways of being that have been ignored denied'. Indeed, Butler (1991) adds that bisexual identities are difficult to conceptualise because necessary understandings are not always readily available. The identity position of bisexual becomes an 'unviable, (un)subject position' (Butler, 1991, p. 306). In this way, it is not always easy to make oneself understood, if the resources with which to understand one's identity or preferences are only available within niche or like-minded communities. She explains her experience of trying to describe her own bisexual identity:

'Sometimes I do feel, in certain contexts and in certain situations, I feel like it's simpler to just say that I'm a dyke or I'm a lesbian. It's more understood, it's more intelligible to people and unless I have time to go into why I say I'm bisexual or how I'm bisexual, I don't always feel comfortable saying that. Especially, actually, in the lesbian community.'

(Butler, 1991, p. 16)

Butler echoes Foucault's philosophies when she speaks of the 'constitutive outside', those peripheral, and not-yet-completely valid subject positions which appear to form the composite circumference around the more legitimate subject positions of the acceptable centre: this she terms the 'exclusionary matrix' (Butler, 1993, p. 3). In terms of the aims of a queer project, the end goal is to deconstruct this 'matrix' and the exclusionary practices that constitute it. Patton (1993) draws a useful parallel between post-structuralists such as Sedgwick and Butler, who argue for plurality and multiplicity in social theory, with pragmatic sociologists like Seidman, who argues for more practical ways of resolving the very real problems of discrimination in society. Patton believes that the end goals of their projects are indeed the same: both perspectives seek to better understand the effects of prejudicial discourse. By viewing identities as 'strategic systems', she recommends that qualitative researchers analyse both the intended and unintended effects of discourse production so that we can indeed create new and more inclusive approaches to solving issues of identity-based inequality. This, she contends, can happen just as effectively with or without the use of the term 'identity' as the foundation of that project. Research can be simultaneously queer and pragmatic:

'If deconstructive readings of identities have produced anxiety for those who need them in order to make practical political claims, then reinterpreting identities as strategic systems with pragmatic purposes and unintended effects may make it easier to forge new strategies (with or without identities).'

(Patton, 1993, p. 175)

This is the notion of identity that has informed my understanding of its premises. Such a way of conceptualising identity was deemed to be the most appropriate for my analysis because it proffered the foundation upon which to build my own idea of my participants' inclusionary and

exclusionary matrices in their own contexts. The aim of utilising Patton's notion of identity was also a practical one, in that it enabled me to better understand the exclusionary impacts of existing systems – with regards to the legitimization of sexual identities – in sport culture.

Criticisms of Queer Theory

Queer Theory is criticized in three main ways: firstly as a somewhat gratuitous *Ivory Tower* pursuit, whereby armchair academics get to philosophize on a new social order bereft of definition and limitation, whilst instead embracing multiplicity for the sake of transgressing essentialism. Stein and Plummer (1994), for example, highlight this view:

'Queer Theory serves to bring about 'a rejection of civil strategies in favour of a politics of carnival, transgression and parody, which leads to deconstruction, decentering, revisionist readings, and an anti-assimilationist politics'.

(Stein & Plummer, 1994, p. 181)

Secondly, it is criticized as an anti-identity school of thought; it is criticized for conflictually housing the possibility of itself being interpreted as an identity. Isaiah Green (2010) suggests that one can arguably identify as a Queer Theorist, as that is a valid subject position resulting from being a queer researcher. Queer can be conceptualised as a category, an identity, a project, a form of activism, and of course, as all of these at once.

Thirdly, Queer Theory, in its rejection of all things identity, is criticized as actually being counter-productive to the cause of anti-discrimination politics and new policies. As mentioned earlier, Barker and Langdrige (2008) warn of the potentially damaging effects of this anti-identity perspective, in that it threatens to *further silence* non-heterosexual minorities instead of giving them a platform or voice. In response to this conflict, I argue that Queer Theory is still a valuable perspective to take when researching non-heterosexual minorities because one can choose the extent to which one fully alienates the idea of identity. In this project, I have shown that by adopting a 'weak essentialism' I have been able to talk to my participants in terms of their lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity categories, while at the same time managing to deconstruct the impact of these conceptualisations upon their lived experiences of acceptance. The implications of meaning-making are discussed in the next section.

4.6 Post-structuralism

Post-structuralism is a philosophical school of thought that was born out of a reaction to structuralism in the 1960's. At its core, structuralism posited that every part of a culture has an essential, underlying structure, beneath its particular collection of meaning. This philosophy was

particularly adopted by the modernist social sciences such as anthropology and linguistics, at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Structuralists aimed to better understand the workings of culture, on the premise that each and every culture can indeed be structured theoretically, and studied systematically as a result. Derrida began his academic career in linguistics as a structuralist, although he later came to criticize the approach on the grounds that it offered no reflexive way of critiquing which of the structures under investigation were chosen to depict a particular culture, and which were omitted by the researcher. He argued that the essentialist nature of such structuralist explanations were consequently loaded with those personal and biased understandings that were personal to the structuralist philosopher. Therefore, not only was it impossible for any one structural anthropologist or linguist to 'find' the 'true' structures belying a culture's productions but it was also impossible for any researcher to stumble across their true natures, being that no single 'true' nature existed. Post-structuralism raises an epistemic criticism of structuralism in that it questions the trustworthiness of its very nature of enquiry, as well as the un-criticized representation of cultural structures as *factual* in its writings.

In particular, Derrida (1976) made an important contribution to the theoretical turn, so to speak, to post-structuralism. This was his idea that binary oppositions were central to Western conceptualisations and that dichotomous identities were foundational to its cultural understandings. He argued that nature was therefore privileged over culture, and speech hierarchically positioned above the written word (phonocentrism). The significance of a propensity towards binary thinking, he suggested, was the very presence of a tendency towards hierarchy, and the stratification of importance with respect to cultural practices. Derrida (1973) also took issue with the fact that as a result of this, ways of understanding were oftentimes in existence because they were simply the most utilised. Indeed, he made this comment about the nature of structuralism, in that its 'expert' Saussure was simply the theorist most accredited with expertise. This was because he was taken-for-granted as being the expert in that field:

'Most of the semiological or linguistic research currently dominating the field of thought (whether due to the results of its own investigations or due to its role as a generally recognised regulative model) traces its genealogy, rightly or wrongly, to Saussure as its common founder.'
(Derrida, 1973, p. 152)

In criticizing the lack of analysis of structuralism's inherent limitations, Derrida propounded that post-structuralism take a more pertinent direction towards the study of discourse. This was to examine the power that discourse-production had in shaping culture, through the construction and reproduction of *meanings*. Foucault, in a similar vein to Derrida, took this idea of non-

essential post-structuralism and applied it to the study of sexuality. Foucault (1977) queried the very possibility of essential gender formations and sexual orientation categories, given that the discourse of homosexuality, and indeed the subject position of the homosexual, were both relatively recent additions to the language of Western culture. He argued that gayness was not an essential state of being, nor was a *homosexual man* an intrinsic subject position to inhabit. On the contrary, the essence and the identity were merely the new projected meanings onto a man, of a culture that had previously classed him as a 'sodomite' under the prior workings of criminalising discourses (Foucault, 1998).

A post-structural project, therefore, seeks to explore how norms and values become taken-for-granted within a given culture, taking the view that language constructs the cultural world, and that knowledge-creation is both a dynamic and political process (Cameron & Gibson, 2005). Where Queer Theory has feminist roots, post-structuralism has been contested by some feminists groups on the grounds of what constitutes a *subject*. As Diane Elam explains, modernist forms of feminism such as Marxist and liberal feminism, hold onto the concept of the subject as a fixed and stable entity, and are indeed 'anchored upon the idea of a subject' (Elam, 1994, p. 70). Whereas feminists like de Lauretis (1990) assert that the subject, whether that be a woman, or a homosexual, or a heterosexual, is constantly changing, and to study identity is to study 'dis-identification' (de Lauretis, 1990, p. 116). Political researchers with post-structuralist sympathies, such as Lloyd (2005), re-position the subject 'as an *effect* of politics; an effect generated in exclusionary and power-invested ways' (Lloyd, 2005, p. 6). This was an important distinction to note for my conceptualisation of identity again, because I chose to explore how subjectification was being manipulated and influenced by power in the discursive practices presented in my interviews. That is to say, the subject position of a homosexual athlete in sport culture was likely to be different for each gay man in sport culture, depending on how the power dynamics around him functioned to construct his legitimacy or acceptability. As Lloyd propounds: 'exposing the political nature of subjectivity enables us to understand how particular versions of the subject come to be centred while others are denied' (2005, p. 6).

Identity politics and their implications

Importantly for my thesis, this opened up another debate, as the contestation over the possibility of a stable subject also gave rise to debate concerning the idea of stable identity. Fraser (1995a) notes that, up to that point in feminist theory, the subject of a woman, and the identity of being a woman had become a 'conceptual necessity' by virtue of the fact that feminism as a political movement needed a stable, recognisable identity to fight on behalf of.

Lloyd (2005) sheds light on the question raised by Bell and Klein (1996), that being: how ‘can we speak if we are fragmented into so many partial and shifting identities?’ (1996, xviii, cited in Lloyd, 2005, p. 5). Lloyd argues that it is of paramount importance that feminist researchers acknowledge the many effects of power, on the many different subjectivities pertaining to being a woman:

‘ “Anti-postmodernist” feminism (to borrow a descriptor from Sasha Roseneil (1999)), in other words, fails to recognize that the subject-politics relation is political: that the subject is a political effect (which helps to secure other political effects). Politics and the political are thus not negated in this sense by the feminist turn to post-structuralism, I propose, but quite the opposite: they are enlivened by it.’ (Lloyd, 2005, p. 6)

Post-structuralism offered me a critical framework with which to explain my data on sport culture and its exclusions. I chose to adopt this viewpoint that ‘exclusions and erasures that define the critical field, determining what ‘counts’ and what does not’ into my framework (Lloyd, 2005, p. 112). This is important because I aimed to explore which discourses mobilised and/ or restricted legitimacy, in terms of sexual identities in football and as a consequence, which subject positions ended up ‘counting’ more than the others.

Essentialism and constructionism: Alleviating epistemic conflicts

Another debate that I had to contend with was that of essentialism versus constructionism. At a glance, these schools of thought appear to be diametrically opposed to one another and given that I was at once researching essentialist identity categories (bisexual, lesbian, homosexual, and heterosexual) as well as non-labelled, queer identifications, I needed to qualify where I stood on this issue before embarking upon my analysis. My resolution was this: it is necessary to speak in terms of these essentialist categories when investigating the workings of homophobia in sport because these are the colloquial terms that are used in the research field. The term ‘bisexual’ has been utilised in my research as a way in, to the discussion of those ‘in-between’ identities falling outside of the sport sociological research focus. Lesbian and gay experiences of exclusion are arguably not the same as those of bi/queer/ and non-labelled athletes.

Fuss (1989) defines essentialism as ‘a belief in true essence – that which is most irreducible, unchanging, and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing’ (1989, p. 2.) That is to say, that an essentialist viewpoint depicts an identity category as being intrinsic to that person, community or culture: ‘For the essentialist, the natural provides the raw material and determinative starting point for the practices and laws of the social’ (ibid., p. 3). Halley (1993) points out that essentialism, as an ontological position, when applied to sexual identity, causes an epistemic problem, that of objectivity. This is because the conceptualisation of sexualities as

categories subsumes that they simply pre-exist, and so too do the homosexual-heterosexual dichotomies that occur as a consequence. Here, Halley highlights how heteronormativity and heterosexism can seep into the workings of a culture when the more predominant end of that scale is assumed to be essentially more normal than the other. The homosexual is thus located within an unacknowledged 'heterosexual knowledge' that never has to qualify itself (Halley, 1993, p. 93). Warner (1993, xxi) echoes this concern: 'So much privilege lies in heterosexual culture's exclusive ability to interpret itself as society. Het culture thinks of itself as the elemental form of human association'. Halley and Warner both warn of the dangers of one community assuming its own heterogeneity when scrutinizing another's difference in order to define it:

'This position is a class of *nonhomosexuals* who know what a homosexual is; who are at the same time exempt from the definitional clarity to which homosexuals are subject; and who because of both these features are exempt from the discrimination to which "known homosexuals" are exposed.' (Halley, 1993, p. 96)

Although this is an important point, that heterogeneity is problematic when it is assumed and not critiqued, I do not entirely agree with the implication here that only 'known homosexuals' are subjected to discrimination. Heterosexual people can experience homophobia too, indeed anybody who is singled out as different can be subjected to exclusionary practices. However, the point about objectivity is nevertheless cogent in my study's context. The purpose of using essentialist LGBT terms here was to examine what they were capable of *doing*, as Foucault inferred (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). Bearing this in mind gave my analysis a focus so that I could retain a post-structuralist perspective and deconstruct these identity categories, in terms of the cultural effects they were having in sporting spaces. Bohan and Russel (2005) also raise this problem that the *critical* field cannot have a positivistic view of sexual identities, because there are no tangible, unitary or categorical truths to test in the first place:

'A merger of essentialist and constructionist epistemologies is philosophically impossible; we cannot both 'discover' and 'construct' reality. Here lies a fundamental challenge to psychology's approach to sexual orientation.' (Bohan & Russell, 2005: 249)

However, they argue that the critical, post-structuralist aim must then be to look at the implications of adopting one essentialist viewpoint over another. Indeed, this debate has been significant for my research because I have aimed to explore the cultural practices underlying inclusions and exclusions and have analysed what they can do. Lloyd (2005) reiterates this issue that 'feminism cannot and should not avoid essentialism. Instead it needs to interrogate what political effects essentialism enables' (2005, p. 59). Indeed, Lee (2001) propounds that a more pertinent distinction would be made between weak and strong essentialisms. Lloyd (2005)

agrees with this suggestion on the grounds that it is useful to be able to discriminate between what she calls the 'plurality of essentialisms' (2005, p. 57). This approach was also useful for my theoretical framework because I was made wary of adopting one kind of essentialism over another within my analyses.

Criticisms of Post-structuralism

Critics of post-structuralism argue that as a movement, it does not affect transformative change, and consequently, operates largely as an academic, 'ivory tower' pursuit of deconstruction for the sake of deconstructing. When trying to apply post-structural ideas to psychotherapy, Balick (2011) argues that terminologies used to categorize sexuality are not necessarily the problem. Replacing them with alternative category-avoiding terms will not necessarily eradicate the power imbalances in society or indeed, within client-therapist relations. Although 'fluidity' and multiplicity of identities are the desired outcomes of any queer or post-structural project, Balick urges that we 'must ask whether the paradigm of fluidity and the deconstruction of identities are simply replacing one powerful discourse with another' (Balick, 2011, p. 16). For the purposes of this study however, I was able to explore these alternative discourses in terms of whether or not they offered more productive *effects*, that is to say, lesser stigmatized subject positions in sport culture. In short, I have used this particular theoretical recipe to analyse what the most prevalent discourses have *done* for the legitimization of minority sexualities in sport.

Similarly, Seidman (1993) questions the usefulness of a new replacement discourse. He argues that the substitution – of the prior objectivist and modernist social theories with postmodernist perspectives – is gratuitous. His contestation is that at the very least, Marxist feminism brought about change:

'While the ethnic/essentialist culture that grounded gay identity politics for two decades was under assault, a poststructuralist version of postmodern gay theory stepped forward as the true radical heir to a fading liberationist ideal. To the extent that poststructuralism, like its political counterpart, Queer Nation, edges into a postidentity politic, its exquisite intellectual and political gesturing draws its power more from its critical force than any positive program for change.' (Seidman, 1993, p. 111)

In answer to these charges, I have balanced this argument out. The essentialist nature of gay identity politics may well have appeared to some to have been 'under assault' and to others, purely for the sake of academic impressiveness, but the post-structural lens sheds an important light on the nature of subjectivity. A person can be perfectly happy identifying within an essentialist category without perhaps realising the powerful forces acting on them through

discourse. Post-structuralism argues simply that sexual identities are themselves value-laden within broader social structures. As a result, individuals can inadvertently subjugate themselves by adopting identities that have been otherwise fashioned to disempower them.

Deconstruction of the discourses that shape these individuals and communities can thus re-politicize their subject positions, in revealing how discourses have the power to either have limiting or liberating effects. Foucault argues that we are living in an historically specific time and thus the cultural values that shape sexual communities are contingent with this time.

Cultural values may soften or harden over time and consequently, compassionate and discompassionate notions of sexuality become available as resources for people to draw upon when talking about minority sexualities. It is important to analyse what is happening within the discourses that serve to construct these marginal spaces or as de Laetis (1987) explains it, the 'social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparatus' (1987, p. 25). This perspective has enabled me to explore both the dominant discourses that appear to construct the sexual identities 'talked into existence' in my interviews, but also to problematize practices of *inclusion* as well exclusion.

4.7 My theoretical position

My theoretical position has managed to remain queer, Foucauldian and post-structuralist, despite my choosing to refer to essentialist categories of identity, namely bisexual, lesbian, homosexual and heterosexual in my interview schedule. The debate has been contentious within feminist discourse but within my study I have harnessed the so-called 'weak essentialism' while also retaining a de-constructionist/ post-structuralist perspective. This was in order to explore what these identities *do*, and how legitimate these identities are capable of becoming in sport. By adopting colloquially used terms such as 'bisexual' and 'bisexuality', I looked at the treatment of those athletes falling along the margins or within the in-between spaces of their team's cultures. Foucault's philosophies were similarly harnessed for their usefulness to the aims of this research. I have posed an important question to sport culture: Is there a current 'condition of possibility' whereby an athlete could adopt a bisexual, queer, or non-labelled sexual identity and be fully accepted – not excluded – within their sport?

4.8 Summary

Chapter 4 has discussed my reasons for compiling this particular theoretical framework. Chapter 5 will focus more on the practical side of the research process, the methods and procedures.

Chapter 5: Methods and Procedures

5.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the differences between methodology and method, and focuses on the ethical considerations of this study and my need, as a researcher, to be reflexive. In the latter part of the chapter I discuss my chosen methods of data collection and data analysis.

5.1 Method and methodology

In short, the difference between method and methodology equates to what a researcher did and why they chose to do it that way. Clough and Nutbrown (2002, p. 22): 'A methodology shows how research questions are articulated with questions asked in the field. Its effect is a claim to significance'. Choosing appropriate methods that will allow a researcher to answer their research question is thus of paramount importance. As Walker (1985) warns, one must pay special attention to the methods chosen, as these must be justifiable in terms of their compatibility with one's ontological and epistemological standpoints, lest they cause a problem for the research rather than solve one:

'Selection of methods may be an act of faith rather than a rational response to a clearly formulated problem. The method may even be an intrinsic part of the problem, rather than extrinsic or disconnected from it... The methods we choose are, in this sense, there to be tested, just as much as the substantive hypothesis.' (Walker, 1985, p. 87)

In response to this, Clough and Nutbrown (2002, p. 29) suggest that researchers compile the best combination of methods for their specific research needs in that 'it is not so much a case of 'choosing' methods as 'making' specifically crafted tools for a specifically generated set of questions'. As discussed in the previous chapter, I decided to use Foucault's specifically crafted tools – in particular his notion of procedures of exclusion and conditions of possibility – in order to perform the discourse analysis in order to answer these questions:

- 1. How does homophobia operate in the context of sport?**
- 2. How does bisexuality operate in the context of sport?**

This was with the overall aim of exploring the exclusionary practices around non-heterosexual minorities in sport culture, through a particular focus on the treatment of bisexuality. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) state that researchers must be sure to compile research questions specific enough to be able to suggest the appropriate types of sampling and instrumentation needed to answer their questions.

5.2 Qualitative research methods

Horowitz (1982) asserts that qualitative research is especially appropriate for the study of neglected topics because methods used provide rich insights which can inform further research and create new forums for discussion. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) define qualitative research as a participant-centred activity, whereby their ontological truths are respected and sought to be represented:

‘Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities.’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 537)

Fielding and Thomas (2008) split in-depth qualitative interviews into two types: one-to-one interviews and group discussions, or focus groups. The first allows participants to speak about the topic in question ‘in terms of their own frames of reference. In so doing, the method enables the interviewer to maximise her or his understanding of the respondent’s point of view’ (Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2009, p. 186). In this way, the world according to the interviewee can be analysed although reflexivity is required on the researcher’s part to acknowledge his or her own cultural positioning within that world (Parker, 1992; 2005). Mies (1993, p. 68) argues that this is an important dynamic to address within the interview process, in that the ‘*view from above*, must be replaced by the *view from below*’. During my interview sessions, I made efforts to ensure that our discussions were as collaborative as possible, by occasionally using prompt questions to gain clarity on my participants’ meanings. Given that sexuality is such a sensitive topic, I opted not to carry out focus groups where topics can be debated and where areas conflict or consensus can be challenged. I felt that this open forum would make personal disclosures potentially more difficult for my participants. My interview schedule is discussed further in the following sections.

5.3 Piloting, recruiting and participants

Piloting and recruiting

According to my ethical guidelines (see Appendix A), it was deemed appropriate for me to advertise for research participants but not to approach potential participants lest they feel singled out. In the summer of 2008 I studied at the National Sexuality Resource Center (NSRC) in San Francisco, California and it was there that I carried out a pilot study on attitudes towards bisexuality. Using a social networking site named Craigslist, I advertised for participants to take part in an online survey. Within three weeks I had received thirty respondents and was hopeful

that this method of recruiting would be equally as successful when I returned home to London. Unfortunately, I found the UK equivalents of such networking sites to prove far less successful (see Chapter 9 for my reflections on this process). I found that I needed someone to vouch for me, and that when athletes heard of my research through somebody they trusted, they were happier to approach me, via text social networking sites or email, to agree to take part in my study. All thirteen participants were recruited in this way: I received no respondents through my original advertisement article, as posted in numerous websites and printed media.

Originally, my study focussed on bisexuality in football, and my criteria stated that I was seeking participation from bisexual identifying athletes, so that they could shed light on their particular sporting experiences of inclusion/ exclusion or phobia. In total, I recruited three participants from February to September 2009. Having discussed the resistance I was experiencing with my supervisors, I made the decision to change the participation requirements from bisexual athletes, to athletes of any sexual persuasion: the key change I made was the element of disclosure. My next advertisement stated that I wished to interview any athlete of any gender, on the topic of sexual orientation discrimination in sport, and that no personal information was needed from them at all. In the following three months – and with the added help of a fellow PhD colleague and footballer herself, who vouched for my research to the University football teams, I recruited eight participants. This made the first semester of my third year the most prolific, in terms of the amount of interviews I managed to conduct than all three prior semesters combined, and all seemingly due to the effect of this reduction in personal risk. The last two interviews were carried out in the spring of 2010: after the completion of those transcripts, I made the decision to cease recruiting and start analysing. This choice was made in order to keep in line with my own personal time-line and of course the University's bursary deadline.

Collective description of participants

When embarking upon this research I was advised by my supervision team to seek out one participant who had some knowledge in the field of sport equalities management. I was fortunate enough to find such a manager and the pseudonym I have given her is Gabrielle. The reason I am differentiating her from the others in this section is because she was not an athlete and so her experiences of exclusions in sport were very different from those of the other twelve participants. Gabrielle's experience was largely in the policy making field of organized sport. I felt that her unique perspective would be beneficial to this research because her decades of experience – working with policy makers and physical educators – would add a sense of the

current policy-related climate to my research, putting it in context. As for the other participants, all were athletes competing at either grass-roots or University levels, bar one of the male participants who was a rugby player and another who was a competitive body-builder.

In this section I have chosen to give a 'collective description' of the participants and their demographics because I felt a professional compromise in giving personally descriptive accounts of each individual. My concern centred around the possibility that participants would find this thesis in a library and be able to recognise themselves in the descriptions. There was a real possibility that had I predicted the identities – of those who chose not to disclose them – I would have offended them if I predicted incorrectly. I felt it would have been impertinent of me to place words into their mouths on the basis of the impressions I made on first meeting them. To give a brief overview, Joel, Tom, Dean and Natalie identified as bisexual; Evelyn, Aaron and George identified as heterosexual and Samantha identified as lesbian. Maya identified as non-labelled. Gabrielle, Beth, Karina and Ellie did not disclose their sexual identities.

In order to respect my ethical duty of care to my interviewees I have chosen to present only their range: the age range was between twenty and fifty years; eight participants identified as female, five as male; and their ethnicities appeared to range from British-African to Caucasian, although these ethnic identities were not confirmed as ethnicity was never discussed. Had I chosen a theoretical framework informed more by theories of intersectionality than by Foucault I may have had the opportunity to explore the interstices of these parameters in more depth. In order to keep within the allotted time-frame of this research I opted to narrow its scope to the exploration of sexual identity only.

Interview locations and venues

All interviews were conducted in the south of England bar one that was carried out in Wales. In terms of venues, I quickly learned that it was of paramount importance to conduct the interviews in places of my participants' choosing. When organizing the dates and meeting times via email I found that most participants had very specific ideas about where they wanted to meet and when. Some participants wished to meet in private, others in public spaces. For example, Tom wanted to meet in his local gay-friendly pub because it was easier for him to discuss his sexuality in that space as opposed to a predominantly mainstream or 'straight' environment. Whereas Dean wanted to meet in private because he feared being overheard. His gym culture had something of a 'grape vine' and it would be difficult to return to his gym if any of the members there found out about his sexuality. Most of the University-based athletes were

happy to meet in libraries in and around their campuses. Some of the participants preferred to be interviewed in their homes. In one case I travelled to a participant's workplace because her schedule was so demanding that she only had her lunch hour free and did not have time to travel herself. Other participants opted to meet in local cafes near to their homes.

On all of these occasions I prioritized the participants' levels of comfort over the possibly more consistent approach of only meeting in libraries or cafes. This was because I felt it brave of them to take part in the first place and it was their individual prerogative to choose the venue in each case. There are, however, implications associated with conducting interviews in private spaces. There is the issue of personal safety, on the behalves of both interviewees and the interviewer, and it is advisable that each party informs a close friend or colleague of the time and place in which the interview will be taking place. If anything goes wrong there is somebody waiting to help. Luckily my interviews appeared to go well and neither myself nor any of my participants felt the need to call upon nominated rescuers.

The other implication of personal safety however, is an altogether less visible one. Just because the participants seemed to walk away unscathed from the interviews does not necessarily mean that they were not psychologically affected by them. In an attempt to minimise any emotional repercussions I advised participants to get back in touch with me via the email address printed on their consent forms should they wish to seek further counsel on the topics discussed – with either myself or a professional counsellor. None of the participants utilised the option of getting back in touch with me, nor did they wish to edit their transcripts. It appeared to me that sexuality is such a sensitive topic, particularly in sport, that athletes were only comfortable with minimal amounts of communication concerning my research. The following sections will discuss the issue of member checking in further detail. See also Chapter 9 also for my interpretations of why the minimal communication may have been the case, most notably for the fear of exposure and its impact upon personal relationships outside of the research context.

5.4 Interviews

Openheim (1992) suggests that interviews are a richer resource for qualitative data collection than questionnaires because they allow for spontaneity and flexibility during the data collection process. Both the interviewer and the interviewee can reflect on their questions and answers as the discussion unfolds. I opted to conduct interviews instead of questionnaires for this very reason: participants have the option to give in-depth answers as the conversation itself is designed to last between forty-five to ninety minutes. The schedule in section 5.5 was organised around my key concerns.

5.5 Interview schedules, anonymity and member checks

1. How would you describe your experience of being an athlete and being bisexual in your sport?
2. Have you ever experienced discrimination on the basis of your sexual orientation?
3. Would you say bisexuality is visible in your sport?
4. As a non-heterosexual/bisexual athlete, what challenges do you face in competing?
5. What would you say is the current climate with respect to homophobia/biphobia in your sport?
6. What do you believe needs to be changed for bisexual athletes in your sport? Is that different from what needs to be changed for gay men and lesbians?
7. What questions would you advise a researcher like myself to raise, in terms of increasing bisexual awareness in sport?

Anonymity and confidentiality

At the beginning of each interview each participant was briefed as to the purpose of my research once more and reminded that of their right to anonymity and confidentiality. I made it clear that all personal information would be kept anonymous and that any other persons or places that they happened to mention during our discussions would be anonymised at the transcription stage. Some participants chose their pseudonym, where others were happy for me to choose one on their behalfes. Participants were also informed of my intentions for the data collected, namely that I use them solely for the purpose of compiling my research, and that all data would be subsequently destroyed within two years. Parker (1992, p. 54) suggests that for the purposes of respecting the researcher – researched dynamic, interviewers should view interviewees as their ‘co-researchers’. One way of ensuring that this respect is given is to provide each participant with a copy of the interview schedule prior to each interview. Should they wish to avoid uncomfortable or sensitive topics they have the option to negotiate such compromises in their own time, meaning that they are pressurized or embarrassed on the day and not ‘put on the spot’, so to speak. Following Parker’s advice, I went through the schedule with each participant before each interview commenced, and made sure that I had their agreement to begin with those questions in mind. One other consideration I posed participants with was my intention to publish my data in research journals subsequent to the submission of

my thesis. On this note, none of my interviewees objected to the notion of their words being published as my findings, being that their anonymity was going to be completely honoured.

Member checks

Interviews concerning a sensitive matter should have a sense of impermanence about them, a so-termed 'one-off character' (Lee, 1993, p. 112). Lee (1993) suggests that if sensitive research is set to be repeated, participants may be fearful that a relationship may build with the researcher over time, meaning that he or she may get to know the participant too well, leaving them feeling exposed. This adds to the difficulty of disclosing sensitive or risky information and could cause anxiety for participants. As mentioned earlier, Guba and Lincoln (1989) believe that member checks are the best way to ensure that interviewees' accounts are presented as they had wished them to be, so it is generally accepted to be an important element of good practice in qualitative research to offer participants the option of reading over and editing their transcripts subsequent to their interviews. I offered this option to my interviewees, as I felt it was important for them to have that voice and input. Also, it was very important for them to send their feedback if I had misunderstood or unwittingly misrepresented something that they have said in the interviews. However, none of my participants wanted to make use of this function. It seemed that Lee (1993) had a point: with sensitive matters, participants in my study seemed to want our discussions to have a 'one-off' character. Brackenridge (1999) raises this issue with her sensitive research experiences. She too found that when a topic was significantly sensitive, her participants wanted no further part in the research process once their interviews were over. These were the issues she raised with this situation:

'...my interpretations of my participants' accounts of their experiences can never come close to matching their actual experiences, which have been lived, recounted for me, relived, then retold by me. Despite my efforts to observe ethically sensitive protocols, I quote selectively from *their* words, I frame *their* concerns and, through my writing, I lobby in *their* behalf. All this, then, reinforces *my* view of *their* (other) worlds. Very few of my earlier respondents accepted my invitation to comment on written work emanating from their interviews: most said that they wanted to exit the research scene and reclaim anonymity.'

(Brackenridge, 1999, p. 402)

Brackenridge raises a set of extremely important points with regards to the ethics of sensitive research where member checks are simply not possible. However, this is not the only ethical consideration I had to make within my research process. Perhaps the biggest implication for the ethics of my research was the fact that I was never intending upon attributing my participants' words directly to them as *individuals*. Given that discourse analysis involves the attribution of social problems to underlying *cultural* practices, and not to individual people, I shaped the data

in terms of the discourses participants drew upon most prevalently. This was in order to highlight exclusion on the basis of sexual orientation as a *cultural* problem. My defence of the use of discourse analysis in this manner was that I genuinely believed it to be the best available resource with which to analyse exclusionary practices at broader cultural level. Issues pertaining to the research protocols and ethical procedures that I considered within my research are outlined and discussed in the following section.

5.6 Research ethics

Accordance with University standards

In December of 2008, my research ethics application was reviewed and accepted by the Research Ethics Committee for the School of Sport and Education, and the BERA. My proposal complied with the University's Research Ethics Requirements and Guidelines, meaning that I was able to commence my data collection (see Appendix A: Ethics application form; Appendix B: Ethics approval letter). With the aid of my supervisors, I drafted an informed consent form before recruiting my participants, so that they may sign a copy prior to our meeting to protect their rights and anonymity (see Appendix C: Informed consent form). Kent (1996) gives a detailed description of what constitutes informed consent: It involves 'giving information about the research which is relevant to subjects' decisions about whether to participate; making sure that subjects understand that information (e.g. by providing information sheets written in a subject's language; and ensuring that participation is voluntary (e.g. by requiring written consent)' (Kent, 1996, pp. 19-20). Each participant was emailed with my signed copy before each interview, so that they could understand that I was legally bound to respect and uphold their confidentiality.

Ethics in sensitive research

Cohen *et al.* (2011) warn that ethical issues are particularly important to consider within sensitive research, since personal information is disclosed 'and the boundaries between public and private spheres are not only relative but highly ambiguous' (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 171). Fontana and Frey (2000) add that ambiguity is completely inevitable when one individual seeks to appropriate and represent another person's meanings. Skelton, Francis and Smulyan (2006) define non-heterosexuals as a vulnerable group given that they are susceptible to stigmatization and negative stereotyping. Hence, Mason (1996) states that it vital for qualitative researchers to contemplate the implications for those taking part in their studies, with respect to the particular ways in which such sensitive issues have been framed. With respect to my study, I had

to make careful decisions about which data to use and which to omit. Some of the names of the football clubs mentioned were still traceable even after I had anonymised them. This was because the issues pertaining to those clubs were well known. In the cases where the anonymity of any party was likely to be compromised I chose to omit the unsafe data from the transcripts. In accordance with the University's ethical guidelines, all participants' names, all places and all other individuals' names were anonymised at the transcription stage. The only exceptions made were those of professional athletes whose names were left in on account of their sexual identities being public knowledge due to their own choosing.

5.7 Reflexivity

Following on from this, Parker (1992) suggests that it is important for qualitative researchers to try to acknowledge the impact of their own subject positionings and cultural voices, whatever they pertain to, when writing up their data findings: 'what we find and the sense we make of it are always a function of what we thought we would find and the position we try to make sense of it from' (1992, p. 7). I, myself, was and still am a participant in the culture being deconstructed. Parker was right in the sense that I was susceptible to seeing only that which I wished to see, in accordance with my previously established beliefs and political inclinations. Take, for example, the very fact that I chose to focus in on bisexuality. I identify as bisexual – although I do not endorse the label's reinforcement of the male/female gender binary as I would not rule out the pursuit of a relationship with a transitioning individual – and it naturally bothered me that in-between identities such as bisexual/queer/fluid/trans/non-labelled were under-researched in the sport sociological literature. At the analysis stage, I had to be careful to acknowledge my own political bugbears, so to speak, in order to reflect the fact that an alternative researcher with different beliefs on this topic would have elucidated entirely different discourses depending on their world views (Mishler, 1986; Ribbens, 1989). Any approach within qualitative research is already politically informed before its very onset, and this is because researchers are people themselves who are unavoidably situated in these pre-existing cultures and practices (Alldred & Burman, 2005).

Parker (2005) urges that it is not only important for qualitative researchers to attempt to acknowledge the influence of their subjectivity on their research processes but that it is also imperative to recognise that subjectivity has different implications for the shaping of data at different stages of the research process.

Below, he outlines those considerations he believes to be significant with respect to interviews and discourse analyses:

‘Interviewing – to what do you intend to disagree with those you are interviewing, perhaps even making explicit that disagreement, or intend to empathize with them, to recognize and validate what they say, perhaps so that you are led to some disturbing conclusions about what you believe?’

Discourse – what role are you going to accord to your membership of a culture, and how are you going to make those cultural resources outside the text explicitly into something to be drawn upon in the reading, but also stepping back and noticing things you take for granted?’ (Parker, 2005, p. 34)

Taking Parker’s questions into consideration, when it came to interviewing I chose to empathise and validate what my participants were saying, as opposed to making any of my disagreements explicit. This was because I knew from my own experience of being a participant in research – focus group research on sexual identity in sport – that it can be very difficult to disclose personal information in the presence of people one neither knows nor trusts. It takes a great deal of bravery in some cases to sit with somebody new and ‘open up’, so I chose to keep my opinions to myself. Also, had I interrupted the discussions with my own dissatisfaction at participants’ views, I could very well have obstructed the most useful elements of my data collection. I went into this process with the specific intention of exploring exclusions, slurs and phobia, and so could not contradict myself by expressing anger on encountering them.

With regards to my discourse analysis, I was careful to remain mindful of my own situated position, with regards to the elements of both LGBT culture and sport culture that I take for granted. As Alldred and Burman (2005) warned, it was nigh on impossible to separate out my cultural view from theirs, so my own *feelings* concerning cultural topics were documented as reflexively as possible, as I wrote out the analyses. I have shaped my data: however, I have done by best to acknowledge my own impact within the findings despite the fact that an unquantifiable amount of my influence was indeed sub-conscious and difficult for me to highlight. All a researcher can ever be is as reflexive as possible in the context of qualitative, sensitive research and this issue shall be discussed further in the following sections.

5.8 Transcription

Atkinson and Heritage (1984) propose that transcription is itself a ‘research activity’. This is because researchers add their own significance to data, which complicates the process of trying to elucidate their participants’ intentions for using particular words. Alldred and Gillies (2002) assert that data analysis occurs throughout the data collection process and is not a procedure

that happens in a detached or independent manner. Data collection, as a journey, requires the researcher to make constant analytical decisions in terms of how to contextualise what participants have been saying, and these decisions will inevitably be made within the limitations of the researcher's theoretical framework: 'transcription tends to affirm a particular theoretical position about the relation between language and meaning and when researchers focus on the mechanics of coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), they can fail to attend the complex ambiguities of language, communication and interpretation (Mishler, 1991)' (Alldred & Gillies, 2002, p. 159).

As an interpreter, I have inevitably made my own meanings out of what my participants said. I interpreted their words through my queer/Foucauldian filter and post-structuralist lens and although this was completely intentional to make new meanings with which to further theorise bi/homophobic exclusions, it was not theoretically unproblematic. I effectively attached Foucauldian meanings to utterances that were not necessarily intended by participants to show up power differentials. I had to remain reflexive and make clear my reasons for interpreting some sporting customs as representative of *underlying cultural practices* in my findings chapter. It is important to note here that I annotated pauses and hesitation within the interviews in brackets. Silverman (2001, p. 230) highlights a very significant problem with transcription techniques that do not pay respect to pauses, in that the researcher's interpretation will inevitably be 'gravely weakened by a failure to transcribe apparently trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps'. Some of my interviewees needed time to properly think about a question and the recording of intermissions proved to be useful at the analysis stage (see Chapter 6).

5.9 Discourse Analysis

My data were analysed using discourse analysis with particular focus given to Foucault's 'procedures of exclusion'. This was the main analytical tool for exploring discursive constructions of non-heterosexual and minority sexual identities and how they impacted upon practices of exclusion in sport culture. Discourse analysis can be defined in many ways, but most of the definitions centre on the way such analysis investigates the processes by which cultural resources are utilised, that is to say, how certain elements of language are 'recruited' (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Gee (1999) adds that individuals draw upon certain discourses in conversation to align their membership to particular cultures, identities and institutions. Howarth (2000) conceptualises discourse analysis as:

'... the process of analysing signifying practices as discursive forms. This means that discourse analysts treat a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic material – speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even

organizations and institutions – as ‘texts’ or ‘writings’ that enable subjects to experience the world of objects, words and practices.’ (Howarth, 2000, p. 10)

Allred (1999) suggests that the study of discourse is valuable for studying underlying cultural changes, with respect to new and emerging understandings of sex and gender. When it comes to gendered expectations between gendered individuals, sites of cultural change can produce new demands on individuals, whose understandings of themselves are not always compatible with those new, emergent terms that stand to take the place of the prior taken-for-granted terms: ‘Cultural shifts in gender expectations and the critique of conventional masculinity and femininity have profound consequences for, yet also resistances from, individuals whose psyches are formed through conventional meanings’ (Allred, 1999, p. 266).

Discourse analysis investigates the processes by which people, notions, and cultural beliefs are ‘recruited’ into language, in order to compile constructions. Motivations and agendas, whether intentional or unintentional, can be explored through an analysis of discourse and how it moves. According to Billig (1995, p. 90), choices concerning which linguistic resources to draw upon and can be quite subconscious: ‘Innocent comments may carry a force of blame or complaint or indirect request, for example, but... the speaker may actually be quite innocent of what discourse is doing’ (Billig, 1995, p. 90). In much the same way, I had to exercise some caution as to the number of discourses I identified, keeping a journal of my reasons for making certain selections and omissions respectively, in order to judge their significance to my analysis.

Individuals position themselves in differing ways, depending on the various discourses they draw upon (Davies & Harre, 1990; van Langenhove & Harre, 1994). Hollway (1989) highlights how competing arguments can be made using the very same discourses, giving the example of a man on trial for sexual assault whose lawyers draw upon discourses of biology to depict him out as a victim of his own biology. In an alternative situation or context, such as a locker-room discussion of sexual triumphs, the same male defendant could equally draw upon predatory discourses of masculinity to assert his power over women. Depending on how discourses are utilised, they have the power to construct very different realities (Gee, 1999; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). According to Parker (1999, p. 1) *Foucauldian* discourse analysis occurs ‘wherever there is meaning’, and this means that we should ‘consider all tissues of meaning as texts’ (Parker, 1999, p. 7). The next section deals with two alternative methods of carrying out Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Foucauldian discourse analysis

Willig's (1999) approach to discourse analysis looks at the movement of discourse through language and how this functions to create subject positions for individuals to occupy. Here simple three-step method is as follows, (from Willig, 1999, p. 114):

1. Identify what is being 'talked into existence' (objects)
2. Identify which 'subject positions' arise as a result of these constructions (subjects)
3. Recognise how these constructions relate to other, broader discourses

Willig (2008) updated her three step method to a six new step process, adding the following three components: 'Action Orientation', whereby the analysis focuses in on the function of constructing an object in a certain way; the 'relationship between discourse and practice', whereby the limitations of what one does and what one *says one does* are analysed; and the last stage concerning the 'relationship between discourse and subjectivity', whereby the analysis focuses in on their particular vantage point and expressed world view, to see the storyline they are creating from that perspective (Willig, 2008, p. 176).

An alternative method of analysis is proposed by Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008): they suggest collecting a 'corpus of statements', as Foucault himself would say, in so far as samples of all different kinds of discourse should be collected to give the wider context. In order to analyse the relationship between individuals' statements and the wider social rules which govern the limitations of those statements, they advocate that researchers collect texts such as policy documents, autobiographical texts, ethnographic materials and semi-structured interview data. Having collected the data, they suggest a two-stage, seven step method of Foucauldian discourse analysis, (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2008):

On first looking at the materials:

1. Look for discursive objects relevant to your research question
2. Look for the *conditions of possibility* pertaining to those objects
3. Look at how historically contingent those statements are
 - a. Are some objects spoken about in a contemporary way?
 - b. Have their conceptualisations

On looking at the materials for a second time:

4. Problematizations (how are power/knowledge relations exposed when those discourses interact?)

5. Technologies of the self (can you identify elements of self-governance?)
6. Subject positions (which cultural discourses are available to the participants?)
7. Subjectification (can you identify a moral order within which participants are aligning themselves?)

Using one transcript as a kind of pilot for the discourse analytic method, I carried out both of these methods to judge their effectiveness. I found that the extra three components of ‘Action orientation’, ‘relationship between discourse and practice’ and ‘discourse and subjectivity’ to be very difficult to operationalize. The difficulty came with being able to ascertain the differences between these subsets as there was quite a significant amount of overlap. For example, I found participants ‘story lines’ (step six) intersected with their subject positionings (step two). Indeed, I encountered the same operational difficulty with Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine’s seven-step method, as I found myself projecting too much of my own theory onto the transcript – take for example, the ‘moral order’ they speak of, and the ‘technologies of self’, which granted are Foucauldian constructs but which I believe require additional qualification as to how one is to adequately explore them, if one is indeed to reveal their workings. After much deliberation, I made the decision to try Willig (1999)’s earlier three-step method, only with one addition: Foucault’s analytical tools concerning procedures of exclusion, and conditions of possibility. I found immediately that my four-step method was entirely more user-friendly, and given that the transcript I had chosen to pilot was thirty-five pages long, I found also that fewer steps were more conducive to a deeper discourse analysis. With this method I was able to allow the discourses to reveal *their own* workings, rather than to try and interpret them through loosely defined terms pertaining to self-governance. Below is the discourse analytic ‘recipe’ I devised with the fourth step broken down to highlight the Foucauldian tools.

5.10 Four-step method of Foucauldian discourse analysis

- 1. Identify discourses that are ‘talked into existence’**
- 2. Identify subject positions that these discourses offer individuals to occupy**
- 3. Identify how these discourses relate to, or pull upon, broader cultural discourses**
- 4. Identify how procedures of exclusion denote**
 - a. The sayable**
 - b. Who is othered/ excluded**
 - c. The conditions of possibility for these subject positions and discourses to exist within the culture being studied**

This four-step method was used for the remaining transcripts and the findings are discussed in the next chapter.

A note on theorizing from qualitative data

Theorizing from a small-scale, inductive, qualitative study proved to be difficult, given that my sample was too small to yield any generalisable data from. However, Silverman (2005) suggests that one can theorize from qualitative data, if one can locate the problem in question chronologically, revealing how it has come to pass and how it has evolved. He suggests a six-stage process whereby a qualitative researcher can theorize about their data:

- Do not start with ‘why’ questions, but rather ‘what’ and ‘how’, for example, ‘what contextual resources are being used here?’ and look for the detail of ‘how’ they are being used (and with what consequences)
- Chronology – look at the history of the problem to see how the current problem has come into being
- Context – how is your data particular to this current context? How many different versions of the same phenomena appear in the data?
- Comparison – Compare with other data in the current research literature
- What are the implications for broader issues in society?
- Explore the inter-relations between the concepts interpreted from the data. Look for relationships between the different models and theories

This model could potentially be useful when coming to further explore my data on bisexuality and homophobia in future sport cultural research.

5.11 Tables of discourse analytic results

The following tables overleaf depict the discourses I identified and the participants who most prevalently drew upon them in discussion. These tables have been placed in this section to give an idea of the range of discourses and the number of participants who utilised similar resources.

Table 1: Step 1 – Identify discourses that are ‘talked into existence’

Discourses (17)	No. /13	Participants drawing upon these discourses
Bisexual identity	11	All except Aaron & George
Homophobia	10	All except Joel, Maya & Aaron
Coming out	9	Tom, Dean, Maya, Karina, Beth, Natalie, Samantha, Aaron, George
Banter/ bullying	9	Tom, Maya, Karina, Beth, Natalie, Samantha, Ellie, Gabrielle, George
Sexual identity as choice	9	Joel, Tom, Dean, Maya, Karina, Beth, Natalie, Evelyn, Ellie
Stigma	8	Tom, Maya, Natalie, Evelyn, Samantha, Ellie, Gabrielle, Aaron
Youth	7	Tom, Maya, Karina, Evelyn, Ellie, Gabrielle, George
Labelling/ stereotyping	6	Maya, Karina, Beth, Natalie, Gabrielle, Aaron
Bisexual closet	5	Joel, Tom, Dean, Samantha, Ellie
Legitimacy	5	Joel, Tom, Dean, Natalie, Gabrielle
Exclusion	4	Natalie, Evelyn, Samantha, Gabrielle
Abuse	4	Joel, Karina, Beth, Gabrielle
Space	4	Natalie, Evelyn, Samantha, Ellie
Prejudice	3	Joel, Tom, Dean
Closet (general)	2	Joel, Dean
Pride	2	Ellie, Aaron
Sporting identity	1	Dean

Table 2: Step 2 – Identify subject positions that these discourses offer individuals to occupy

Subject positions (15)	No./13	Participants drawing upon these subject positions
One end of a binary	13	All
Gay	13	All
Male	12	All except Ellie
Female	11	All except Aaron & George
Straight	11	All except Aaron & George
Bisexual	11	All except Aaron & George
Lesbian	9	Joel, Tom, Dean, Maya, Natalie, Evelyn, Samantha, Ellie, Gabrielle
Butch	6	Dean, Maya, Karina, Beth, Natalie, Evelyn
No label	4	Maya, Dean, Karina, Natalie
Trans-gendered	3	Joel, Dean, Gabrielle
'I like girls'	3	Maya, Beth, Ellie
Fluidity	2	Maya, Samantha
'Just a person'	2	Maya, Karina
On the fence	1	Evelyn
Bisexual for university	1	Ellie

Table 3: Step 3 – Identify how these discourses relate to broader cultural discourses

Broader discourses (30)	No./13	Participants drawing upon these broader discourses
Culture of sport	11	All except Tom & Ellie
Gender	9	Joel, Tom, Dean, Karina, Beth, Natalie, Evelyn, Samantha, Gabrielle
Traditional masculinity	9	Joel, Tom, Dean, Maya, Karina, Natalie, Evelyn, Samantha, Aaron
Power	9	Joel, Tom, Dean, Karina, Beth, Natalie, Samantha, Gabrielle, Aaron
Media	8	Joel, Tom, Maya, Karina, Beth, Natalie, Ellie, Aaron
Lesbian culture	6	Karina, Beth, Natalie, Evelyn, Samantha, Ellie
Organisations/management	6	Karina, Beth, Natalie, Samantha, Gabrielle, Aaron
Education	5	Natalie, Evelyn, Samantha, Gabrielle, Aaron
Language	4	Natalie, Evelyn, Samantha, Gabrielle
Homoeroticism	4	Joel, Dean, Samantha, Aaron
Family	4	Maya, Evelyn, Samantha, George
Racism	3	Joel, Tom, Maya
Traditional femininity	3	Maya, Beth, Natalie
Generation gap	3	Maya, Karina, Evelyn
Traditional British identity	2	Joel, Evelyn
Hooliganism	2	Aaron, George
Law/ civil rights	2	Joel, Gabrielle
Knowledge	2	Samantha, Aaron
Rugby culture	2	George, Samantha
Politics	1	Gabrielle
Equality	1	Gabrielle
Paedophilia	1	Gabrielle
Drinking culture	1	Aaron
Inclusion	1	George
Medical/ biological	1	Joel
Gym space	1	Dean
Class	1	Maya
HIV	1	Joel
Black power	1	Ellie
Tennis culture	1	Tom

5.12 Summary

My study is a small-scale, qualitative, mostly inductive, exploratory research study into the exclusionary practices around non-heterosexual minorities in sport culture. Using semi-structured interviews, thirteen participants were interviewed on the topics of bisexual visibility and homophobia in sport. I devised a four-step method of discourse analysis with which to examine how discourses of identity inform practices of exclusion, through a Queer/post-structural/Foucauldian lens. The next Chapter 6 will focus on the findings and analysis pertaining to the first analysis question concerning bisexual identity. Chapter 7 will present an analysis of the findings relating to the second analysis question on homophobia.

Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis – Bisexual Identity

6.0 Introduction

This chapter will cover the changes made in the interview schedule, the issues particular to sensitive research topics that were applicable to this research and the Foucauldian discourse analysis that has been performed on the data. This chapter aims to answer my first analysis question which pertains to the bisexual identity related findings: 'How does bisexuality operate in the context of sport?'

6.1 Evolution of the interview schedule

As a matter of course, I found that even the three bisexual-identifying athletes did not know how to answer the questions pertaining to their personal visibility, because none of them were 'out', so to speak. All three of them were openly bisexual in their friendship circles, but either not so much, or not at all in their sport circles. I devised an amended schedule to account for this, and it was as follows:

1. Would you say homophobia is prevalent in your sport?
2. Is bisexuality visible in your sport?
3. I have experienced a lot of resistance, in terms of garnering participants for my study into bisexuality in sport: do you have any insights as to why this may be the case?
4. If you know of any bisexual identifying athletes, what stereotypes or possible slurs do they encounter?
5. Do the same things need to be changed in sport culture to better accommodate for, or give greater visibility to bisexuality minorities, as need to be changed for other non-heterosexual minorities, i.e. gay men and lesbians? Would identifying as bisexual place you in a unique situation?
6. Do you predict any of the aforementioned issues to become better or worse when pursuing a career in your sport, outside of your University context?
 - a. Indeed, if you are playing for the GFSN league, how do you think you would fare in mainstream leagues?
 - b. Do you play for multiple teams, and do you have any insights?
7. What needs to be done about the cultural climate in football, in general?

6.2 Sensitive research

When conducting research into sensitive topics, it is important as the situated investigator to remain as reflexive as possible throughout the process. For the purposes of my study, this will mean keeping a reflective eye on my own political biases and 'emotional engagements', as Lerum (2001, p. 470) would suggest. Lerum warns of the danger of a researcher's engagement affecting both the knowledge they create and as a result, their ability to create 'critical knowledge' if their subject position changes throughout the course of the research. Lerum suggests that this has direct implications for their chosen epistemological standpoint, given that their status within the research process unavoidably *fluctuates* between that of a situated member of the same culture and that of the academic professional simultaneously adorned with the position of analysing other people's words. These positions pose something of a conflict for such a researcher because sensitive topics oftentimes conjure feelings of compassion or sometimes frustration the behalf of the researcher, particularly if the subject matter is close to their own personal experience. In this way, researching sensitive topics necessarily involves a 'move from the subject position of emotionally detached researcher, which implies control, to the subject position of emotionally immersed researcher, which implies vulnerability' (Nilan, 2002, p 366).

In my analysis, I will have to acknowledge those judgements I make that could have been interpreted in a completely different way had the researcher not identified as bisexual or experienced bi-phobia. As Lerum, Nilan and Cohen suggest, it will be difficult for me to separate out my biases from my interpretations, as I may not have a way of knowing when indeed my analytical filters pertain to my qualitative data analysis experience, and when they pertain to my personal baggage. This is the issue, both ethical and practical, of qualitative sensitive research, since these spheres are so interchangeable and yet so highly ambiguous' (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 171).

6.3 Subjectivity

Lee (1993) highlights how researchers inevitably harbour their own ideas of what is important in their participants' accounts. Lee believes that we use our own 'vignettes' to edit our participants' voices, in the sense that we create 'short descriptions of a person or a social situation which contain precise reference to what are thought to be the most important factors' (Lee, 1993, p. 79). Indeed, an alternative researcher could read through my interview transcripts and come to a completely different set of conclusions. I will have to be careful to acknowledge,

to the best of my ability, where I feel my influence serves to take my analysis in a particularly political direction, as this will have implications for the nature the knowledge I am creating and its potential uses subsequent to publication.

6.4 Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of the data

Subsequent to the interview process, each taped interviewed was transcribed and analysed using my adapted four-step Foucauldian discourse analysis. As can be seen from the tables above, step 1 focussed on discourses utilised by participants, step 2 analysed the subject positions they made reference to, and step 3 analysed the pulls on broader discourses to explain homophobia and bisexuality in sport culture. Seventeen discourses relating directly to the topic were identified in the first stage, fifteen subject positions were identified in the second stage, and thirty broader discourses in the third stage.

The discourses drawn on most prevalently in step 1 were bisexual identity (11/13) and homophobia (10/13). Almost as prevalent were discourses of coming out, banter/bullying and sexual identity as choice (9/13), with over half of the participants drawing upon stigma discourse (8/13). Subject positions that participants made the most reference to in step 2 were binary identities and gay identities (all participants), with the next most prevalent position being male (12/13). Subject positions of female, straight, and bisexual were referred to by eleven out of the thirteen interviewees. Lastly, step 3's findings were that the broader discourses most prevalently drawn upon were the culture of sport (11/13), which was the most utilised, then gender, traditional masculinity and power (9/13) and the media (8/11). In the next section, I shall carry out the fourth step of the Foucauldian discourse analysis. Step 4 is as follows:

6.5 Step 4 – Identify how procedures of exclusion denote the following

- d. The sayable**
- e. Who is othered/ excluded**
- f. The conditions of possibility for these subject positions and discourses to exist within the culture being studied**

The rest of this section shall be explained in terms of the two most prevalent discourses: bisexual identity and homophobia, which also address my research questions.

6.6 Bisexual identity

Having completed individual mind-maps – to log the discourses, subject positions and broader discourses drawn upon for each of the thirteen transcripts – I then compiled mind-maps for the discourses themselves, to see how they were interrelated. Bisexual identity discourse was utilised by eleven participants in connection with eight other discourses in total: four of these were directly related to the topic, namely *the bisexual closet*; *sexual identity as choice*; *labelling/stereotyping*; and *exclusion* discourses. The four broader discourses were those of *lesbian culture and practices of inclusion*, *traditional femininity*, *traditional masculinity*, and lastly, binary identity discourse – this created subject positions under some pressure to occupy an identity, which I have termed as *one end of a binary*.

6.7 Discourses relating to sexual identity – *The bisexual closet*

Two of the three bisexual-identifying participants, Tom and Joel, drew upon discourses of prejudice and stigma when talking about the place of bisexual identities in the LGBT-friendly leagues. They depicted the problem as one of visibility and legitimacy within their football clubs, as commonly held ideas concerning bisexuality and what its practices involve were typically stigmatized or simply not taken seriously. Joel explained that the prejudicial beliefs he had encountered in his team were based on condescending and undermining notions of bisexuals, as being stereotypically indecisive and untrustworthy: ‘There’ll be sort of like, condescending comments now and again. You know, ‘can’t make your mind up’, or ‘what are you doing that for?’ (Joel: Interview 1). Tom’s account was very similar, as disdainful comments were extended to him within his LGBT football club as well:

‘That’s all it is, it’s constant little niggles and little jokes about it, and I’ve got very few friends who actually accept it, this is who I am. My gay friends think, ‘oh, he’s just gay’, or ‘he’s just not sure about what he wants’, or ‘he’s greedy’, that sort of thing. And my straight friends think, ‘oh well, he must be gay, he’s just pretending’, you know?’

(Tom: Interview 2)

The third bisexual-identifying athlete, Dean, echoed their sentiments by explaining the reception he often received when mixing in his gay male friendship circle: ‘... that’s my nickname every time I go round – ‘ah the half blood is here’. It’s like I don’t get what that means. I mean, I do get what that means, but hate having to deal with that’ (Dean: Interview 3). By associating bisexual identities with undermining nicknames, bisexual subject positions are not necessarily rendered un-occupyable, or un-sayable, but are arguably rendered as being less legitimate and thus difficult to *legitimize*, being that the comic nature of the nicknames

themselves contains a certain cultural gravity that seemingly takes precedence over the positive experience of the individual they are attached to. Interestingly, all three of these participants described similar accounts of other people's perceptions of bisexuality, in terms of their dependence on the discourse of *sexual-identity-as-choice*. Each athlete, at some point, had been on the receiving end of so-called 'make up your mind' *banter*, whereby their friends or team-mates had utilised the notion that an individual *chooses* their sexual identity. As a result, Joel, Tom and Dean felt that they were being tried or tested, by being constantly asked if they had indeed 'made up their minds' yet, like there was such a tangible decision to be made in the first place, and that they were defaulting on this requirement, to presumably, make themselves more valid or acceptable members of their LGBT sporting circles by picking a side:

'A couple of guys, they weren't close friends, were like, they'd sort of turn up their nose at you. They'd say, 'Are you straight now, or are you gay now?' When you'd see them it'd be, 'Have you made up your mind?... And then, it just built up and up, and it was like having a dirty secret. It was the same as pretending I was straight when I wasn't, you know, it was exactly the same.' (Tom: Interview 2)

The statement 'I am bisexual' is sayable, but not necessarily considered to be acceptable in predominantly gay sport culture. Hence, all three athletes gave accounts of having been noticeably othered, and on a continual basis. It would appear that the possibility to occupy a bisexual subject position within an LGBT football league or a gay sporting friendship circle indeed exists. However, the possibility for that subject position to carry the same legitimacy as the gay and lesbian identities being occupied in the surrounding culture seems to be somewhat slimmer.

Staying in the bisexual closet

Two of the three bisexual-identifying athletes felt unable to 'come out' within their sport: Joel within LGBT football and Dean within mainstream bodybuilding. Tom had made several attempts to come out again as bisexual, but had felt that his efforts had been unsuccessful within his LGBT football team. As he explained, all he wanted was for his subject position to be given the chance of being conceptually possible: 'Just to believe that it exists, as a true thing, not somebody on their way to one sexuality or another. I was talking to my best mate the other day about it. I could tell he just didn't believe me. He just didn't believe me' (Tom: Interview 2). In this sense, Tom's bisexual identity is sayable, but not necessarily *hear-able*, within his LGBT club culture. Dean echoed a similar situation within his LGBT friendship circle, whereby individuals who had previously 'come out' as gay found it difficult to 'come out' a second time as bisexual:

‘Unfortunately for some people, I think it becomes easy to ‘come out’ into the straight world and go back into the closet in the gay world and so you know, if they come out as gay in the straight world and actually realise, you know, ‘shit, I’m not gay, I’m bi’ then they have to find the nearest closet and go back into it.’ (Dean: Interview 3)

Here, Dean drew discourse of *the closet* to explain his fear of conjuring retribution, when discussing his own process of self-silencing. His wish to be ‘out’ in his sport posed a problem for him, being that the etiquette of his masculine, mainstream gym space was such that the use of homophobic language was commonplace and being a ‘straight acting’ bodybuilder was therefore an imperative, lest his choice to be open about his bisexuality invited criticism, rejection and/or exclusion. In the quote below, he illustrated the negative reception that even the slightest mention of gay or bisexual identity could evoke:

‘If you’re accused of it, it’s not okay, it’s not acceptable and he started hurling back a lot of abuse and, you know, ‘don’t fucking call us a queer, you fucking cunt’ and all this sort of stuff and, you know, ‘this isn’t a poof’s gym’ and all that sort of stuff.’

(Dean: Interview 3)

The language of gym culture thus denotes homophobic language as the sayable, and honest, open, ‘out’ sexual identity discourses as the un-speakable. Thus, alternate non-heterosexual identities are limited to the point of needing to be publically rejected in that space. Dean felt othered, not only by his surrounding bodybuilding sporting culture that offered no possibility for anyone to adopt a non-heterosexual subject position, but in some way by himself, as he colluded with these exclusionary practice of heterosexual gym-etiquette in keeping his identity silent: ‘I plucked up the courage to go to Pride myself. I felt a bit of a fraud because, you know, I’m not out myself, I’m not out in sport’ (Dean: Interview 3). The imperative to conform with gym-space ‘poof’ and ‘queer’ speak is such that discourses of equality and notions of homophobic bullying as morally wrong are not possible to draw upon in the cultural context of bodybuilding. Consequently, non-heterosexual subject positions are not readily possible to occupy without the occupier risking rejection and exclusion from the other more outwardly conformant members of the culture. Dean expressed that this practice of self-silencing – in order to remain concordant with his heteronormative and oftentimes homophobic customs – caused him notable turmoil, primarily because he could feel himself *othering himself*, and reinforcing the exclusionary practices of all other ‘closeted’ non-heterosexuals around him:

‘... you can cover yourself up with this straight blanket and people say things all around you completely not knowing who you are inside... I want people to be real and if someone is going to call me ‘queer’ or ‘poof’... whereas it hurts even more to know that I’m, in inverted commas, “straight” in the gym and to know that, well, the only reason why they can say ‘poof’ and ‘queer’ and, you know, abusive terms in front of me is

because they think that I'm agreeing with them. I think that hurts a little bit more. Well actually, I'm not agreeing with you! I'm just staying silent'. (Dean: Interview 3)

Within LGBT football, where gay identities are those most predominantly expressed, bisexuality is difficult to have taken seriously. Within mainstream, hyper-masculine bodybuilding culture, any kind of non-heterosexual identity is difficult to legitimize and have taken seriously, it would appear, from these accounts. In all three cases, the interviewees drew upon discourses of phobia, exclusion and silencing when talking about their perceived inability to adopt a bisexual identity without either risking or actually experiencing being othered in men's sport. In the next section, discourses of bisexual identity –as less legitimate- and the *bisexual closet* are drawn upon by female interviewees to describe issues of othering in women's football.

Disingenuous perceptions of bisexuality and the bisexual closet

Within women's football, the issue of bisexual invisibility is depicted by those who make reference to it, as being something of a self-induced problem. Evelyn, Ellie and Samantha all drew upon the discourse of bisexual identity in conjunction with either the notion of confusion, or the idea that bisexual-identifying individuals are deliberately flighty and duplicitous to maximise their solidarity with both binary 'camps' – gay and straight sporting friendship circles. Evelyn revealed the concern she felt her lesbian football culture harboured with its bisexual members – that of falling victim to their insincerity as part of their overall agenda to attract more personal attention:

'I think that's why a lot of people... *doubt* it, when people say they're bisexual, because... (pause) this girl, she turned around and said, "Well, if it comes to choices as to who I go home with, it will be a girl", so people sort of say, "Well, are you really bisexual, or are you just leading boys on?" Or, "Are you just having a bit of fun, and getting a bit more attention?"... "Is she just being needy?"' (Evelyn: Interview 8)

Echoing this concern, Ellie described her predominantly lesbian football team as having a similar sense of apprehension towards the bisexual community. In the quote below, she drew upon the discourse of bisexual identity in conjunction with the notion of distrustfulness, to explain why she felt many of the lesbian-identifying players in her club had minimal respect for bisexual female footballers, given that they posed some considerable danger and emotional risk to those willing to entrust them with reciprocal personal relationships:

'I know some examples of this where girls have gone that way... identified as straight, but aren't 'curious', and then they've done things, but they're like, 'actually, no I'm not' and then it hurts the other person. If someone is comfortable and identifies as gay and they've had someone come and do this to them... or whatever, and then they just completely detach themselves, 'cause they're like, 'okay, well I'm not, I knew I wasn't, I

was just wanting to experiment'. So that's when it comes into the problems.' (Ellie: Interview 10)

When a discourse of bisexuality is depicted in these ways – as disingenuous, egocentric and untrustworthy – again, it is arguable whether a *respected* bisexual subject position can be occupied in this football culture, at this time. These perceptions of bisexuality also serve to reinforce binary notions of sexual identity as they appear in women's football: you are either lesbian or heterosexual and if you default on your requirement to satisfy a tangible binary identity, you are not to be completely trusted. Another possible interpretation of Ellie's quote in this context is that the lesbian community are by process of elimination, the *genuine* community, at the genuine end of the binary, and hence they need to exert caution when dealing with the Machiavellian in-betweeners that may cause them damage. Gay or lesbian identities represent the sayable, in that no participants reported having experienced any questioning or contestation with regards to their assumption of a lesbian identity. Bisexual, in-between identities are othered by this practice, that is to say, the practice of a lesbian footballer's identity being taken seriously by default, and a bisexual female footballer's identity taken to be questionable and/or devious by default.

However, might I note here, for the purposes of reflexivity, that this interpretation could well have entered into my mind as a result of my having been constantly vexed by such representations of bisexuality, since openly identifying as bisexual/ non-heterosexual myself and being judged in a similar way. Although I can see where Ellie is coming from, perhaps a more respected bisexual or 'in-between' sexual subject position could be rendered possible when as a culture, we realise that issues of identity and misconduct are not so inextricably linked, or so black and white. This notion is useful, however, as the basis of further research into exclusionary practices. Researchers could investigate more intricately those practices surrounding the attainment of *respect* for taboo or unconventional identities, how this is mediated and/or restricted.

Samantha also touched upon the issue of bisexual invisibility in women's football culture. She too drew upon the discourse of bisexual identity, in terms of its link with the bisexual closet, to explain why lesbian-identifying footballers found bisexual players difficult to understand. Like Evelyn, she coupled this discourse with the notion of confusion but in a seemingly more compassionate sense insofar as the bisexuals in her club were believed to be genuinely confused and hence unable to properly assert their identities as a result of the fact that they themselves did not fully understand them:

'I think the problem was really, that she was so unsure about so many things to do with herself and to do with, you know, linked into the sort of bisexuality as well, that was probably the fact... 'cause you've got so many strong characters in football and you've got so many people that are really, really willing to kind of tell you exactly what they think, exactly who I am, how I feel and if you don't entirely stand up for yourself straight away and say, 'actually, you know, this is me, this is what I'm about', then I think that can completely work against you.'

(Samantha: Interview 9)

Interestingly, Samantha drew upon the notion of assertiveness – a personal quality of strength and confidence that considerably helps or hinders a non-lesbian footballer's chance of having a positive, inclusive experience on a predominantly lesbian team. However, Evelyn drew upon the same discourse of bisexual identity, as coupled with the notion of personal confidence, but to depict the opposite effect: 'The one that's bisexual on the team at the moment, she is very, very...probably the most confident person in the club. No-one will sort of, there's not really much banter thrown towards her, because she can give it back. People don't really want to mess with her' (Evelyn: Interview 8). This example poses a site of possible resistance. The one female footballer identifying as bisexual on Evelyn's football team is considered to be one of the most un-touchable, in terms of the practices around banter-giving and safety form/susceptibility to, jokes at the expense of a non-lesbian sexual identity. In this case, it would appear, her statement of 'I am bisexual' is considered to be both sayable and respectable and hence, according to Evelyn's account, this bisexual female footballer is not othered or excluded on the basis of her bisexuality. Of course, I would have needed to interview her, too, in order to attain her perspective, but this is nevertheless a positive instance which adds perspective to this study, in that further research could investigate the gate-keeping strategies around bisexuals in women's football, and indeed who qualifies to be included or excluded. Interestingly, in Evelyn's account, it would appear that for some female footballers, it is more difficult to be heterosexual in women's sport culture, than bisexual (this will be explored further in the section on *Exclusion: heterosexual female exclusion*).

Avoiding the bisexual label

The two female participants that loosely identified as bisexual drew upon the discourse of bisexuality in conjunction with that of that of the closet, but not necessarily in such a way to denote a feeling of oppression or disempowerment. Natalie and Maya both preferred to describe their sexual identities as non-labelled, unless others placed them under pressure to categorize themselves, in which case they would reluctantly choose the bisexual label. Interestingly, both interviewees conceptualized bisexuality through a somewhat queer lens, critiquing the notion of binary identities, and their team-mates un-scrutinized preoccupation

with them. By drawing on the discourse of binary identities, Maya explained the conundrum she faced when trying to express her own sexual identity: 'I could have said I'm not gay, but I ain't straight either. But then if they say 'oh, are you bi then?', I'd be like, 'I don't really like that term'. But if you were to put me in a category, then that would be it' (Maya: Interview 4). Natalie echoes this sentiment, that within her football culture the notion of binary identity meant that she faced a barrage of unwanted questions and scrutiny concerning what she 'was', if she was not heterosexual or homosexual: 'I would never say I'm bi, it's easier to say I'm gay. Strangely enough... rather than having to explain it. Or just to say that I'm 'with a girl', rather than to go into it' (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 8). Since the notion of *this sexual identity or that* goes seemingly un-critiqued, these participants, who both identify in ways unconventional to the limitations of those binaries, have to make a continual choice whether or not to resist the inquisition or to choose an identity based upon their partner's gender, rather than their own sexuality. In this way, it would seem the language and available resources around the concept of bisexuality become limited, as 'I'm with a girl' resolution becomes a sufficient enough argument stopper. In staving off the reportedly uncomfortable practice of being pressurized to choose – an identity that is either lesbian or heterosexual – the non-labelled participants felt that the significances of their alternative ways of identifying were lost and that as a result, they were resigned to the act of 'soldiering on' without their team-mates' full understanding. Maya drew upon the 'so gay' discourse of homosexuality to highlight what she felt to be the predominant and most accepted way of identifying in women's football:

'There isn't really much... it's just like taking the mickey. It's not a personal attack or anything, but not a lot of people, like, say it in terms of... no one's really come out with 'bi'. Everyone will just be like... they'll be just like 'oh yeah that person's so gay'.'

(Maya: Interview 4)

The 'so gay' discourse of homosexuality also appears in both Joel and Tom's accounts of their being pressurized to choose, as Joel remarked, 'It's just like, 'bisexual: it's a bit gay, innit' (Joel: Interview 1). That coupled with the discourse of sexual identity as a choice creates an imperative to choose, whereby the only truly sayable choice is that of homosexual, in the men's LGBT leagues and in women's football. In the next section on *sexual identity as choice*, I will explore further the discourses drawn upon when participants delved into more detail on the topic of this pressure, and of the binary conceptualisation of sexual identity in football culture.

6.8 Sexual identity as choice

Six of the seven female footballers interviewed for this study reported having personally experienced or witnessed female footballers being subjected to a pressure to make a choice regarding their sexual orientation and for that resulting choice to conform to one particular end of the lesbian – heterosexual dichotomy. The discourse of sexual identity as akin to a *choice that can indeed be made* served to construct bisexuals and non-labelled individuals as deviant within football culture. In these accounts, non-homosexuals, or incomplete homosexuals – those footballers who were open about their choices to engage in sexual relationships with women but who otherwise refused to designate themselves to one identity category or another – were viewed as being transgressive by their team-mates, as is explored below.

Pressure to choose

In order to explain how this pressure manifested itself, Natalie drew upon the discourse of sexual identity as a choice to show how its mobilisation had an impact for the possibilities – or lack thereof – for new footballers’ to experiment with sexual fluidity: ‘... you’ve got an immediate requirement to decide, and specify... and it is part of the sport, for everyone to guess whether you’re... pre-empting what you are gonna be, or what you’re gonna discover yourself to be’ (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 1). Karina drew upon the same discourse to depict a similar issue, only in terms of the pressure exerted being more subtle and pervasive in nature:

‘For example, if one girl couldn’t decide, then they’d be like... they’d name her whatever they thought she was. And then eventually, she’s going to like, well maybe, ‘I am’, or whatever. I don’t know. That’s how I would see it, that she feels a little pressured, not forcefully, but in, sort of like, mentally thinking, ‘well actually, maybe I am more one way.’ I think in society, if you’re gay or whatever, I think... sorry bisexual, then you definitely think you sway more one way than the other.’ (Karina: Interview 5)

Bisexuality, then, as a choice, appears to be un-sayable within this practice. By imposing an imperative to choose, sexual identity is depicted as being dichotomous and three groups appear to be forged as a result: those identifying as lesbian; those identifying as bisexual or non-labelled; and those identifying as straight. Natalie drew upon the banter/bullying discourse again to highlight how achieved the impact of reducing possible fluidity: ‘Yeah, you would have those comments like, ‘best of both’, those kinds of comments that again, are in jest, but actually... kind of outline that you don’t fit into this, or that. ‘Make a decision!’, almost’ (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 3). Six out of the seven female footballers constructed lesbian identity as the only one that would indeed ‘fit’. Natalie, Maya, Samantha and Beth all outlined how bisexual identities would fall under one of the remaining two thirds that would not ‘fit’.

Evelyn, however, drew upon the discourse of bullying to explain how heterosexual women would fall under the third excluded identity-group: 'I would say that the people that may, um, be confronted with a bit of bullying, are the ones that claim to be straight, but really, it is questioned whether they are or not. That's the only type of bullying I've seen' (Evelyn: Interview 8). Here, she conceptualised the practice of pressurizing-to-choose as a form of bullying, given that its impact was exclusionary for heterosexual-identifying female footballers who felt the most under pressure, and hence the most susceptible to being othered:

'I'd say there's a few girls that claim to be straight, they don't have a boyfriend, haven't had any short term flings or whatever, and they've been quite pressurized... It's not just sort of, the girls that are gay, it's also the straight ones, but they have pressurized as to, sort of, 'are you straight or are you gay? Are you sure, you don't like girls as well?'... I think they experience more pressure than what lesbians in English football do.'

(Evelyn: Interview 8)

The mobilization of binary identity discourses appears to function in such a way that it can be considered *a-cultural* for a player joining a new women's football team, or a men's LGBT league club to identify as bisexual or heterosexual. Samantha and Beth both drew upon the discourse of sexual identification as a process of choosing to explain their recollections of this pressure-to-choose. However, Samantha constructed bisexual identities, and *not* heterosexual, as the least spoken about and thus most othered, as she drew upon the discourse of sport culture to illustrate – with regards to sexual identities and the conditions for their variability to be possible – how cultural practices denoting the acceptable, also denoted the sayable:

'there was certainly a culture, I would say, of either stating that you are gay or you are straight. I don't think the people that came out and said that they probably, you know, that they were bisexuals, they weren't necessarily kind of bullied, but I think that they...you know, it was less acceptable probably, than being either gay or straight.'

(Samantha: Interview 9)

In much the same way, Beth drew upon a similar discourse of identification as a process of choosing to illustrate how the process of labelling was an unpopular, yet still evident practice in her club, with the resultant identity choices being binary ones, and with the remainder of heterosexual footballers feeling another pressure to make their heterosexual 'choices' very clear to the others:

'generally, people don't like being labelled and for a lot of people, if they've been provoked they tend to identify themselves as one or the other. There's only a few people who'll be like, 'yeah I'm bisexual', and then the people who are straight generally kind of... they might just be there but they kind of 'over-straight' themselves, to a certain extent.'

(Beth: Interview 6)

All of these participants independently highlighted this practice – of pressurizing bisexuals and non-labelled individuals to identify as either homosexual or heterosexual – as an *exclusionary practice* in sport. Those being questioned were effectively being othered because they were being singled out as different, in terms of their either being unable or unwilling to meet the pre-requisites set by the club's underlying culture. As a result, many of these interviewees felt that bisexual subject positions were not possible within the culture of their club because the terms of the current cultural climate did not permit them. Hence, when they presented themselves as bisexual or un-categorized, they were met with a barrage of questions, the answers to which then had powerful implications for the level of regard or respect they could hope to be adorned with subsequent to those discussions. In the next section I shall discuss the discourse of sexual identity as choice in terms of this notion of legitimacy and the apparent gate-keeping strategies around the attainment of legitimacy.

Struggle to be taken seriously

Five participants raised the issue of bisexuality as a form of sexual identification that is not afforded credibility. Joel explained how the dominant concept of the 'this or that' binary choice of identities meant that bisexuality was left with no groundings or firm foundations upon which to even be considered eligible for the status of 'sexual identity':

'Nobody really talks about bisexuality at all, it's just gay or straight... There's nothing cement in its history. It's not something that you can solidify as an identity, because of the very nature of what it is, which is, like you say, a fluid, day-to-day, mind-changing experience. Life's not always the same, so why should sexuality be? But, it's not taken seriously. It's not taken seriously, and it hasn't got an identity, I suppose.'

(Joel: Interview 1)

Here he drew upon discourses of bisexuality, identity, history and ontology to explain the cultural restriction he perceived to be affecting bisexuality, in terms of its ability to be understood and hence taken seriously. Due to the very nature of bisexuality that it changes in nature, bisexuals or non-labelled individuals cannot 'cement' their history or create the same kinds of solidarity that gay men and lesbians have been able to achieve in prior liberationist movements. Hence, a block in the cultural resources pertaining to bisexuality is seemingly operational the wider society, meaning that a similar lack of understanding presents itself in sport culture – even LGBT sport culture. Gabrielle utilised the same discourse of society in conjunction with the same notion of understanding:

'I think it's about... an acceptance of bisexuality, which I think is a bigger societal thing. Um, yeah, for me it feels like we have this issue about, 'well, what's bisexual? They

swing either way'. So kind of, it will be 'so what?' I just think it's like an understanding of it. It's just not talked about. It is really, really hidden and secret, which isn't positive.'

(Gabrielle: Interview 11)

Not only is this problem of legitimacy characterized by a lack of consensus as to how bisexuality is defined, it is also confounded by the fact that – as many participants reported – there is a missing imperative within the broader culture to bridge this lack of understanding, and to alleviate the resulting discrepancy in the way legitimacy is culturally granted between variously conceptualised groups. Natalie drew upon the same collection of discourses, bisexuality, understanding and conceptualisation, to illustrate how difficult her experience had been in trying to gain respect for her bisexual/ in-between identity within her predominantly lesbian-identifying club:

'it wasn't fully believed that someone could be both, could be bi. It was, they were either one, and when they got drunk they were the other... or every now and then they got a little bit bored and wanted a little bit of experimentation, and there was no kind of real respect for the possibility that... (pause)... It's kind of, 'well, you're either on or the other and you just want the best of both', rather than, 'actually, you could just be that open'.'

(Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 3)

The significance of the pull on these particular discourses is that they describe another exclusionary practice: the utilization of disempowering notions of bisexuality within the exclusionary practice of pressurizing and questioning. That is to say, when a bisexual-identifying individual is prompted to make a choice and they respond that their 'choice' is indeed bisexual, their explanation of why this is the case falls on either unsympathetic or genuinely confused ears. The conditions that would make bisexuality more readily acceptable and respectable are seemingly tied to the same conditions that would make such identities more understandable. Until we have cultural resources that explain bisexuality and problematize these dichotomous paradigms of understanding, the problem will arguably be circular. Tom raised the issue that this cultural confusion – as to what bisexuality means, what it is and why people need to identify that way – is often projected *back onto bisexuals* in something of another 'catch-twenty-two'. He described his experience of telling a friend that he was on his way to take part in my research:

'I bumped into him and he said, 'oh, what are you doing today?' and he's on my gay team, and I said, 'oh, I'm speaking to the girl who wants to do that study about bisexuality'... 'Oh, you're not bisexual', he said, you know, he said, 'you like the *cock* too much, you're not bisexual, you're just confused'.'

(Tom: Interview 2)

This harks back to Natalie's comment that within her sport culture, 'being' bisexual was itself considered questionable in that bisexual was not something you could be. However, Samantha

offered an explanation from her lesbian-identifying perspective as to why this might have been perceived to be the case: ‘from my perception anyway, the women that were saying that they were bi as well were actually really, really confused. So it wasn’t... I don’t think it was necessarily, but it wasn’t necessarily helping the fact that they weren’t sort of stern about it, either’ (Samantha: Interview 9). Samantha drew upon the discourse of bisexuality coupled with the notion of visibility and self-silencing to explain why, on her team, those footballers who were secure in their identities and were being open about them could only explain the bisexual or non-labelled footballers’ coyness and mysteriousness in terms of their confusion: if you do not choose an identity, or opt for one end of the gender binary, you must be confused and unable to choose.

By means of a reflexive note, I would add here that I have struggled to find an alternative explanation for this exclusionary practice, in that I myself have been charged with being ‘just confused’ on so many occasions that I too find it frustrating to not feel heard when I articulate my reasonings to minimal avail. However, from a research point of view, there could be many alternative interpretations that I am missing due to the impact of my personal experience on my ability to see these issues a-politically. Had an alternative researcher carried out my study and analysed these transcripts using the same queer/ Foucauldian methods, I daresay they could have reached an entirely different conclusion as to why these notions of confusion and illegitimacy are operational in sport culture. Also, had I managed to interview more footballers or athletes identifying as bisexual, I could possibly have found more accounts of resistance to these practices, or indeed positive reports of football clubs within which these practices were not apparent. Future research into exclusionary practices will need to be broader, with larger sample sizes from a range of sporting demographics. This study is useful, however, for opening up a forum for discussion as to the range of exclusionary practices in sport, and hence the range of cultural resources needed to improve understandings of non-binary sexual identities.

6.9 Labelling and stereotyping

One issue that six of the participants raised was that of stereotypical labelling, within football culture. Natalie highlighted her experience of this by drawing on the discourse of bullying/abuse and the fine line between that and humour: ‘Oh, it was... it was the, ‘Are you guys the carpet-munchers or the cock-suckers?’ kind of... Jokey but abusive’ (Appendix D: Interview 7, pp. 1-2). She was referring to the kinds of language used when the men’s and the women’s first teams travelled together and had to share space. Interestingly, the banter came from the male footballers towards the female footballers and yet within this practice of ‘bantering’ only two

possible subject positions were available, and both of them were derogatory. This is another example of the effect binary sexual identity discourse within football culture. During the process of questioning and pressurizing – to choose, as some participants report – the banter considered acceptable actually refers to sexual proclivities, and hence, this might be ‘jokey’ for those doing the questioning but ‘abusive’ for those being sexually stigmatized on the receiving end.

In some instances, where individuals’ sexual identities are being categorized, it would appear that bisexuality is a missing category. In Natalie’s example above, it is missing even in a derogatory form. Samantha highlights the same issue, only without drawing on bullying or abuse discourse. For her, the bisexual option is not deliberately discarded or excluded, it happens to not be one of the main choices, if indeed choosing an identity is required: ‘naturally if you walk into a new team or a social setting, as you say, you do kind of assess people around you, and personally I do kind of put gay, straight... (pause)... Yeah, I wouldn’t necessarily make in my mind a bisexual box for people’ (Samantha: Interview 9). Beth drew upon the discourse of binary sexual identity and ‘so gay’ discourse to make a similar point to Joel’s – that bisexuality is ‘just a bit gay’ – and Maya’s, that bisexuals are ‘so gay’: ‘There’s a big gay culture, but in general, if you ‘come out’ as bi and then people ... it’s almost like, a lot of people would see it as you’re pretty much gay’ (Beth: Interview 6). Indeed, Tom draws upon both binary and ‘so gay’ discourses to explain how bisexuality on his LGBT team is all but invisible and how as a consequence, bisexual-identifying individuals like himself are excluded from topical discussion:

‘The gay team is supposed to be LGBT as well, but it’s not, it’s never mentioned. When they started the team, there’s gays and there’s lesbians on the team, but that’s it. There’s no mention of it, you’re either gay or you’re... There is no bisexuality, it just doesn’t exist.’
(Tom: Interview 2)

In these cases there are almost missing stereotypes, in that participants reported having been labelled as ‘half pints’ and ‘half bloods’ but only when their team-mates were taking part in discussions directly pertaining to sexual relationships. When discussions would become more general, a bisexual ‘box’, as Samantha termed it, would not necessarily materialize of its own accord. Gabrielle echoed this issue:

‘You know, my friend says that if he talked about bisexual people in football, it may even sort of revert back to some of the smutty jokes about swinging either way, um... I don’t know because I didn’t have those discussions. Again, it was pretty clear about, you know, this is about gay men in the men’s game, gay women in the women’s game, and then this special group of transsexuals, who were quite clearly defined.’

(Gabrielle: Interview 11)

From a professional, equalities-management point of view, bi-phobia is not high on the agenda because other special groups are considered to be more in need of support and protection. From my analytical point of view, that lack of legitimacy and visibility renders bisexual or non-labelled individuals as disempowered even further, because the issues pertaining to their *particular* experiences of being othered – pressures to ‘choose’, misconceptions and misunderstandings of who they are, and practices of exclusion that mean they do not ‘fit in’ anywhere – remain marginalised, even within the equalities initiatives there to protect them.

6.10 Exclusion

When speaking about exclusionary practices, three of the female footballers directly made reference to exclusionary practices towards heterosexual women. Interestingly, in terms of their sexual identifications, they represented the overall range of identities found in this study, in that Samantha identified as gay, Evelyn as straight and Natalie as bisexual, but with a preference to outwardly remain non-labelled. With regards to the issue of heterosexual female exclusion, they all described a very similar set of cultural practices.

Heterosexual female exclusion

Natalie drew upon discourses of heterosexuality and exclusion to illustrate the power imbalances she observed in her football team: ‘There’s a lot of straight girls in my Uni team that felt excluded, massively excluded. They almost felt that they weren’t gonna get picked for a squad, because the Captain was going out with the Club Secretary, and the Club Secretary got picked every week, whether she was at training or not’ (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 9). It would appear that Natalie was describing a nepotistic practice, whereby lesbian-identifying individuals were more likely than heterosexual women to be selected for a squad, necessarily restricting their inclusion and the conditions possible for them to be considered on a more equal basis. Samantha drew upon the same discourses of heterosexuality and exclusion to depict this practice of privileging on the basis of cultural-exclusivity and identity-based inclusion:

‘And you certainly wouldn’t progress as far in a team if you were straight because... (pause) Yeah, no definitely, because the captain was gay, the manager was probably gay and, do you know what I mean? You choose people that you like and you get along with and, you know, the straight girls wouldn’t necessarily socialise as much with the gay girls because... for obvious reasons.’ (Samantha: Interview 9)

Evelyn drew upon these same discourses when speaking about her personal experiences of having been excluded on the basis of her heterosexuality, and hence, inability to secure a place in the predominant social ‘group’ of her football team: ‘The girls that are gay, or bisexual, they

will all go out and stay together. Whereas, the girls that are straight, we have, sort of, different friend groups, or... and it's not necessarily with boys, it's... I kind of see the whole lesbian-gay-bisexual thing as... (pause) quite a closed group. If you're not classed as one of them, you're not in that group' (Evelyn: Interview 8). It would appear to me that the practice of 'choosing' a sexual identity 'group', or indeed pressurizing others to ally themselves with a certain group, is interlinked with a practice of classing and categorizing, that is carried out by the dominant group in the direction of either new individuals joining the team or marginalised individuals who have yet to align themselves with one of the team's two identity-based groups. Samantha went on to describe how this process of classing individuals might manifest itself:

'I think there was a stigma towards being straight in a football team, certainly, and there was a type... there wasn't necessarily bullying, but it was a kind of like, actually, the gay girls would group together slightly more... I guess sort of calling someone 'straighty' is not the most offensive compared to other things that other people have been called, do you know what I mean? But it's still sort of like, that's what you are and it's a negative connotation towards that... you say it in a negative way, really.'

(Samantha: Interview 9)

All three participants drew upon the discourse of culture to depict the process of heterosexual exclusion as one of restricted *immersion* into lesbian culture. Samantha exemplifies how, although 'straighty' is not necessarily a derogatory or offensive term, the net effect of its use remains the same: it denotes the limitations of what is deemed cultural and hence has the othering and exclusionary effect of positioning those on the perimeters of lesbian culture as *a-cultural*. Indeed, Evelyn believed that her inclusion in the team would only ever go so far, in that she wanted to be a part of their culture but she felt that her sentiment was not reciprocated: 'It seems as quite a closed-off group. And it's not the fact that I don't want to be sitting in a group of lesbians, it doesn't bother me at all, um... it's just sort of... (pause), I know they don't really *care if I'm there*, or something (laughs)' (Evelyn: Interview 8). Samantha described exactly the same process, drawing again on the discourse of culture and cultural immersion to illustrate the gate-keeping strategies in operation that she felt functioned to limit heterosexual inclusion:

'I think there was a certain divide, right, because the straight girls that were in the team that almost did completely immerse themselves into the gay culture, but were still identified as straight – absolutely, absolutely great. But they also progressed further than the girls that, you know, would say that they were straight, but not immerse themselves in that culture.'

(Samantha: Interview 9)

On the one hand, Samantha is describing a positive scenario, whereby heterosexual females are not necessarily excluded on the basis of their outwardly disclosed orientation – they are only excluded if they fail to immerse themselves in the communal social life and close-nit friendship

groups within the club culture. On the other hand, it is not entirely clear how a heterosexual-identifying footballer would manage such an immersion, if her heterosexuality was met with the kinds of questions, doubts and classing/choosing practices on her initiation into that team, as were reported by many of the other participants. Natalie drew upon a similar discourse of cultural immersion to illustrate the importance of dedication – to the social life outside of women’s football – when it comes to the issue of acceptance into the group: ‘it might be a big tar-brush scenario here, but actually, how many straight girls were on our club committees? It would be minimal, because maybe they weren’t... their whole lives weren’t in that football club’ (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 8). Natalie went on to describe women’s football culture as a ‘cliqey, cliqey group that *you’re* the one that’s different in, for the first time. So it’s a bit of a role-reversal from how society normally behaves’ (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 9). Here she also drew upon the discourses of society and heteronormativity, to show how she believes women’s football culture works in the reverse. Indeed, Evelyn echoed this perspective suggesting that a ‘homonormative’ role-reversal occurs in women’s football, since practices of questioning and classifying mean that those being charged with the action of choosing are simultaneously charged with finding a method of validating their identity as genuine: ‘It is quite... big in the sport, and inside the sport, so... so you have to be either lesbian or straight, and then if you *are* straight, you kind of have to prove it’ (Evelyn: Interview 8).

Evelyn believed that this requirement to prove or validate a non-lesbian orientation came from the fact that broader society also projects an ‘expectation’ onto women’s football, that most members will indeed be lesbians. Evelyn illustrated that as a result, there was a pressure to ‘prove’ her straightness both within the team and to the rest of her external social networks:

‘The thing is, in women’s football now, it’s expected for you to be gay... Everyone I know that I’ve told I play football, the first couple of questions asked have been whether I’m gay or not, so it’s kind of an expectation. Um, and I think, even if there’s a percentage lower, of lesbians than straight, I still think it’s harder to be straight in women’s football.’

(Evelyn: Interview 8)

However, despite the fact that these three accounts appear to paint a very similar picture of heterosexual exclusion within women’s football and its association with lesbian culture, these are nevertheless only three accounts. Further research could delve into this issue on a broader scale in order to see if in fact, there are more cases of positive heterosexual inclusion that just happened to not be depicted in these particular accounts. For the purposes of this study, this issue remains an interesting analytical point, being that it represents another issue of exclusion on the basis of sexual identity, even within LGBT friendly sporting environments. The issue of

homophobia is more diverse than perhaps the prefix 'homo' would insinuate: bisexual, non-labelled and heterosexual identifying footballers also report experiences of having been othered and excluded.

6.11 Broader discourses – Lesbian culture and practices of inclusion

In contrast to the aforementioned issue of heterosexual female exclusion in women's football, some participants drew on quite a parallel set of discourses to explain how certain practices could in fact be beneficial to non-lesbian identifying footballers. Four of the eight female participants spoke about lesbian culture and the ways in which practices of *acceptance*, such as nick-naming and bantering, could have inclusive effects for individuals occupying bisexual subject positions. Participants spoke about the fine line between bantering and bullying, and the various impacts these practices could have. Interestingly, these customs were not always disempowering, and in the cases discussed below, pertained more to practices of *inclusion* rather than to those of exclusion.

Nicknames

In highlighting the difficulty she found in effectively differentiating this difference, Ellie drew upon discourses of bullying and humour to demonstrate how, as a member of the lesbian-identifying social group, she could not always anticipate the safest way to banter with new bisexual recruits:

'Whereas... if you get a new person come to your team that's never been there before, you don't know their personality. You don't know whether they can take it as banter or if they're going to take it as bullying.'

(Ellie: Interview 10)

Both Karina and Natalie drew upon similar discourses of humour and sexual identity to point out this fine line between practices of bantering and those of bullying. In terms of nick-naming, Natalie recalled that this process was an essential part of being accepted, because if an individual failed to be given a nick-name, this denoted their distance and separation from the group, as opposed to their fortuitous avoidance of a nickname:

'Everybody doesn't get a shirt with their name on it, everyone gets a shirt with their nickname on it, and you've had that nickname from the very first day of training... And if you haven't been given a name, it's almost as if you haven't been fully accepted into the group. If you remain as just your name, it's kind of like, 'I didn't really find anything about you to kind of click with.' It is like a kind of acceptance, really.'

(Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 6)

The line between what is thought of as bantering and what is classed as bullying appears to be ambiguous and dependent upon individual interpretation, as Ellie suggested. Natalie and Karina both believed that banter was an essential part of being inaugurated into women's football culture, and so to have a nickname pertaining to your bisexuality was almost a better case scenario than to have no nickname, and cultural significance, at all. Karina also drew upon the discourse of sexual identity in conjunction with that of humour to explain why it would even be better to have a 'horrible' nickname than none at all:

'Like I said, people appreciate that sometimes just as a joke. Sometimes it kind of brings them a sense of... sort of if you've got a nickname, you kind of feel accepted, so to speak, but even if you've got a horrible nickname that isn't to do with sexuality, sometimes you think, 'oh well, that's... you know, I'm associated with them through that'.'

(Karina: Interview 5)

In this way, the 'half pint' or 'half blood' references could indicate new footballers' accepted statuses within the group, rather than examples of othering or exclusion in all cases. Karina went on to explain: 'Um... there's a definite 'half pint' joke... glass isn't half full, or empty, or in the middle, kind of thing... Yeah, her nickname is 'half pint' because she hasn't decided whether she wants a full pint or not' (Karina: Interview 5). However, from the last section on the bisexual closet, we can see that many of the same participants also felt othered and excluded by phrases such as 'make your mind up' and nicknames like 'half pint' or 'half blood'. So, perhaps in some contexts, participants were able to see the positive effects that these terms had for their acceptance into their various sport cultures. However, these names nevertheless rendered them as marginal and peripheral to those cultural practices, ironically, of inclusion. As Foucault would explain, dominant identities need peripheral or transgressive identities to reinforce their dominance and normativity, and indeed to reinforce their positions of dominance. In the context of sport culture, inclusive practices can have simultaneously exclusionary effects.

Cliques

A few of the female footballers discussed the situation of 'cliquey' social groups in women's football. Beth drew upon minorities discourse to explain how these cliques could have direct implications for bisexual individuals on the football team, because in some cases, a 'half pint' nickname could create something of a band-wagon for other players to latch onto:

'I think generally, if people are okay with themselves then it's fine. And it's normally a minority of people that sort of... (pause) and if there are certain cliques and someone is bisexual, one person in a clique says stuff, or has an issue with it, then the whole clique kind of catches on, and it's because of that.'

(Beth: Interview 6)

Earlier, Evelyn described how she felt her football team was segregated, in that the straight girls represented a minority and the lesbian-identifying girls formed a group that was for her, very 'closed': 'If you're not classed as one of them, you're not in that group' (Evelyn: Interview 8). Natalie, however, explained why she thought lesbian social groups within the game were so close, by drawing on discourses of friendship, relationships and solidarity, rather than those of exclusion or othering:

'for the incestuous lesbians in the group, that's where everything is: their friendships, their relationships, their football, their hobby, and they're the kind of ones that knit the group together, almost. And that can be very cliquey, but that can add to the ...(pause) how long that team lasts, almost, and how long it holds together as a squad, because actually, you've got that core.' (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 8)

She went on to describe how women's football teams were seen as 'safe' environments for newly 'coming out' individuals, and in doing so also drew upon discourses of romantic relationships and monogamous couples to illustrate her point. For her, she felt that the term 'half pint' was at once inclusive and exclusionary but she could see why the solidarity of a women's football team was needed to maintain this safety, and indeed the longevity of the club itself: 'I think for most girls, the football team is probably where they find their first girlfriend. Because it's that safe environment, where it's accepted... in female football, that's what everything's about. It's 'who's coupled up with who?' this week. And often, it's the girls that are in couples that become the glue of the groups' (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 8).

Practices of inclusion and exclusion therefore seem to more interchangeable than I had originally anticipated them to be, as the line between bantering and bullying can even be perceived differently, or context-dependently, within the perspective of one individual at one time. The discourses being drawn upon paint seemingly competing pictures, if taken out of this sport cultural context – for example, discourses of safety, solidarity, bullying and abuse, occurring within the same topic of discussion. However, the participants are not contradicting themselves as experience is not a static entity. The variability of discourses utilised within this same context reflects what Parker (1992) would call the 'multivoicedness of language': people often use the same language to make alternative points and this shows how powerful language is as a cultural resource. Foucault would agree that power moves within language, and we can see how this could be the case when the same term – for example, 'half pint' – has the power to be utilised in a simultaneously inclusive and exclusionary way. Samantha made the significant point that 'straighty' was not the most abusive of the terms used in football culture but that it had the ability to exert negativity nevertheless in the direction of heterosexual players. It could

be possible to conclude that in these cases, bantering and bullying are a 'much of a muchness', so to speak, if the net effect is the same.

6.12 Traditional femininity

Physical appearance was an issue that many participants raised, with particular respect to femininity and masculinity and the predictability of sexual orientation. Beth and Maya both drew upon the discourse of traditional femininity to explain the stereotypical association between 'girlie-girl' appearance and bisexual identity. Beth's statement appeared to reinforce traditional associations between lesbianism and butch identity: 'this is really stereotypical, I know... I don't like it, but all the ones that come in that are really girly and you wouldn't expect, like, they're the ones that maybe would identify themselves as bisexual' (Beth: Interview 6). Maya also drew upon the discourse of 'girlie girl' femininity to describe her surprise at a new recruit being simultaneously interested by both football and shopping:

'Yeah, football... it's kind of stereotypical like... that whoever plays football, they're either gay or... but then you're either gay or bi or you're really, really girlie... Yeah, 'cause you wouldn't have guessed a girlie girl would play football. One of the girls from two years ago... she came in... if you see her in the streets you wouldn't guess she was a footballer. Like, she gets her nails done and stuff like that, and proper goes out shopping, and you wouldn't have guessed it.'

(Maya: Interview 4)

Here, Maya appears to be describing the hyper-femininity of a heterosexual female footballer on her team. In showing what she perceives as the limited range of sexual identity subject positions available to occupy, she somewhat draws upon binary identity discourse – whilst managing to acknowledge bisexuality as an option – to show how traditionally feminine women are a surprise, and perhaps a minority in women's football. Evelyn went on to explain how the main social group within her football team had one day decided to female-footballer-spot whilst out socialising together, and they successfully spotted a woman who turned out to indeed be a footballer. Evelyn drew upon a discourse of female masculinity, to show the link her team-mates were making between this woman's clothing choices and appearance, and her status as a football player. This, she explained, was perceived also as being indicative of her status as a lesbian:

'they just said from the bottom upwards, she was wearing these trainers, she was wearing straight jeans that had rips in them, then she had a big belt on, she had a slightly baggy t-shirt on, and she had a chequered scarf on. And an ear-piercing at the top... (laughs). And a headband in her hair. That's sort of, that's how many things you could be labelled on.'

(Evelyn: Interview 8)

By judging female masculinity in these ways, Evelyn explained that on the days where she satisfied those lesbian-associated fashion choices, she would be questioned as to the nature of her sexual orientation, even though she had made her statement of heterosexuality very clear: 'The days when you do get caught off, or something, then... (laughs) you'll be subject to that sort of questioning, when it's just an off-day when you want to go in, in your tracksuit bottoms!' (Evelyn: Interview 8). Hence, judgments based on appearance – whether they are traditionally masculine or feminine – may not transpire to be exclusionary but may well be taken to denote a female footballer's membership within the lesbian culture of women's football. When a feminine woman joins a new team, her choice to become a member is therefore seen by some as surprising because those indicators of probable affiliation are not presented. This is an interesting point, in that the number of parameters upon which an individual can be judged is quite diverse and thus the conditions for their acceptance or exclusion are also varied. This is not to say that feminine footballers are always bisexual, or heterosexual, or that they are always excluded – this is simply to say that there may be implications for the way in which a woman initially presents herself, in terms of her team-mates' perceptions of her suitability for their culture.

6.13 Traditional masculinity

In the previous section, I touched upon occasions where participants had drawn upon the discourse of masculinity, in terms of its connection with female masculinity, stereotypes around the butch lesbian identities and the effects that practices of inclusion could have on bisexuals. Indeed, Samantha added that she felt lesbian attitudes towards bisexual players were 'derogatory', but that this was more to do with the ever-present imperative to be accepted, and less to do with personal or political problems with bisexuality. Biphobic or exclusionary terms were not always intended to be attacking but perhaps even defensive on the speakers' own behalves, given that those kinds of phrases carried a certain humorous and cultural currency, that increased their own chances of acceptance: 'I think a lot of people make the mistake to feel accepted in a situation, like, that you've got to be quite masculine and you've got to behave and talk in a certain way and be quite derogatory towards people' (Samantha: Interview 9). (To put this comment in context, Samantha was explaining how she felt that other women around her sometimes felt compelled to almost masculinize themselves, in order to fit in with the macho culture of male-dominated football environments).

This section deals with the discourse of masculinity, as it particularly pertained to bisexuality in the interviews. More participants actually drew upon this discourse with respect to homophobia

than to bisexuality or biphobia, so the analysis of this discourse will be dealt with in more depth in the next chapter, Chapter 6.

One interesting finding, with respect to the discourse of masculinity, was an insight given by Dean into the ease at which sexual orientation could be used to undermine athletes during competitions. He drew upon this discourse when talking about competitiveness within bodybuilding sport culture and the differing perceptions of aptitude and ability in conjunction with conventional or non-conventional sexual identities:

‘But the real problem is in bodybuilding, I find, is that people will really, really quickly throw the dagger at your sexuality. They won’t say, ‘ah you didn’t put in enough hours dieting to get in competition’... or ‘that’s why you didn’t get the points’. It’s because you’re gay or because you’re bisexual or... And there’s no reason behind it and they won’t justify that statement, but it’s because of that, that’s why you’re not good enough.’ (Dean: Interview 3)

Dean went on to draw upon the discourse of the ‘manly-man’ to illustrate exactly how reductive and emasculating these comments could be: ‘It’s almost like... it’s almost like you’re less of a man if you’re gay or bisexual or... do you know what I mean? Anything that’s not conventional’ (Dean: Interview 3). Interestingly, he felt that the culture of bodybuilding was more likely to soften and become more compassionate towards the idea of sexual diversity, given time, than the culture of the gym, which would somehow be more reluctant to change: ‘I don’t know, it just seems the dynamics of the gym is very much pressuring you to stay silent’ (Dean: Interview 3).

Both Dean and Maya drew upon seemingly parallel discourses of masculinity and femininity, in that Dean utilised ‘manly man’ discourse, and Maya utilised ‘girlie girl’ discourse. It would seem that othering on the basis of sexual identity is something of a gendered issue. The uptake of ‘girlie girl’ discourse in women’s football can serve to construct a feminine woman as less likely to be compatible with women’s football culture, if she *is* heterosexual-appearing, where on the converse, ‘manly man’ discourse used in men’s sporting environments serves to construct an outwardly masculine man as ‘less of a man’ if he *is not* exclusively heterosexual. Indeed, this is an interesting finding but garnered from only two perspectives on bisexuality and discourses of masculinity/femininity. Further research could investigate the gendered nature of sexual-identity based exclusion with a broader range of athletes from a larger sample.

6.14 One end of a binary – alternative subject positions

Nine of the thirteen participants drew upon discourses of binary sexual identities when speaking, in varying ways, about the difficulty in authenticating bisexual identities. Evelyn, Beth

and Ellie each utilised binary identity discourse to assert their beliefs that bisexual identities were not truly authentic. In direct contrast, Maya, Natalie and Karina drew upon queer discourses of sexual identity to assert that fluidity as a practice did not directly equate to disingenuousness or an inability to choose.

Evelyn drew upon the notion of a stepping stone when speaking about bisexuality in a binary way:

‘I mean... (pause) even outside of sports, with bisexuality people always think, “Well, eventually, you’ve got to take one road or the other”. So, it’s like, you always must have a preference. I think that can transfer into women’s football... I think in women’s football, I think it’s the first step to coming outright as a lesbian.’ (Evelyn: Interview 8)

Bisexual identities are in this way constructed as transitory, and therefore not the final identity an individual would rest upon. Indeed, binary identity discourse constructs sexual identity as something upon which a person must inevitably decide, as if they ought to reach a conclusion at some point in their life. With this combination of binary and transitory discourses, bisexual identities are somewhat left out of the ‘genuine’ categories – this positioning also depends on the idea that sexual identity is indeed so tangible that it can be stratified into categories the first instance. Beth echoed this conception in her explanation of the reception bisexual identities received on her team: ‘They’d be like, ‘if you’re saying you’re bi, that obviously means that you like girls. So then why are you with a guy?’” (Beth: Interview 6). Binary identity discourse gives rise to two subject positions and two subject positions only: heterosexual and homosexual. When this notion is drawn upon, alternative non- heteronormative or non-homonormative identities are rendered as marginal and incomprehensible. Ellie made an interesting point concerning the criteria that would need to be met for a bisexual identity to be seen as authentic – that of its likelihood to transpire into a long-term lesbian relationship:

‘Yeah, there’s a few of our friends that I know, that have a long term... have had long term relationships with both boys and girls, and have said the future, ‘I could see myself in a long term relationship with a boy or a girl’. So, those kind of people, you’re like, ‘yeah, okay, you’re definitely. But then, some people are like, ‘yeah I’m bisexual, but I would never settle down with a girl’.’ (Ellie: Interview 10)

In these examples, we can see how orientation authenticity is dependent upon an individual’s ability to meet these criteria: ‘Do you date girls? And for how long?’ One could interpret authenticity in this context as being linked to longevity. However, in contrast, Natalie drew upon queer discourse to describe why criteria such as these were not only frustrating for her, but practically immaterial for her process of identification: ‘I’m a no label person. I think... it frustrates me that anyone has to apply a label, for starters, um... And I always prefer, in all parts

of my life, to kind of... just be who I'm with, regardless of who I was with before, or who I might be with in the future. It's about who I'm with at the time' (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 3). Maya mirrored Natalie's frustration, not only at other players' inability to understand why they would identify in a fluid and *present* way – bereft of past or future contexts – but also at the position they had been placed in, to satisfy *somebody else's* need for them to be labelled. She drew upon a similarly queer construction of fluid, interchangeable identity, and in so doing, illuminated an alternative subject position of 'just a person': 'it's just like a really weird term to use... it's stupid in the sense that each person is a different human being and they should be able to do what they... within reason and then it's just like a really stupid term that shouldn't be used really' (Maya: Interview 4). Maya went on to illustrate another alternative subject position, that is to say, alternative from 'gay', 'lesbian' or 'bisexual' – the identity of 'I like girls'. When describing herself and her way of explaining her identity, she used it as something of a substitute for gay/lesbian/bisexual labels:

'You can say, 'yeah I like girls', and yeah sometimes it is to someone who's just coming out, or it just seems like a little weird to say at first, but then it's better than saying 'oh I'm bisexual', 'cause it's not... 'cause you do like the girl and then you can also, I also like boys. With bisexual, it's just kind of... it's just a term that I just don't... I just don't really like to use, really.'

(Maya: Interview 4)

By drawing upon queer notions of fluid sexuality, these participants manage to assert their independence of choice and their resistance to practices of labelling and choosing that would contest the authenticity of their relationships and chosen ways of finding partners. They appear to have circumvented the problem of being pressurized to choose by opting out of those practices: Maya and Natalie refused to use other people's terms in order to define themselves. However, this begs the question of how – or indeed if – they managed to gain acceptance onto their teams *without* taking part in these rituals.

Karina also drew upon queer fluid discourse to describe the common identity subject positions found on her team. Interestingly, she portrayed her club culture as having views predicated upon the subject position of being 'just a person', and that of being 'just in love'. These are both gender-less and orientation-category-less ways of conceptualising gay/lesbian/bisexual relationships:

'Yeah, like they wouldn't have a problem... I think in the club they've looked at it as though you're a person. They don't look at what sexuality you are. They look at you as an individual rather than a sexuality... I've got a friend that... she claims to be straight, but she's got a girlfriend... She doesn't see it as gay or bisexual. She sees herself... she doesn't fancy women in that respect. She's just in love.'

(Karina: Interview 5)

When participants drew upon binary discourses of identity, they depicted traditional and discrete subject positions such as gay, lesbian and bisexual. When participants drew upon discourses of queer and fluid sexual identity, they exposed alternative subject positions, derived from an almost humanistic understanding of love, individuality and diversity. This arguably gave the occupiers of the latter positions more freedom to live outside of those binary-induced parameters and the ability to be considered genuine and authentic irrespective of their renunciation of binary discourse's choose-based imperatives.

Apathy towards proving bisexual authenticity

The two male participants who identified as bisexual both expressed some apathy towards the perceived need to continually authenticate their identities. Tom drew upon the broader discourse of politics to illustrate his point that bisexuality lacked visibility on his team because nobody championed its cause:

‘I would feel, like you said, there’s no-one to talk to about it, but I’m quite apathetic about it, I just don’t... If it comes up, it comes up, but I wouldn’t raise it. It’s not something I would push out there as my cause, do you know what I mean? I just get on with it. That’s the sort of person I am anyway, I’m not political or anything.’

(Tom: Interview 2)

Indeed, he believed that he would be the only player taking up the activist’s role if he did, and he did not feel that he occupied a political role, merely a marginalised bisexual subject position that was probably going to remain that way. Both Tom and Joel raised a similar issue, that openly identifying as bisexual on an LGBT team was somewhat incompatible with the way most men would identify, which was as exclusively gay. Joel remarked that his bisexuality become side-lined because it did not have so much of a place – he felt the ‘gay’ aspect to his personality fitted in more seamlessly with the culture of his gay team-mates: ‘So, as a footballer, I suppose if... I’d find out more if I was a bit more out, bi-out, but because I don’t say anything, it’s like I’m a gay footballer playing for a gay football team’ (Joel: Interview 1)... ‘Also, bisexuality doesn’t seem to have that much of an impact because that side of my bisexuality fits in very well with the culture that’s happening, you see what I mean?’ (Joel: Interview 1). In this sense, Tom felt othered by his minority-within-a-minority status, where Joel only felt excluded in the sense that as he could not bring a girlfriend to football matches with quite the same ease as he could bring a boyfriend but aside from that, his bisexuality was only marginalised because his identification with homosexuality in that particular culture took natural precedence.

6.15 Answering the first analysis question

‘How does bisexuality operate in the context of sport?’

We can theorise bisexuality through a discourse analytic lens: binary discourses of identity give rise to discrete subject positions of categorical sexual orientations, where queer discourses of sexual fluidity give rise to a greater diversity of alternative subject positions. The latter pertain more to an individual’s humanity, agency, and right to remain free of having to choose to outwardly adopt one of the traditional categories. Participants reported that their freedoms to be included and accepted were both sexual identity based and depended upon the particular collection of sexual identity discourses most prevalently drawn upon in their club cultures.

In terms of its operation, bisexuality seems to operate in somewhat of a peripheral capacity. Bisexual subject positions are present in the sense that they are possible to occupy, within both women’s and men’s LGBT football. However, participants reported difficulty in having their non-labelled, fluid or non-homonormative, identities respected as authentic and on an equal par with those of gay men and lesbians. Practices of questioning and pressurizing – for example, the ‘make your mind up’ discussion – placed individuals in a position of having to choose a binary identity. These were conceptualised as being exclusionary, although practices of nicknaming and bantering, particularly with new recruits, were seen as simultaneously having the potential to be inclusive. The practice of nicknaming was deemed as essential for a new footballer’s acceptance into the team – in that it was indicative of their membership into the group – but seen as simultaneously exclusionary, given that those nicknames such as ‘half pint’ or ‘half blood’, or phrases such as ‘you’re just confused’, ‘you’re just experimenting’, were actually indicative of their marginalised status and semi-membership of the culture. Derogatory discourses of bisexuality functioned to construct non-homosexuals as disingenuous, untrustworthy, ego-centric or needy, which meant that even when they took part in these practices of choosing, their non-binary identity choices were subsequently met with derogatory misconceptions and a lack of understanding. These conceptualisations, of an almost sub-standard bisexual identity, left these participants feeling less able to legitimize their non-binary ways of identifying and with an overall feeling of being less able to garner respect from the rest of their lesbian or gay-identifying team-mates. Particularly within men’s football, even within the LGBT-friendly leagues, bisexuality operated as a silent minority status that was barely considered legitimate enough to speak about. However, a larger sample size would need to be researched in future to see if this kind of operation was representative of bisexuality across a larger cross-section of the United Kingdom.

6.16 Summary

This chapter has presented my findings on the topic of bisexual identity and how it operates within sport culture. The discourses relating directly to sexual identity I chose to split into four groups: the bisexual closet; sexual identity as choice; labelling and stereotyping; and exclusion. Despite there being considerable overlap, in terms of the discourses spoken into existence and the ways in which they constructed subject positions, I felt that grouping them in these ways would highlight their social impacts. The broader discourses were grouped for similar reasons, in terms of their social effects: lesbian culture and practices of inclusion; traditional femininity; and traditional masculinity. The final section dealt with the polarity between sexual identity positions that were most prevalently presented in interviews. The key finding was that bisexuality 'operates' in a very peripheral capacity, within the sporting cultures I studied. The next stage of the thesis, Chapter 7, presents the findings on the topic of homophobia, and answers the second analysis question.

Chapter 7: Findings and Analysis – Homophobia

7.0 Introduction

This second half of the analysis will explore the findings from the three-step discourse analysis pertaining directly to homophobia. At the end of the previous chapter, I addressed the first analysis question of ‘how does bisexuality operate in the context of sport?’ At the end of this analysis chapter I will be answering the second analysis question, ‘how does homophobia operate in the context of sport?’

Overall, ten out of the thirteen participants drew directly upon the discourse of homophobia when discussing sexual identity and exclusions in sport. This discourse was utilised in conjunction with eight other main discourses, three of which were directly related to sexual identity discrimination and five of which were broader discourses drawn from the wider culture. The sexual orientation related discourses were as follows: *banter/ bullying, ‘coming out’ and the closet, and prejudice*. The broader discourses were those of *gender, education, power and the media, traditional masculinity and culture*.

7.1 Discourses relating to sexual identity – Banter/ bullying

Gabrielle raised the issue of this very apparent overlap between practices of bantering and bullying. Drawing upon discourses of abuse and language, she explained that the issue was twofold: on the one hand, bantering is an intrinsic element of sport culture, particularly team sport culture and so the imperative for sports sociologists now is not necessarily creating ways to eliminate that but creating resources that police its boundaries with bullying more effectively. The second issue is that language of banter is often interchangeable with that of bullying and the challenge for sporting authorities therefore, is the development of resources able to discriminate between the two:

‘it is a continuum and what you’ve got is exactly... you know, on one side: absolutely fine, acceptable, comfortable language and behaviour and on the other side: absolutely unacceptable, it’s foul, it’s abusive, it’s offensive... and somewhere in the middle is the mid-point, and where is it? Is it too far to the right at the moment? Is it too far to the left? Look, where is it? Where do we need to set it?’ (Gabrielle: Interview 11)

She went on to explain that in her experience of equalities issues and legislation, the problem of creating resources to contend with homophobia in sport was complicated by the variety of people affected by it:

‘I could be straight and receive homophobic abuse. I could be a closet gay and receive homophobic abuse. I could be an out-gay and receive homophobic abuse. It’s quite

subtle, in terms of... it's not what some people define as homophobia, which is the fear of gays and lesbians.' (Gabrielle: Interview 11)

Here she drew upon discourses of abuse, homophobia, the closet and 'coming out' discourse to illustrate the variety of demographics susceptible to homophobic discrimination. According to Gabrielle, homophobia operates in both overt and covert ways and this subtlety needs to be appreciated by future researchers. Tom made a similar point that in his experience, homophobic language was often adopted by bystanders at football matches because, it seemed, those kinds of slurs were the most culturally popular at that time – there was never any rational link between the insults being shouted and the events happening on the field:

'For playing, I think, especially in the local leagues, I think it's pretty bad. If you go and watch the local teams, the insults you hear... If a player has got long hair, or if he's got coloured boots, then it's all, 'Ugh! Give that poof a kick!' That sort of thing, yeah. At the lower leagues, it's really quite homophobic, anybody different, who stands out.'

(Tom: Interview 2)

What is considered to be acceptable football 'banter' can have the same othering and exclusionary effects as bullying – in this sense, homophobia would appear to operate within sport culture in a very similar way to that of biphobia within LGBT friendly football. When an individual is perceived as being non-conformant – with whichever ideal is deemed vital to permit their full acceptance into and membership of the team – homophobic language is used to signify this reduced and partly accepted, partly othered status.

Tom explained how the act of shouting a homophobic slur such as 'poof' was not always considered to be tantamount to an act of bullying by supporters. He drew upon the discourse of abuse in conjunction with the notion of difference to show how homophobic language was consequently quite commonplace: 'I used to go and watch my local city team, and it's all gay banter. It's a way of insulting people. The top people get it all the time. Some players, all through their careers, they were, you know, if you're a little bit different as a footballer, then you're gay. It's dreadful' (Tom: Interview 2). Any footballer that was in any way considered to be different was susceptible to this kind of abuse and rendered vulnerable as a result. When speaking about football culture, Dean made a similar point about a well-known professional player: 'He was hailed for his ability, but when he gets knocked down, he gets knocked down for his sexuality and that's what I really don't like' (Dean: Interview 3).

These participants all depicted a fixation – within men's football culture – with non-heterosexual identity. It functions as an all-encompassing topic of slander and is used to undermine any player that behaves or presents in an unconventional way. Practices of

homophobic bantering and homophobic bullying appear to hold their own power in this way: there is a very present cultural imperative for footballers to *appear* to be conformant, be that to standards of sporting excellence, or to broader cultural standards of typically heterosexual-related clothing choices or hair styles. Interestingly, Evelyn made a similar point with regards to women's football, in terms of a link between appearance – clothing and hairstyles – and perceived suitability within women's sport culture. To conclude the point, discourses of abuse were drawn upon when participants spoke about *bantering* practices, so the line between bantering and bullying appears to be very fine indeed.

A victim of homophobic bullying: Justin Fashanu

Three participants made direct reference to Justin Fashanu, the UK's only professional football player to 'come out' as gay in the media, and who committed suicide after years of abuse in 1998. Karina, Joel and Tom all drew upon discourses of abuse, bullying and 'coming out' to show how a frightening precedent had been set by football culture's alienating response to Justin Fashanu's disclosure. Joel raised the issue that currently there are no 'out' homosexual players in men's football and suggested that their fear of 'coming out' would equate to their fear of such negative, alienating consequences: 'You'd have thought more people would've come out by now, but they haven't. The only player that did come out died, and he's the bench marker for anyone else that wants to come out' (Joel: Interview 1). Karina raised a similar concern, that there are no 'out' gay players in the professional leagues, by drawing upon discourses of abuse and 'coming out': 'Yeah, Justin Fashanu, he was gay, but there was a lot of abuse around that and it was never really accepted. I don't know if, now, if someone came out, whether it would be more accepting' (Karina: Interview 5). Karina was also drawing upon the discourse of culture here, as she was questioning the current culture's evolution beyond that homophobically abusive stage of the 1980's and 1990's. Indeed, Tom raised the same question of football culture, in that he doubted whether supporters were ready for players to 'come out', since the current zeitgeist of the terraces was still so abusive:

'I think if the supporters don't change, then players won't come out. The only player who I know was gay lived a torrid life, and people attacked him, and he didn't have a very good manager at the time, who could have protected him.' (Tom: Interview 2)

Issues pertaining directly to the influence of supporter will be dealt with in more depth in the section under the broader discourse of power. To conclude the point of this section, discourses of abuse and indeed death, mobilise a great deal of fear and were drawn upon when these participants framed the problem of homosexual invisibility in the men's professional game:

'coming out' as gay was constructed as a dangerous thing to do in this climate. The next section will focus upon the discourses drawn upon to frame this issue.

7.2 'Coming out' and the closet

Many participants drew upon 'coming out' discourse when discussing visibility in sport culture, that is to say, the visibility of non-heterosexual minorities in football. Six interviewees drew upon discourses of abuse and stigmatization when discussing the repercussions of 'coming out' as a gay male in football, sometime in the near future. Natalie drew upon equalities discourse as well as 'coming out' discourse to illustrate the place at which she felt football culture *should* be given that we are in the Twenty-first century:

'But also, at the highest level, creating some form of cultural protection, for the players that want to, so that they can feel able to... I would hope that we're at a stage where if a player did want to come out, in a current Premiership starting sixteen, um, there'd be no risk or doubt in his mind about whether he'd get picked, whether he'd still get the wage he's on, or whether he'd still get accepted by his team-mates in the same way... But otherwise, actually, why are they not coming out?' (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 13)

Natalie also drew upon the discourse of culture to show how far-reaching the issue of homophobia is, being that there are both personal and professional implications for players who do risk 'coming out' in the sporting media. In a similar vein, when explaining why he thought professional male footballers were not disclosing their gay and bisexual identities, Joel drew upon discourses of abuse and name-calling in conjunction with the issue of visibility. Again, the act of 'coming out' was conceptualised as a personally hazardous step to take, and in this example, Joel asserted that fears around disclosure were inextricably linked to the issue of LGBT invisibility:

'But there's no face to LGBT. Despite the fact that people are getting shouted 'faggot' on the pitch, it don't matter, they're not really gay. Do you know what I mean? If there was gay people *out*, and bi people *out*, who were getting abuse, I think it would change more quickly.'

(Joel: Interview 1)

Joel felt that sporting authorities would have an obligation to respond more comprehensively to homophobic abuse in football if they had a tangible and name-able individual to protect from being singled out and discriminated against. He felt therefore, that the issue of invisibility was responsible for the fears associated with visibility, in that the problem was circular. Tom echoed this argument but made a different point by drawing upon power discourse to frame the issue of LGBT invisibility as being symptomatic of managerial control at the business level of football:

'It is like the 70's, like it was with racism, it's still acceptable with homophobia, you can say what you want... 'cause anyone who comes out now would have so much trouble.'

And I think even if there were players brave enough, the clubs wouldn't encourage them, to be out. You hear stories about managers who, and clubs who keep it hidden, and arrange girlfriends for players and stuff.' (Tom: Interview 2)

Tom drew upon the discourse of racism here to represent something of a time-line in the history of football culture. In his mind, the issue of homophobic discrimination was akin to that of racial discrimination in the 1970's UK culture. He believed that because homophobic slurs and practices of abuse such as name-calling were so prevalent within today's culture, there was still a great deal of ground to be covered before it would cease being dangerous for players to 'come out' as non-heterosexuals whilst still in the midst of their careers. Samantha drew upon abuse discourse in much the same way when explaining the risk attached to the reality of a player 'coming out': 'I guess if they're willing to do that, they have to think about a bunch of things 'cause men's football is probably quite brutal. If that was to happen there'd be a backlash' (Beth: Interview 6). The issue of visibility was drawn upon here too, showing a link between pressures to stay in 'the closet' and the current lack of cultural protection – as Natalie suggested needed to be available at the highest level – that would make the act of disclosing non-heterosexual identities safer on a personal level and feasible on a professional level. Gabrielle echoed Tom's point concerning homophobic language and its pervasive nature:

'Still, if you talk to people about homophobia in football, there will be people who will think, "There isn't an issue because there's no openly gay players"... "So, what's the problem?" And, homophobic abuse is so commonplace... outside of football, and it's used so causally, you know, "You big poof", "You big girl's blouse". That's not, "You're gay", like how the kids do it in the playground. It's used so casually, that it's not seen as abuse.' (Gabrielle: Interview 11)

Clearly, there are implications for the conditions of possibility for non-heterosexual male footballers: it appears, from the utilisations of abuse and invisibility discourses, that the conditions needed for professional players in the men's game to 'come out' securely and without broader cultural repercussions are not yet present. Sports organizations will need to appreciate the powerful effect of homophobic language on the disempowerment and marginalisation of sexual minorities in future, in order to steer sports development in an equalities/inclusion-based direction. The impact of positive and negative language within football culture will be dealt with in more detail in the section under 'education'.

Guilt by association

Many of the participants drew upon abuse and discrimination discourses when speaking about the cultural barriers preventing footballers from 'coming out'. Aaron and Dean spoke about

personal barriers that they perceived to be restricting players' willingness to disclose their identities. Both participants drew upon the discourse of sporting identity to show how it conflicted with sexual identity, in terms of how the reputation induced by the latter could have a debilitating effect on the former: 'I think what people are really trying hard to achieve at the moment is that they don't want to be recognised as a 'gay athlete'. They want to be recognised as an athlete' (Dean: Interview 3). Dean was illustrating that in order to be taken seriously as an athlete, an individual would have to be careful to protect their sporting reputation from their sexual identity, because as he stated earlier, when an athlete defaults on their form, their sexual identity is blamed on the grounds of its stigmatized link with weakness.

Aaron went on to explain how this perception of weakness and homosexuality in men's football was, in his experience, the reason why the discussion around non-heterosexual identities was practically non-existent. Players on his team did not want to risk being seen to be discussing issues of homophobia or minority sexualities lest those conversations raise question marks above their own heads: 'well, it *is* a problem, because a lot of people don't sort of, like, come out and talk about it, sort of thing. A lot of people don't want to touch the subject, 'cause they might be seen as one of those people' (Aaron: Interview 12). The impact of traditional masculinity discourse will be analysed in more depth later on in the chapter, under the section on 'broader discourses. To conclude the point of this section, participants drew upon abuse discourses when they spoke about the fears and risks associated with 'coming out' as non-heterosexual. There was also a sense that these topics – sexual orientation discrimination and visibility – were themselves stigmatized insofar as they carried their own potential risks in conversation, and were therefore rendered un-sayable. The possibilities for even discussing the possibilities of 'coming out' in men's football were consequently restricted, from these accounts.

It is possible, of course, that had I been able to garner more participants for this research study that I could have encountered more positive accounts where members of mainstream male football teams had circumvented these problems. Topics such as homophobia and minority sexual identities may not be un-sayable across the whole of the UK and acts of 'coming out' may be possible elsewhere. Indeed, George made the point that he felt Gareth Thomas had been a positive example for rugby in recent years, being that he disclosed his homosexual identity and appeared to receive a positive response from the wider culture, which could pave the way of possibility for others:

‘because people like Gareth Thomas are coming out: there’s nothing bad happening to him now. It’s all calmed down and everything like that, and everyone’s just accepted it and so on... he’s obviously happier with what he’s done, so it might lead others to do so, as well.’ (George: Interview 13)

Within rugby culture, George felt that homophobia was on the decline: ‘To some degree there’s homophobia but now it’s a lot more relaxed and I guess it’s probably... compared to how it was, because everyone’s getting used to it, I guess, so it’s not an issue anymore’ (George: Interview 13). Samantha drew upon a discourse of sexual fluidity to present a similar contrast. In her experience of playing in both football and rugby cultures, she found there to be greater openness to sexual fluidity in rugby and resultantly a more relaxed attitude to diversity:

‘Well from my experience of playing in a football team, playing in a rugby team, the girls in the rugby team that weren’t bisexual and were quite happy to be fluid between whatever they wanted to... Whereas the girls that I’ve met in football are either deadly straight, deadly gay or sort of almost slightly socially outcast just because they’re not... they’re not confident about it.’ (Samantha: Interview 9)

More research would be needed to substantiate this contrast but statements like these nevertheless raise an interesting comparison between football and rugby cultures that warrants further exploration. It would potentially further sport sociological understandings of identity-based inclusionary practices if they were to be studied in both contexts. The in/exclusionary effects of binary identity discourses could then be examined to see whether they are particular to football culture.

To conclude, homophobia operates within football culture most effectively when it remains unscrutinized. However, the critique of such practices is not the most forthcoming conversation in men’s football because there is a fear around talking about the plight of gay men. This derived from the notion that the very mention of homosexuality infers homosexuality. Discussions of homophobia and sexual orientation discrimination are, again from these accounts, yet to become fully possible. The next section will explore how conditions of the possibility relating to sexual identity diversity in football are affected by the impact of prejudice.

7.3 Prejudice

The discourse of prejudice was drawn upon most prevalently when participants spoke about marginalised individuals within already minority groups. For example, Joel explained that the actual diversity of sexual identities on his LGBT team was restricted, particularly when it came to the involvement of women or trans men:

‘Sometimes they do start on our trans guy, you know, ‘what’s he doing playing for us?’ You do hear it, not so much about bisexuality, but there are certain players on the team who, sort of, like... I mean, women can play on the team if they want to... but there are certain players who will try and encourage that not to happen. We’ve all got our prejudices.’
(Joel: Interview 1)

Even within women’s football, it appeared that some participants harboured prejudices for the women they identified as being ‘butch’. Beth drew upon a discourse of youth in connection with the notions of misunderstanding and naivety to illustrate that this kind of fear concerning lesbianism was down to a lack of worldly experience: ‘if you get a young team with all the girls, sometimes the younger girls are a bit more wary of certain teams, if they’re really, like, butch and stuff like that. But I guess it’s just naivety’ (Beth: Interview 6). Maya herself expressed a wariness of ‘out’ lesbians that she identified as being butch:

‘this one particular football club... like they’re really kind of... they’re kind of butch... if I’m allowed to use that term... like masculine and stuff like that and you just don’t talk to them. Just stay away from them... they’ve got that... the lesbian vibe, what’s the correct term for it? But you feel intimidated... you’re like ‘stay away from me.’

(Maya: Interview 4)

From the interview discussion it appeared that Maya felt different from those women and so felt intimidated because she did not identify with them, even though they all identified as ‘liking girls’. She drew upon discourses of masculinity and lesbianism in a way that depicted those women as unapproachable because they seemed masculine, meaning their collective ‘vibe’ was formidable and to her, somewhat daunting. Here we see how certain language choices can have inadvertently othering effects. Maya, it appeared to me, did not mean to be homophobic by drawing on these discourses. However, it happens to be the case that constructing masculine-appearing women in this way has an othering effect on them, which in turn perpetuates this kind of prejudicial misconception.

On the topic of butch identity, Dean drew upon the discourse of prejudice to illustrate how homophobia – towards female bodybuilders – was not always a problem, as female bodybuilders were accepted by the male athletes if they were indeed lesbian. However, there was a different issue of transphobia, Dean explained, with regards to the very notion that male bodybuilders would engage in sexual relationships with female bodybuilders. This was because the act of dating a masculine woman would raise a question mark above their heterosexuality:

‘that kind of banter is very accepted in the gym, to hear big butch bodybuilders in my gym talking about big butch women having girlfriends, is totally acceptable... It’s sort of a horrible point. It’s because these big butch male bodybuilders would never, ever,

accept a straight man to be dating a bodybuilding woman. It's almost like, 'no, that can't be right'.

(Dean: Interview 3)

A key finding within my research is, therefore, that sexual identity-based and gender identity-based phobias take many forms. With Dean's example above, heterosexual relationships between bodybuilding men and women are frowned upon because from the perspective of male machismo such attractions are debatably heterosexual if both parties are masculine-appearing.

As a reflexive note, I should state here that with particular respect to Maya's expression of fear of 'butch' lesbians, I cannot claim to know what she *meant* by what she said. Indeed, this is the case for all of my interpretations of all of my participants' accounts. There are always multiple meanings within language choices and sometimes conflicting meanings can exist in tandem (the 'multivoicedness of language', Parker (1992)). Also, my perspective on entering into the interview with Maya was to try and sympathise with her voice and refrain from any kind of argument with her. She felt that she had been othered, but she also felt that homophobia was intrinsically wrong, so I took her anecdotal expressions of a fear to be well-intended and not meaningfully prejudicial. Maya stated that she felt intimidated, which left her feeling othered, too. Significant for my research, however, is the point that unintentional prejudices can have discriminatory effects. In Maya's case, the adoption of masculinity discourse served to construct the masculine-appearing lesbians on her opposing team as domineering and to be avoided, hence the exclusionary impact.

An important analytical note here is that many participants expressed prejudicial beliefs without seeming to intend upon being discriminatory. There is a running theme throughout this analysis that exclusionary practices are based upon misconceptions of othered individuals and missing understandings pertaining to othered individuals or groups that would otherwise catalyse their inclusion/s if only they were present. In terms of my participants' data, these exclusions seemed to affect butch, bisexual and heterosexual identities the most in women's football, and transgender identities and females in mixed-LGBT football. Again, the sample size of this study is too small to make any substantial claims to generalizability, although these issues are points of interest and would benefit from further exploration in future research.

7.4 Broader discourses – Gender

Although many participants made reference to gendered issues of sexual orientation discrimination, four participants drew directly on the discourse of gender when explaining incidences of homophobia. Gabrielle drew upon discourses of prejudice, stigma and child abuse

to illustrate an example of how women she has known have had their appropriateness for teaching positions questioned – within girls' high schools – on the basis of their lesbian identities:

'for me it's further complicated by how that, how those prejudices and stereotypes might manifest themselves, um, and the sorts of things I'm talking about are particularly on the women's side... where a club wouldn't appoint a female coach if they knew she was a lesbian. Particularly if there's young women involved. Then there's this... "What's she about? What's her behaviour like? Are they going to be appropriate? Are they going to be predatory?"' (Gabrielle: Interview 11)

In this way, homophobia operates by undermining those women's access to professional positions through the stigmatization of their sexual orientations which is achieved by the uptake of the predator-prey discourse of lesbianism. Another cross-over between gender orientation discrimination and sexual orientation discrimination was talked into existence by Natalie and Karina. Both participants drew upon discourses of female masculinity and stigmatized butch lesbian identity to demonstrate how, in their experiences, women had been undermined by the use of a gender question mark. That is to say, that when female footballers had shown particular skill or aptitude for the sport, those wishing to undermine them had suggested that their skill was due to their masculinity and not their talent. Natalie drew upon discourses of masculinity and hyper-femininity to illustrate her point, that a great deal of the homophobic judgments levied against female footballers are done so on the basis of their appearance:

'It's a lot easier to spot a gay female in sport... when I say that, I mean according to stereotypes of what a gay female looks like, with the muscles and the bulk and that kind of thing. And if you're not fitting into that pretty, tennis player, swimmer's, netball player's physique then you could be A) gay, B) bi or C) actually maybe a man. That's definitely in there.' (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 12)

Karina raised a similar sport cultural association, that being the stigmatized link between male of female athlete subject positions, by drawing on masculinity discourse and the notion of subversion: 'they want to take that away from you in certain respects, like you can't get it back, 'cause you're not a man. You have masculine features, therefore that's probably why you're good at this sport. It's not because you're capable of being one (a footballer)' (Karina: Interview 5). Karina also drew upon the discourse of homophobia during her interview when explaining how competitors from other teams have used homophobic language against her when she has demonstrated such aptitude: 'I know on other teams, you get a bit of abuse if... say you went in hard on a tackle and someone stood up and was like, 'you're such a dyke', or whatever, you know' (Karina: Interview 5). It would appear from these examples that homophobic slurs that undermine women football players are still considered sayable within the game. On the

converse, the idea that females can be *naturally good* at traditionally masculine team sports still seems to be less sayable and is less prevalent as a result. Interestingly, in terms of players' responses to derogatory terms of this nature, Karina predicted the exhibition of nonchalance: 'it's not... the people that are in the category, so to speak, probably if it was said would just be like, 'don't care, it's just a joke' and they'd take it... you know, take it on the chin' (Karina: Interview 5).

In this way, homophobia and gender orientation discrimination operate together to maintain the marginalised status of women's football. Indeed, Tom added that even though supporters knew they were watching a mixed team play, when they attended his LGBT side's matches, they nevertheless expressed some astonishment at the involvement of women on the team: 'I don't know if they know it's a gay team they're watching. They're surprised when they see girls playing, but we're allowed mixed teams, so that's always a surprise for the supporters' (Tom: Interview 2). Once more, further research would need to be conducted in order to gain more perspective on this issue, and to know where the resources are most needed to contend with this apparent overlap between gender orientation/sexual orientation discrimination in football. The next section focuses on the need for educational resources within sport culture to eliminate practices of exclusion that are based upon perceptions of sexual identity.

7.5 Education: It's okay to be gay

Homophobia was constructed by many participants as being a problem based on a lack of positive 'out' gay role models. However, participants also realised the need for educational resources to be introduced into the culture of football, as it would not be fair to ask one sole candidate to step forward as the only 'out' gay professional footballer before those safety nets were in place. Five participants drew upon education discourse when speaking about the future of football and indeed how to make it a safer environment for non-heterosexual players to 'come out' as such if they so wished. Gabrielle suggested that an initiative known as League Football Education would help somewhat in paving the way forward, in that she was able to go into clubs and offer training and advice with respect to their anti-bullying and positive language policies. Drawing upon discourses of equality, youth and language, she framed the problem of homophobia as being part due to traditional heteronormative expectations that she felt had been projected onto youth and that needed to be replaced with language that instead opened up the opportunity for sexual identity diversity:

'where's the lead from the top, in the club? Who's saying that homophobic abuse is unacceptable? Who's stressing the culture that is okay to be gay in football, you know?

What are the coaches doing in the academies and centres of excellence, to support young gay players coming through the system, because, *without doubt* they'll be in there. What's their language like? Is it always appropriate? Probably not, um... you know, the whole culture there within the club, that has to change.'

(Gabrielle: Interview 11)

Interestingly, she drew upon the overall discourse of sport culture to illustrate how expectations of heterosexual identity were all too pervasive throughout its boundaries and that to move forward, teaching staff, coaches and managers needed to change their approaches to allow for the fact that not every child or teenager in their academies was likely to be heterosexual. Evelyn drew upon similar discourses of homophobia, language and youth to express her view that positive language was indeed crucial for the movement of football culture towards the direction of equality and diversity. She also drew upon bullying discourse, but to illustrate a different point that for the youth of this climate, positive role models with positive messages would be more productive and effectual than negative messages containing anti-bullying sentiments:

'I think there needs to be role models, not necessarily gay people, but role models taking a stand, and saying, "No bullying should be happening. You shouldn't be homophobic." You need that someone, then that's someone to follow, like fifteen year olds think, "Oh, so-and-so famous footballer says it's not right by them, so it's not right by us." They will accept that. Whereas if you get a gay man or a lesbian come out and say, "It's not fair, we shouldn't be bullied", it's a bit... I think they'll just get laughed at, by teenage boys.'

(Evelyn: Interview 8)

Natalie drew upon discourses of the family and the media to make a similar point to that made by Gabrielle concerning traditional expectations of heterosexuality and the culture of sport: 'I think it's going to be a big challenge, because people fear what they don't know about. Only when taught about it through professionals in the media is it going to be less of a shock when little Timmy in the under 12's suddenly one day goes... (laughs) 'Yeah, actually, I might be gay, Dad'' (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 13). The language of diversity has an impact, therefore, upon the possibility for new foundations to be built within sport culture that will allow for the possibility of non-heterosexual footballers to be able to disclose their identities in future leagues. Many participants drew upon equalities discourse and education to assert that new messages of sexual diversity needed to replace the old constructs of heteronormativity to take precedence and dictate the *new culture* of sport, which they suggested would be based upon a new discourse of sexuality, that being 'it's okay to be gay' (Samantha: Interview 9).

Significantly, from these examples, we can see how participants believed that othering was endemic within sport culture, so much so that this change in language would need to occur from the ground up, so to speak, because negative, homophobic language had long been an

aspect of youth sport culture, as well. Participants felt that positive change *could* be possible if the professional centres of excellence and youth academies chose to adopt less heteronormative perspectives and adopt more positive viewpoints – that is to say, those understandings pertaining to the *actual* range, rather than the expected range, of youths' sexual identities under their care. Many participants drew upon discourses of power, with respect the practicalities of bringing these positive changes about and these will be dealt with in the next section.

7.6 Power and the media

The discourses of power and the media have been joined together under this section because many of the participants drew upon them in conjunction with one another. In particular, they were drawn upon with regards to the workings of homophobia within sports journalism and broadcasting, in terms of and how invisible non-heterosexual players still remained in football culture. Natalie drew upon media discourse to illustrate how she felt the choices of heteronormative language in various forms of television-based media served to influence people's expectations of footballers' relationship choices and identities. Of course, these choices, to focus solely upon heterosexual aspects of players' lives had an othering effect on those who did not meet such pre-requisites, making it more difficult for them to be open:

'But it's... in women's football, they highlight the good straight girls, and it's all, "Oh she's taking a year out to have a baby", kind of comments. Um... and it's difficult, I think, for women in football to start coming out, as difficult as it is for men in football to start coming out.'

(Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 13)

A number of participants raised the issue of visibility and press coverage. Ellie drew upon the discourse of society along with the notion of taboo to explain what seemed like the sporting media's reluctance to grant visibility to the issue of homosexual invisibility: 'I think society and sport do parallel each other entirely. But when it comes to sport, because sport is so media highlighted, I think it's... the taboo is higher within sport' (Ellie: Interview 10). Maya made a similar point that the influence of the media was going to be crucial for move towards sexual orientation equality, given the world-wide audience of football. Beth also drew upon the discourse of hyper-femininity, in much the same way as Natalie did in the above example, to explain how the gaining prominence within the sporting media would be two-fold for the women's game – female footballers are oftentimes expected to be lesbian and therefore come under additional pressures to present themselves in heterosexual ways: 'I guess the media is always going to come in. Like if women's football wanted a better sort of image and everyone

thinks it's all gay, I guess there's a bit of pressure. They all... they're all make-upped with slicked hair' (Beth: Interview 6). Ellie drew upon similar discourses of heterosexuality and hyper-femininity to illustrate this point: 'say like for an FA cup women's final, they'll have kids with them that aren't their kids, but just to kind of show towards the media that they're not (gay), and little things like that' (Ellie: Interview 10).

Participants inadvertently drew upon power discourse when speaking about the media's influence and apparent capacity to perpetuate heteronormative ideals that have homophobic effects. Joel drew upon media discourse in conjunction with the issue of chanting to show how supporters of some teams were drawing upon pejorative discourses of HIV/AIDS to attack individuals, en masse, on opposing teams. His concern, however, was that these incidences of homophobia were too often de-politicized within the broader media, through journalists' collective adoption of racial or 'hate crime' discourses *over* homophobia discourse:

'It's not even given press coverage... I mean, one player had the worst abuse for a whole game, stuff like, 'hope you die of AIDS', and 'hope you die of HIV', really sort of bad, gay-directed abuse, and in the news it was just 'such-and-such amount of people have been arrested for racial abuse'. Well... you're being as bad as them. You're being homophobic by not talking about it.'

(Joel: Interview 1)

Indeed, Joel's point is significant because one of the most important conditions needed – for non-heterosexual players to feel able to 'come out' in football – is arguably the very discussion of their rights to 'come out', to be accepted and, of course, to be protected. Many participants believed that the power held within the media was considerable, and that the impact of supporters' responses to the onset of non-heterosexual disclosures was not to be underestimated.

Supporters and organizations

Many participants made reference to the mobilisation of fear throughout football culture, and the powerful influence exerted by the culture of the terraces, where homophobic abuse was commonplace and in some cases considered acceptable. Gabrielle drew upon a discourse of politics to illustrate how her sporting organization's responses to discrimination and hate crime in football were stratified, in order of perceived importance. Homophobia, however, was considered to be less of a priority than racism:

'But because there haven't been out players in football, it's kind of not been such a big issue, it's only much more recently that spectators have said, "This isn't good enough; this abuse is uncomfortable"... and it mainly came from political lobbying groups. That's where the drive for change came from because clearly, I was working down a shopping list of priorities, and at the bottom of it was homophobia.'

(Gabrielle: Interview 11)

Gabrielle made an interesting point here that the 'drive for change' came mostly from political groups, and not so much from the population of the terraces. Joel made a similar point concerning the power and influence of the spectators: 'I think it's the people that watch football that control it. I think it's the supporters that dictate ... how people represent themselves' (Joel: Interview 1). Tom added that the problem of abuse from the spectator community was more diverse than that pertaining to just the professional leagues – there was also the problem of homophobic chanting at grass-roots level, where punitive responses to such bullying were non-existent: 'At that level, there's no stewarding there to throw you out of the match, you're just on the side of a park on a Sunday, you know?' (Tom: Interview 2).

Other participants drew upon the discourse of homophobia in connection with that of politics to explain how the hierarchical nature of punitive responses, from the sporting bodies towards the terraces, meant that homophobia would be dealt with to some extent but only in niche areas of the game. For example, Natalie made reference to the 'Kick Racism out of football' campaign: 'I know that the 'Kick Racism' is actually an equality campaign that tries to deal with homophobia, but very silently and very exclusively to gay leagues and lesbian leagues... In mainstream football, they don't have anything to latch onto' (Appendix D: Interview 7, p. 12). In this way, Natalie felt that homophobic bullying was continuing *despite* the campaign because neither the breadth of scale nor the comprehensiveness of anti-homophobia measures was in place to ensure its effectiveness. Samantha made a similar point, that sporting bodies did have some positive ideas for pro-diversity change, but that these were not yet filtering through to the powerful individuals who would be able to initiate such changes:

'And that's happening... you're getting more... people are getting educated. So you are getting the physiotherapists, the sport scientists, but the people that actually control those environments, managers and the coaching staff, actually they don't have those view points and what they say goes.' (Samantha: Interview 9)

Tom made reference to the same campaign, and raised the same question of its usefulness for challenging homophobia, when homophobia was seen both as a taboo topic and also as less of a priority within top-level football culture: 'Players warm up with their 'Kick racism out of football' t-shirts. Now, could they get a player, or a team to wear 'Kick homophobia out of football' t-shirts?' (Tom: Interview 2). In addition to politics discourse, Ellie drew upon equalities discourse to explain the workings of taboo and its impact upon the silence surrounding homophobia within sporting media and managerial structures:

'I think you actually need to take the flooding approach and be like, 'this is it!' It's here in society, it's here in football', like, 'stop hiding away from it, just deal with it', kind of

thing... I think gradually it will get better. But the whole time everyone's tiptoeing around and scared and walking on egg shells, they can't do anything about it.'

(Ellie: Interview 10)

There was a real sense from the participants that it was time to move on, away from heteronormative structures, taboo and silence, towards openness, sexual orientation diversity and cultural acceptance of minorities. Gabrielle drew upon legal discourse to frame the issue of cultural protection of non-heterosexual minorities as a human rights issue: 'the club is a place of work... sometimes people need, um, a kick... and the legal challenge is a good kick. Once they start to, it's going to have to be somebody pretty brave, to stand up to the club and go, "You're not protecting me from harassment"' (Gabrielle: Interview 11). Joel also drew upon legal discourse to illustrate how a sea-change in football culture was now possible: 'Well, years ago, you'd have got strung up! The law's on our side now' (Joel: Interview 1). All in all, these participants believed that the culture of sport was largely dictated by that of the terraces and that the conditions needed to make non-heterosexual disclosures possible and indeed homophobic bullying obsolete would need to be carefully dealt with there. To combat homophobia on such a large scale, however, the problem would need to be confronted on a much broader scale, through the effective collaboration of sporting bodies with sports journalists and the wider popular media, not to mention teaching, coaching and managerial staff members in positions of prominence within the sporting structures themselves. On the topic of the way in which football is structured, some participants drew upon the discourse of traditional masculinity to explain how the problem of homophobia was further complicated by cultural ideals of machismo. These examples will be discussed in the next section.

7.7 Traditional masculinity

Masculinity discourse was directly drawn upon with respect to the workings of homophobic practices in sport by five of the participants. Speaking about the macho nature of bodybuilding gym-culture, Dean drew upon this discourse to show how perceptions of masculinity can be shaped by sexual identity, and indeed, how a man's weakness or strength can be judged on the grounds of his sexual conventionality:

'I think your real man's man is afraid of being approached by another man, almost like it's a weakness, not a flattery, you know? If you're appealing to both sexes, that is a weakness, that, 'hang on a minute, am I not man enough to be appealing enough to women that I'm being approached by men?... Why is there that relationship? And so a big man is strong, but then a big unconventional sexual man is weak.'

(Dean: Interview 3)

Here, Dean drew upon heteronormative discourses of sexuality and masculinity to illustrate the apparent contradictory – and exclusionary – connection between perceptions of bodily strength and sexual weakness. A homosexual man could be the heaviest weight-lifter in his gym, but would risk being perceived as the weakest if his sexual orientation were to become common knowledge. Pervasive notions of traditional masculinity serve, in Dean’s experience, to restrict the possibility of homosexuality being associated with strength, and hence, when perceptions of strength are crucial to a sport, non-heterosexual identities are kept hidden.

Joel drew upon a discourse of traditional British identity in conjunction with traditional masculinity to make a similar point about football culture: ‘We’re white, we shag birds. You know, essentially that’s my experience, in my life has been that, you know, if you want to have gay sex then fine, just don’t talk about it’ (Joel: Interview 1). Here he made a connection between both traditions: the cultural imperative for footballers to satisfy certain standards of machismo, involving claims to sexually prolific behaviour involving women. As Dean stated, through this cultural lens, a ‘man’s man’ is only perceived as such if he is attractive to women. Karina also drew upon the discourse of traditional masculinity to show how it served to reinforce constructions of the ‘man’s man’ as tough and heterosexual:

‘You have to be hard, you have to be a man, and there’s the stigma if you’re gay or bisexual, they’re kind of... you’re a ‘poof’ so to speak and I think... So in men’s football, it’d be a lot harder to ‘come out’ than it is in women’s football. I mean, I don’t, in the men’s football team here I don’t know anyone who’s gay.’ (Karina: Interview 5)

These kinds of constructions appear to be *dependent* upon traditional notions of heterosexuality. Tom suggested that such associations served to subjugate non-heterosexual football players because they reinforced the erroneous notion that only heterosexual men were proficient at football. He believed that this would change if a well acclaimed professional footballer ‘came out’ at the height of his career:

‘If an International captain came out and said, ‘I’m a gay man’, you wouldn’t be able to write him off the same as up some lower league player. He’s right there, a really good player. If he came out as gay or bisexual, people would have to think, ‘Gay people can play’, you know what I mean?’ (Tom: Interview 2)

Participants believed that the ‘laddish’, tradition-based, masculine culture of sport had a prohibitive effect on the involvement of LGBT players in men’s mainstream leagues. Samantha gave one example of a homosexual player on a professional football team who had felt the need to segregate himself from the others. She drew upon a discourse of homoeroticism to explain why he had opted for such separation, namely because he feared his sexual identity would

render him conspicuous or vulnerable during the homoerotic behaviours of his team's locker room practices:

'I think there are other gay guys in clubs and stuff like that. I know one of them doesn't change with the rest of the guys... The whole culture's slapping each other on the ass and sort of, I don't know, you're matey, matey...you get in the showers together... I think it would be extremely difficult, yeah.' (Samantha: Interview 9)

Dean also drew upon the discourse of homoeroticism when speaking about homophobia in bodybuilding. He stated that because homosexuality was seen as an 'imperfection' in such a masculine environment, nobody wanted to talk about or acknowledge the homoerotic nature of the gym culture's practices – for example, the inherent admiration involved in judging another man's physique: 'it's almost like they don't want to tarnish what they're trying to achieve' (Dean: Interview 3). Dean's point was that acknowledgements of homoeroticism within the gym would only undermine the masculine nature of the sport, and thus raise question marks around bodybuilding as a *heterosexual sport*. In the aforementioned accounts, a similar link presented itself between the masculine nature of football and its cultural status as a heterosexual sport. In the next section, I will explore discourses of culture and homophobia in more depth.

7.8 Culture

Overall, participants drew upon several different discourses when linking homophobia with the broader British culture. Some drew upon the discourse of the family and others drew upon class and generational discourses when speaking of the range of ways in which homophobic practices manifested themselves. For example, Samantha spoke about the influences of socio-economic backgrounds and parental attitudes towards the gay community when explaining the kinds of homophobic attitudes she had encountered in her profession (which was working with professional footballers). Drawing on discourses of class and the family she demonstrated how many factors were contributing to the persistence of homophobia in men's football culture:

'I work in the top leagues okay, so like the clubs that I go into, it's just like a male environment. And to be accepting of that kind of thing is hugely difficult, you know? The fact that they're so close minded, some of the people... not because they mean to be, but mainly because of their social upbringing and the fact that they've always played in a male environment and their dads were very macho.' (Samantha: Interview 9)

George also shaped the persistence of homophobia in sport as being due to the combination of traditional family values and parental conceptions of homosexuality. He drew upon discourses of generational change and traditional masculinity to illustrate his point: 'it would take a lot to change the whole terraces, just because of how it was back in the olden days. And then you'd be kids growing up with their dads going to football matches and just carrying on with all that,

which is quite a big issue really' (George: Interview 13). Many participants believed that homophobia was going to have to be challenged across several parameters, each of which had their own dynamics and ingrained prejudices. Indeed, Maya drew upon discourses of class, youth, the family and generational change to highlight the interplay of these differing demographics:

'Whereas you've got families who have kids and stuff like that, they're most probably likely to want their kids to not be gay... 'cause you've got other different kinds of categories as well. You've got the older generation, you've got the working class, and you've got the kids and stuff like that and it's just something that they might not be ready for.'

(Maya: Interview 4)

The challenge of eradicating homophobia was posited by these interviewees as requiring more time, to allow for further generational change. Sexual identity diversity in football was seen as possible but as a future development to be achieved in generations to come. Evelyn drew upon discourses of youth, the family and homophobia when speaking about the kinds of cultural changes that would need to occur in order to eliminate homophobic attitudes from future generations of footballers:

'I think you need to change the attitudes at a young age, and also make people realise that it shouldn't be happening. I think they should target middle age people, people that are raising their children. They're raising them with the belief that gays and lesbians shouldn't be in sport, or there are no gay men in the Premiership.'

(Evelyn: Interview 8)

Evelyn made a significant point that the traditional discourses of homosexuality most drawn upon by families, whose belief systems centred around traditional and heteronormative conceptions of ideal athletes, were serving to exclude LGBT football players, even at a conceptual level – 'there are no gay men' because the discussion on gay men in the Premier league is not traditionally had. Joel made a similar argument that traditional values only served to uphold archaic and misrepresentative depictions of ideal athletes. This in turn decreased LGBT visibility in the game:

'sport, by its very definition, is about being the best. And, God forbid we could have a black, Jewish lesbian being the best at something, then that undermines the majority, then. We want our Aryan male, working class, fits every mould, because he's the perfect mould of what we want our sportsmen to be.'

(Joel: Interview 1)

George drew upon the discourse of sport history to illustrate how homophobia had been an actual part of football's development over the years. His point was that sport is homophobic in nature and that this was why football's problem of homophobia was persisting: 'it is still sport and sport in general, I guess... homophobia is a big... it's still there. Just how it's come through

sport and how sport has been developed' (George: Interview 13). Aaron drew upon the discourses of hooliganism and binge-drinking culture to explain why he felt homophobia was still so intrinsic to the sport: 'I think it's just the society that we live in... everyone's trying to be l, and then everyone's trying to use other people's weakness to try and beat them, or whatever. I mean, it's just the world, that's just how it is' (Aaron: Interview 12). George and Aaron both intimated that there was something inevitable about the existence of persecution – on the basis of homosexual identity as a kind of weakness, as Dean also stated – within football culture. Add to that the impact of binge-drinking culture within the already laddish culture of the terraces and there arises an exacerbated issue of homophobic language and abuse. Aaron believed that alcohol confounded the issue because there was every possibility that drunken supporters would not harbour homophobic views nor add their voices to homophobic chants if they were otherwise sober. The issue was not necessarily one of a culturally phobic fear of gay men and lesbians, as Gabrielle asserted earlier in this chapter – the issue was instead framed as being characterised by a readiness to draw upon homophobic language in order to undermine the opposition through abusive behaviour:

'I mean, um... when you talk about sports, especially in the Premiership, you always see the hooligans, the drunken people. So... sometimes they might *act*, but it's not actually *them*.'

(Aaron: Interview 12)

Homophobic slurs appeared to function, from these accounts, as a set of daggers that were currently nearest to throw. Participants drew upon several discourses relating to broader cultural institutions, such as the family and British identity, to show how homophobic practices were oftentimes mixed in with these other formidable value systems and traditions. Hence, the task of combating homophobia in football culture would be tantamount to tackling all the various vestiges of homophobia throughout the rest of British culture.

7.9 Answering the second analysis question

'How does homophobia operate in the context of sport?'

Within the culture of sport, homophobia appears to operate in a range of ways, through the mobilisation of a variety of discourses, and seemingly in conjunction with a set of historically powerful institutions. The discourse of traditional masculinity, for example, functions to construct the notion of the ideal athlete as a heterosexual male. Along with the discourse of traditional femininity, this construction effects two potent marginalizations: female athletes who are subjugated through the utilisation of homophobic discourses that undermine their

proficiency and very presence within sport; and non-heterosexuals whose abilities to disclose their sexual identities and relationship preferences are restricted by both practices of bantering and bullying. In direct contrast to bisexuality which seems to operate in a peripheral capacity, homophobia operates in a far more central capacity. The language of homophobia is a constituent part of spectator culture, and the language of heteronormativity is endemic within both sports journalism and the media's representations of footballers.

In much the same way as the findings from the bisexual identity half of this chapter, practices of bantering and bullying have simultaneously inclusive and exclusionary effects. The workings of prejudice appear to operate in a reinforcing capacity perpetuating stigmas around, and misconceptions of, non-heterosexual identities. Homophobia appears to operate in simultaneously overt and covert ways. Sometimes homophobic abuse presents itself as a derogatory HIV-based chant; other times it presents itself in a more ambiguous fashion, especially when coupled with gender discrimination in the women's game, or with trans-phobia in the LGBT leagues. Phobias take many forms in football and thus, so do practices of exclusion. Powerful institutions of the family and of traditional, generational ideologies go a long way in further shaping the accepted ideal of a football player as that of a heterosexual male. Participants mostly drew upon discourses of abuse, discrimination and in some cases suicide, when speaking about the possibility of gay players 'coming out' within the men's professional leagues. This is a sobering reminder of the level of fear currently surrounding the very thought of male non-heterosexual disclosures.

The challenge facing sporting bodies now is the quandary of how to create new resources that will contend with homophobia in these many manifestations, and within all of these arenas. One positive way forward, however, would be the adoption of positive language policies within sporting organizations, schools and centres of excellence. Such establishments could effectively introduce new discourses into mainstream arenas – those pertaining to diversity, equality and sexuality. Future generations of youths in sporting academies could then be raised with the understanding that non-heterosexual players are present and indeed belong within football. The progressive sexual identity discourses which advocate that it is 'okay to be gay' could help to transform the problem of the fear-induced closet, helping future LGBT footballers to 'come out' whilst they are still playing football. Homophobia arguably operates in this kind of central capacity because, arguably, these progressive discourses are not yet prevalent enough to offer any salient competition for the contention of tradition-based discourses. Thus, discursive practices which utilise the traditional discourses have othering and exclusionary effects.

7.10 Summary

This chapter has presented an analysis of the findings pertaining to homophobia and how I have interpreted its operation within sport culture. The findings were presented in groups, again, that followed a theme in terms of their social impact. Discourses relating directly to sexual identity were sub-divided into three groups: banter/bullying; 'coming out' and the closet; and prejudice. The broader discourses were sub-divided into four groups: gender; education; power and the media; traditional masculinity; and culture. The key finding here was that homophobia 'operated' in quite a central capacity within the sport cultures I studied. Both in the men's and women's leagues, participants felt that homophobia created something of an oppressive atmosphere, so much so that the climate was not currently conducive to public disclosures of non-heterosexuality. The next stage of this thesis, Chapter 8, will discuss these findings in terms of their interrelations with the literature published on these topics within the sports sociological field.

Chapter 8: Discussion of Findings

8.0 Introduction

The following section will discuss how my findings help to develop the critique on existing theorisations of bisexuality and biphobia in sport. This section shall also evaluate the usefulness of a Foucauldian/Queer/Post-structuralist approach for the study of sensitive, sexuality-based topics. In doing so, I shall also address the broader implications for theory, methodology and policy in the sport sociological field.

8.1 New theorisations of bisexuality in sport

In light of my analysis, I would recommend the adoption of a Queer/Post-structuralist lens through which to explore further research into bisexuality. I found the Queer analytical tool of de Lauretis' 'problematic protocols' to be very useful when investigating the workings of in/exclusionary practices within sport culture. Her focus on discursive protocols – and the movement of relationship descriptors in recent culture, for example, from 'husband' to 'partner' – offered me a pragmatic way of identifying new positions, such as 'I like girls' and 'I'm just in love'. In these ways I could track elements of transgression and resistance to these old protocols and could analyse how certain discourses mobilized these freedoms. In addition, the element of Post-structuralist theory allowed me to further explore these discursive circumventions by analysing the discourses that facilitated the status quo. Binary discourses of sexual identity mobilized normative understandings but also the taken-for-granted nature of the imperative-to-choose-practices that accompanied them. As Lloyd (2005, p. 112) asserts, a feminist, Post-structuralist framework helps to analyse 'what counts and what does not' and my findings suggest that queer/fluid/bisexual identities are still struggling to 'count' even within LGBT-friendly sporting spaces.

The range of sexual identity conceptualisations expressed in my interviews absolutely supports Alfred Kinsey's notion that 'It is fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories' (1948, p. 639). Many participants expressed frustration (with sport culture but also on a broader cultural level) with the practice involving the imperative-to-choose a binary identity. The cultural treatment of bisexuality and all other non-normative/non-binary identities appeared not to have changed since the 1970's. Participants' frustration at the lack of legitimacy and visibility pertaining to non-normative sexualities also supported Klein's assertion that 'a threat is best dealt with if it is dismissable' (1978, p. 9). My analyses indicated that the lack of alternative, non-traditional and Queer discourses available to draw upon in footballing

culture meant that only the traditional discursive formations remained, perpetuating the silence around bisexuality. This finding also supports Fox's (1995) research whereby he theorized several experiential difficulties particular to the treatment of bisexuality in society, namely the sense of isolation caused by a lack of visible community and the feeling of alienation – from both the mainstream and LGBT subcultures – resulting from the 'predominance of a polarized view of sexual orientation' (1995, p. 72). Indeed, both the views expressed and the discourses elicited from the analysis both supported Hemmings (1993) theory that bisexuals represent an othered community within an already othered community. My research adds to existing research by suggesting that bisexuals are something of a *constant other*, in both mainstream and LGBT contexts.

The inability of participants' to openly express sexual identity fluidity supports Troiden's (1988) theory that bisexuality is difficult to validate. Expressions of bisexual preferences are seldom fully believed possible and therefore not taken as seriously as hetero/homosexual identities. At the time of Troiden's research in the 1980's traditional discourses such as heteronormativity and familism were so powerful that an ability to show multiple preferences at one time was considered nigh on impossible. The findings of my research suggest that little appears to have changed since the 1980's with regards to the ability of bisexuals to authenticate and validate their identities. On the one hand, this appears to be due to the absence of queer discourses in colloquial dialogue that would facilitate the discussion of bisexuality as both genuine and possible. On the other hand, in LGBT-friendly football contexts this appears to be more symptomatic of a political power struggle within those spaces as opposed to the repercussions of missing alternative understandings. This finding supports Rust (2000)'s theorisation that bisexual identities fall victim to the workings of 'intraminority relations', whereby exclusively lesbian and gay identities have greater access to political capital than queer, fluid and bisexual identities.

Stigmatizations revolving around the perceived lack of political conviction were reported by several of the bisexual or non-label identifying individuals in this study. This finding was one of the most notable given that within this context – women's football, which is usually a lesbian-friendly space (Caudwell's theory of 'dykespaces') – the discourses available to explain same-sex attraction were present but not as prevalently drawn upon, in favour of more traditional and normative discourses of binary identity. Such conceptualisations of dichotomous sexuality effectively supported the stratified political hierarchy within those teams, with the 'one hundred carat gold' lesbians, in some instances, occupying powerful organizational positions

with those who couldn't 'make up their minds' feeling pushed to the periphery. This finding very much supports Barker's (2007) research that such binary conceptualisations of sexuality function to further silence and devalue bisexuality by placing it in a 'fence-sitting' position: its transient state amounts to nothing more than a 'phase en route to a mature heterosexual or homosexual identity' (2007, p. 112). The imperative to choose an identity was one of the main exclusionary practices identified in this research, but simultaneously one of the only mechanisms available to attain an *included* position within such spaces.

Within the sporting literature on bisexuality and exclusions, these findings also support Broad's (2001) explanation of the 'regimes of normativity' at work in sport culture. However, my findings do not support her results, in that her participants used women's rugby as a site for resistance to such regimes of albeit anti-normativity, whereas the participants in my study expressed a feeling of disempowerment at being unable to resist or circumvent the identity politics in women's football. Broad (2001, p. 194) reported that 'most teams were a blend of women who sometimes identified as lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual'. In my research I found a similar 'blend' of women but not an accompanying ability to *morph* between this range of possible identifications. Women's footballing cultures appear to be far more fixed in terms of their connection between sexual identity and subcultural citizenship. In Broad's rugby studies, athletes could be in constant flux between one identity and another without it affecting their respective placings within the dynamics of the group. In contrast, my findings showed that female footballers were required to choose a discrete sexual identity as a part of their initiations into the social element of the club. From then on, their chosen identities had a direct impact upon inclusion and involvement, with bisexuals, non-labelled and heterosexual individuals experiencing the least involvement in the close-knit 'family' of the club setting.

This finding also supports Caudwell's (2007, p. 188) assertion that 'football spaces are where power is materialised and where women's bodies are controlled and regulated'. The power dynamics in women's football cultures are very complex and interchangeable, but Caudwell's findings indicated that physical bodily appearance was the key vehicle for mobilizing these relations. For example, she found that femme identities were marginalised and butch identities rendered normative, to the exclusion of bisexuals as well as femme-identifying lesbians. My data also support this idea insofar as some participants placed emphasis on the importance of dress-sense and of the assumed ability of being able to spot a lesbian, based upon her fashion sense, if the observer was also a lesbian. Both sets of findings show how dichotomous conceptualisations of sexual identity can directly impact upon how people are ultimately

treated. For example, from my analyses, if a female player's sexuality could be predicted from her initial appearance and then her disclosure matched that stereotype, she automatically attained a higher chance of being accepted into the social group at the core of that football club. On the contrary, if a bisexual, heterosexual or non-labelled player's appearance were to be stereotypically ambiguous she would be unlikely to encounter the same level of access. Understandings of this nature further depict sexual identity as so tangible that it can indeed be spotted, reinforcing the idea that stratifications on the basis of difference are *natural* and therefore the political effects and power imbalances emerging from these segregations are simply par for the course.

Drury's (2011) research into the exclusionary effects of discursive practices within LGBT-friendly sporting spaces is also supported by my findings. In her study, bisexual athletes occupied a 'particularly marginal discursive space' meaning that the language-based resources needed to legitimize bisexual identities were not as readily available as those utilized to normalize binary identities. Anderson and Adam's (2011) research suggests that American collegiate athletes have a new repertoire of cultural resources to draw from when speaking about non-heterosexualities. Now that children are no longer cultured into being homophobic from a young age, there are fewer exclusionary discursive practices at work with regards to non-heterosexual identities in sport. Although this might be the case in American collegiate contexts, my findings do not support Anderson's overall theory that 'inclusive masculinity' dispenses with the hegemonic nature of sporting spaces. My findings suggest that one powerful hierarchy has been replaced by another. The hegemonic masculinity of old, as mobilised through practices of abuse and bullying appears to have been replaced by a new kind of hegemony - sexual normativities that are mobilised through humour, practices of bantering and processes of *inclusion*.

None of the mainstream football players in my research expressed either homophobic or biphobic views of their own and yet all of them expressed doubt that any mainstream male player would 'come out' in the current media environment. Likewise, similar views were expressed by both of the bisexual males in this study who reported having only experienced biphobia in LGBT settings. In contrast, all of the female participants raised the issue of bisexual othering, with many of the non-labelled, heterosexual and bisexual players reporting experiences of marginalisation on the basis that their sexual identities had not sufficiently satisfied the identity pre-requisites needed to enjoy complete inclusion. Of the openly bisexual players interviewed, the majority expressed a sense of apathy at their own inability to change

this status quo and many settled for a peripheral space within their club cultures. To conclude, new masculinities may be more prevalent in today's footballing climate, but they do not necessarily catalyse the proliferation of queer/fluid and bisexual-friendly conceptualisations of sexuality into sporting practices.

From my perspective, this is why the adoption of a Foucauldian theoretical framework can be helpful for the analysis of identity politic dynamics in sport. Through this lens researchers can analyse which discourses mobilize helpful notions of diversity and equality, giving rise to the possibility of sexual orientation fluidity, and which reinforce heteronormative and homo/biphobia giving rise to othering and exclusion. I opted to utilise Foucault's theorisations of 'conditions of possibility' and 'procedures of exclusion' because I felt his analysis of power was more appropriate for the exploration of sexuality than, for example, Bourdieu's. A Marxist analysis of power is arguably steeped in class oppression, where Foucault's analysis is rooted more in the history of sexual oppression and how sexuality has been culturally hijacked as an additional parameter with which to further divide society. However, herein lies one of the main limitations of using a Foucauldian framework to analyse bisexual marginalisation – Foucault's theory is steeped in discourse, which arguably only replaces one 'catch-all' analytical tool with another.

I would suggest that Foucault's theories proffer a helpful framework for the examination of exclusions and indeed the treatment of bisexuality in sport. Analysing the dominant commentary on sexual identity in sport culture is useful for gauging the current zeitgeist with respect to the likelihood of non-heterosexual acceptance, should a footballer decide to disclose his/her identity publically. This helps to inform sporting bodies as to how they should move forward in the development of their educational resources and promotional campaigns. Many participants in my research called for the introduction of a focussed anti-homophobia campaign so that sexual orientation discrimination would no longer be de-politicized under the label of 'hate crime'. Indeed, Foucault's focus on the relationship between language development and the making of new cultural meanings flags an important issue for policy makers and educators alike: the introduction of positive and respectful means of communication, particularly between coaches and young athletes in the youth academies, will ultimately impact on the overall possibility of genuine diversity and inclusion in sport, irrespective of sexual identity. Perhaps then, inclusion will no longer be sexual identity-based and phobic exclusions will no longer be mobilised through bantering or humour. The important link between discourse and practice

could help sport educators to create a new generation of athletes who optimize the conditions of making diversity possible and who enjoy the realisation of equality in future sporting spaces.

For the purposes of my research, the adoption of a Queer/Post-structural and Foucauldian framework has allowed me to map out a new space for non-heterosexual athletes who also experience exclusion on the basis of being simultaneously non-homosexual. Butler's (1993) exploration of the 'constitutive outside' is useful for highlighting how diverse exclusions can be in sport, being that wherever there is a normative majority there is also a marginalised minority, even within minority-friendly sport contexts.

8.2 Broader implications for methodology

In this section I shall discuss how my methodology changed along with the evolution of my research process and how this had an impact on my epistemological standpoint. I shall also discuss how journey arcs of this nature have implications for methodological choices in the field of sensitive sexuality research.

Originally, I had anticipated encountering an epistemic conflict on the basis that the adoption of an identity-category-less theoretical lens might be problematic for the analysis of an identity category, namely bisexuality. I overcame this potential obstacle by harnessing the main element of a Queer project which is to invert and problematize any fixed notions of sexual identity. I chose to combine that with a Foucauldian discourse method of analysis which then sought not only to identify discourses of sexuality and/or fluidity but to illuminate the power relations at work between and amongst them. My overall aim was to investigate which discursive practices concerning sexuality attributed cultural legitimacy to certain identities and second-class sexual citizenship to others. My findings highlighted that although physical violence was reported to be at a minimum in comparison to that of decades prior, athletes identifying with non-normative sexual identities were still not being taken as seriously as their mainstream contemporaries. That being said, an epistemic conflict did arise from my attempts to explain practices of exclusion through a critical lens: I ended up merging this perspective with that of an albeit unintentional empirical lens. The latter happened quite by accident, as I found my epistemological position veering naturally towards interpretivism. I found myself becoming emotionally invested in the analyses and by this I mean that I developed personal identifications with the experiences of the participants, many of which I had encountered in my own life. I found it difficult to step back from the material sufficiently enough to look exclusively for

discourses and subject positions. My interpretations and thus explanations of my analyses were emotionally driven and perhaps not as discourse-based as I had planned for them to be.

In a practical sense, although I initially believed the ‘procedures of exclusion’ analytical tool would provide me with a pragmatic way of exploring exclusions and their discursive movements, I later found at the analysis stage that discourses were not so easy to identify. This was despite my best efforts at identifying them systematically and according to my ‘recipe’. I often felt confused as to what constituted a discourse and how that differed from a *theme*. Take for example, the practice within LGBT contexts of new football players being pressured to choose a binary sexual identity – I honestly became confused as to which was the discourse, i.e. the identity, and which was the practice, and so labelled that entire discursive formation as ‘sexual identity as choice’. I used this terminology to highlight the taken-for-granted nature of the way in which sexual identities were conceptualised as dichotomous in the first place, to illustrate how it would then be taken-for-granted that a new player would naturally adhere to one *end* or the other. Remaining in a state of identity flux was an option but not an entirely accepted one and I found this occurrence very difficult to explain using discourse explanations alone. At times I felt that I was performing a *thematic analysis* and I wondered if I was wearing ‘too many hats’, so to speak. Other times I feared that I wasn’t being ‘Foucauldian enough’. Any qualitative analysis is affected by the researcher’s subjectivity and mine was no exception. In all honesty, the process of carrying out the Foucauldian discourse analysis was personally, as well as academically testing. It was also incredibly time-consuming given the amount of times I felt it necessary to analyze and re-analyze the same interviews, lest I fail to highlight the emerging identity dynamics comprehensively enough.

One could argue on the one hand, that there is nothing wrong with being an advocate when carrying out sensitive research. Arguably, it may even be important for a data analyst to at least have the capacity to relate to or show compassion to the accounts of their participants. Alternatively, their experiences could be dangerously passed off as lacking in humanity and reality. On the other hand, the inability of a data analyst to fully appreciate the political workings of power through discourse could also be problematic, if such a researcher is aiming to make a statement about how any disempowering effects need to improve. Emotions could possibly get in the way of a truly Foucauldian project that seeks to investigate the *political* effects of sexuality binaries, that is if the researcher is too personally invested. Indeed, my shift towards a phenomenological approach happened for a positive reason: I found my interviews to be very therapeutic. Three of my participants commented during the interviews that this

process had either 'been a birth' for them, or indeed something of a counselling session. The epistemological problem with the waxing and waning nature of my interviewer role is twofold: the epistemology of empiricism derives its knowledge solely from the senses, whereas the epistemology of feminist post-structuralism attempts to map out an entirely new sexual economy into the sociological landscape through offering a critique of phallogentrism and heteronormativity. Here lie two different agendas: the former to explore and better understand a new phenomenon (bisexuality in sport); and the latter to examine current sexual economies and power dynamics with respect to the discursive movements of marginalisation.

To illustrate the last point, I firstly refer back to Halley's (1993) work on heteronormativity: the presumed heterogeneity of heterosexuality has, throughout the 1980's and 1990's certainly, had a direct impact on legal frameworks that define the rights of non-heterosexuals in the UK. Homosexuality has classically been defined as the antonym of heterosexuality, rather than by its own community's definitions and terms. Consequently, the heteronormative point of view has been able to predominate as the status quo. This has impacted upon social understandings of what constitutes society, and more recently, the family. Another example is that of phallogentrism – a deconstructionist feminist term used to describe the centralisation of the male point of view within broader cultural frameworks. Manji's (1999) findings indicate that legal frameworks are themselves phallogentric because they serve to reproduce and reinforce the male point of view. As a Third World feminist she suggests that legal frameworks need to work towards 'legal pluralism', particularly in developing world countries where both women's issues and gay sexualities are either under-represented or outlawed altogether. She sites MacKinnon (1989, p. 129) who asserts that this is because 'the state is male in the feminist sense': traditional legal paradigms do not always include a feminine point of view or a non-heterosexual point of view, within the very law-making procedures that govern those cultures.

In terms of the effect this fluidity had upon my perspective and epistemology, I would suggest that these interpretivistic and critical feminist positions are not necessarily incompatible. On the contrary, I would recommend that when a bisexual researcher studies biphobia in an already homophobic arena that they perhaps plan for, or at least allow for, a level of fluidity within their epistemology. When embarking on this research I originally identified as a Post-structuralist Queer theorist, informed by feminism and Foucault. Now, having realised the difficulty of maintaining a standardized Foucauldian stance throughout the interview and analytical stages, I would identify as more of a phenomenologist/empiricist informed by Queer theory, Foucault and Post-structuralism. Again, this is not necessarily problematic for the analyses I managed to

derive but more of a nod in the direction of future research. If I were to repeat this study I would possibly adopt a more empirical approach and use perhaps story-telling techniques as my data collection tools with narrative analyses employed to interpret them.

I would argue also that a slightly shifting epistemology would be perfectly in keeping with a 'truly' Foucauldian project. Foucault himself warned that any epistemology is a regime of power in itself and should be treated with some caution (Foucault in Rabinow, 1991). By this he meant that within each cultural 'regime of truth' is a 'general politics of truth', and the rules that govern the attribution of truth and falsity to discourses of identity in turn affect their abilities to 'function as true' (ibid., pp. 72-73). My standpoint became at once personal and political, but I would argue that this was an important aspect to note as part of my overall reflexivity as a researcher, lest my position be misrepresented as preceding these politics and not being informed by them. Some level of personal investment is therefore not only inevitable, but helpful for critiquing the usefulness of sensitive research areas. It appears to me from my review of the literature on sexuality research that many studies pay homage to certain epistemological standpoints as if to show political solidarity. Normally, research that seeks to highlight the disempowering effects of sexuality or gender politics would be carried out using a theoretical framework of feminism. However, phenomenological research can be equally as useful –if only informed by feminism and Foucault – for the purpose of making a difference to the fields of policy and practice. Research that seeks not to analyse through a critical or political lens can make just as much of a positive political impact once its recommendations have been disseminated into education and government-based publications.

With respect to the data collection method, my choice of semi-structured interviews was justifiable on the grounds that this research was exploring a new topic. A certain amount of steering (hence the use of an interview schedule as opposed to an open interview question) was warranted to keep on topic. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) stipulate that 'the interviewer must shake off self-consciousness, suppress personal opinion, and avoid stereotyping the respondent' in order to avoid compromising their interviewer role. From a discourse analytic point of view this was completely impossible for me because I was inevitably situated within the culture being explored and was myself an active participant in the discursive practices occurring within the interviews. One could argue that although the interviews with the bisexual-identifying athletes became rather personal, in that we exchanged anecdotal information regarding our personal experiences of biphobic othering, the trust built through these exchanges could have enhanced the richness of my data. On the other hand, one could also argue that this represented an

inconsistency in my approach to the interview process because I only disclosed my identity with certain participants and not others, namely those I felt a personal connection with. In hindsight I should perhaps have made a decision prior to my embarking on the process as to whether I would disclose or not, in all cases. This way the influence of my disclosure would presumably have been the same in all cases. However, I would argue that the process of conducting sensitive research is unlikely to ever be so linear and that when carrying out sexual orientation based research, the researcher must satisfy a legal imperative to respect their duty of care: this is not only to their participants but also to themselves. There were times when I did not feel comfortable speaking about myself or my sexual identity and so refrained from doing so because ultimately, that was my prerogative.

One other limitation of the interview technique for the purpose of this study was the complication of insider status. Alldred (1998) would argue that insider status is helpful when conducting sexuality research because the participants can feel understood as well as heard if the interviewer identifies as a member of the LGBT community. I would argue on the one hand that this is true: there were instances when I was interviewing bisexual-identifying athletes where it became obvious that the experiences we had indeed shared were particular to the bisexual community and no other – that being the situation of the double closet and the constant othering caused as a result. It is not necessarily the case that such data would *not* have been garnered had I identified as heterosexual in the interviews. Participants could still have educated me as to the politics of the double closet. However, I do feel that the therapeutic nature of those interviews contributed something extra, a quality that is difficult to describe but at the very least illuminates an important discursive practice in itself – that when bisexuals get together to discuss playing football we immediately end up discussing othering, marginalisation and biphobic discrimination. The personal nature of such interviews did not necessarily compromise the richness or usefulness of the data therefore, as they helped me address my analysis questions and ultimately answer my research question.

The only hindrance I can see having resulted from my insider status was the possibility that participants presumed my advocacy of bisexual rights, even in the absence of my identity disclosure. The very fact that I had chosen to conduct research into bisexuality represented a very strong possibility that I could privately be an activist for bisexual rights. This could have influenced how comfortable certain participants felt in expressing biphobic or borderline biphobic views given that they may not have wanted to upset me (as a probable bisexual). This influence I cannot really account for. I can only reiterate that if I were to repeat this research I

might consider using narrative techniques that explicitly do not require the sexual identity disclosures of either participants or researchers. This would possibly reduce the problem of participant recruitment by removing the politics of disclosure and render a quite official, face-to-face conversation into more of a relaxed and creative story-telling activity. Discourse analyses could still be used with techniques of this nature in order to examine how discourses of gender and sexuality are evolving, and how new understandings are competing with the old. Narrative tools could also contribute to debates concerning the mobilization of power through discourse. According to Carless (2012) stories can illuminate the emergence of new identities and their respective power struggles in ways that protect the political interests of those being studied. This is because 'stories are irreducible: no summary can do the work of the story as the insights that pertain are best expressed through the story itself' (Carless, 2012, p. 620). Future research into bisexuality needs to further explore the issue of cultural legitimization. Researchers can then contribute to the dissemination of new understandings into mainstream sport culture aiding the mobilization of respect, diversity and inclusiveness. The next section will discuss the broader implications for policy development and the dissemination of my data.

8.3 Broader implications for policy and dissemination

On presenting my findings to the Football Association my main recommendation was that they review their policies on the language being currently considered permissible in their youth academies. The participant who worked in equalities management flagged an issue of residual homophobic language still in use within certain educational sport spaces. New policies could be introduced, if they have not been already since our interview, to work towards the reinforcement of positive, inclusive language-use. Perhaps schools within the professional football network could introduce an audit process whereby the use of either gender discriminatory language or homophobic terminology could be scrutinized more carefully. That way the level of monitoring would be more on a par with that of public sector schools. This could possibly spark a sea change in the way youths are spoken to and the ways in which they are encouraged to speak, with normative sexual identities no longer being reinforced as the cultural status quo. Policies that seek to reinforce the use of sex-positive discourses pertaining to diversity and acceptance could well create the foundation upon which educators and coaches could build. A policy change of this nature has the potential to induce cultural change so that in five to ten year's time, an England footballer could disclose their sexual identity without feeling the need to immediately retire from the game. Sporting bodies have a powerful platform from which to advocate on behalf of youths and the professional LGBT players of the future.

Another of my recommendations centred around the centralisation of heterosexuality: in future, coaching staff and general management within sporting institutions could be encouraged to realise that not every teenager is heterosexual, nor is every professional male footballer and that not every professional female footballer is a lesbian. On the topic of non-heterosexual players and the homophobic practices of chanting, my findings support Caudwell's (2011) in that language such as 'does your boyfriend know you're here' was indeed reported, along with other discriminatory gesticulations from spectators on the side-lines. Some participants expressed frustration that the footballing authorities for not better controlling chanting, especially that of an HIV-related nature. Caudwell suggests that chants of a humorous nature 'go unchallenged by the authorities' (2011, p. 128). In the FA's defence, I would say that it is difficult for their policy-makers to legislate around such negativity (albeit that which is often passed off as harmless jocular) because the law in the UK is still blurry on this issue. Bakshi and Lim (2011) assert that hate crime paradigms are diminishing in usefulness because methods of homophobic stigmatization have become more covert, such as those which mobilized marginalisation through humour. A hate motivation is difficult to establish in these cases and new policies need to be developed in order to account for the effects of LGBT-phobic *discursive practices*, such as 'humorous' boyfriend-related chants. These have profound repercussions for the individuals being singled out as the target of them and need to be re-conceptualised as dangerous and unacceptable, irrespective of humorous intent.

Policy of this kind would also have the potential to impact change at a broader level, within the sports media. Many participants expressed frustration at the media's tendency to de-politicize the nature of homophobic chanting and gesticulation by placing reporting such cases under the overall umbrella of 'hate crime'. New policies regarding the outlawing of LGBT-phobic language in football could contribute to the discussion on homophobic spectatorship in general sport culture. This would also contribute to the critique on exclusions in sport which would benefit educators and sports coaches working in educational settings. The very introduction of such a policy-change would provide a forum for discussion in itself and offer a safer arena within which these issues of sexual identity-related in/exclusions could be openly debated.

The findings of this research were disseminated at a meeting in June 2012 with the FA and another meeting is planned subsequent to the completion of this thesis. I also intend to disseminate the findings into three possible academic journals, namely the academic journals *Psychology and Sexualities*; *The Journal of Bisexuality*; and *Sport, Education and Society*. Publishing in these spheres of the field will benefit educators, policy makers, youth workers and

communities, the bisexual community, sport organizational development, critical theory, sexual orientation theory, sport cultural studies and UK discrimination law. At the beginning of each paper I shall be careful to include a statement of my intentions in the introductions. Given that some expressions of biphobic beliefs have emerged from the lesbian-identifying participants in this research I want to make my position clear that I am not lesbiphobic as a result. I have not taken these accounts to heart and my intention is not to misrepresent the lesbian sporting community as inherently biphobic. This would only serve to further reinforce and reproduce homophobia. My intention is altogether more altruistic in that I am presenting accounts from a variety of athletes in order to better explain the workings of phobia: in this case through the particular treatment of bisexuality in sport culture. I do not wish to raise the awareness of bisexual political issues to the detriment of those pertaining to the lesbian community, nor do I wish to attribute blame. Normative/non-normative identity politics are very dynamic, as my results have shown. These dynamics are complicated and particular to each sporting context. Indeed there is a real possibility that there exists somewhere a football club where bisexual-identifying footballers enjoy the most subcultural currency within their team structures, and butch/lesbian identities are marginalised as a result.

8.4 Summary

My findings indicate that inclusionary practices in the context of sport have exclusionary effects, particularly with regards to the inclusion and involvement of bisexual athletes. Bisexuals are often peripheralised as the constant other. When researching marginalised communities I have found that it is wise for emotionally invested researchers to allow for a certain level of epistemological change throughout their process. A shift in epistemological standpoint need not present a conflict for the overall research journey and I would advise that a certain amount of fluctuation be anticipated. I would argue that as long as the research findings benefit the policy-makers or communities they concern, then the positive net effect remains the same. My findings stand to benefit both the UK sporting communities as well as the policy-makers at the FA. New educational resources would benefit from focussing on the eradication of homophobic language from youth sporting spaces, such as youth academies. In addition, educators, coaches and managerial staff would benefit from a new perspective that not every teenager is heterosexual and neither is every professional footballer in the UK. In the next chapter I will expand upon my conclusions and further reflect upon my own personal research journey.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

9.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the main findings of my research and my main contribution to knowledge. In the section on reflections and limitations I shall also offer points of advice for future researchers exploring sensitive topics, along with my recommendations for the development of new research directions in this area.

9.1 Main findings

The main findings of this research were that homophobia plays a central role in football culture where bisexuality occupies only a marginal space in comparison. This is because practices of inclusion are sexual identity-based. Consequently, in mainstream football culture, non-heterosexual identities are stigmatized because practices of inclusion require new players to outwardly identify as heterosexual in order to be accepted at their club's initiation stage. Admittedly, not as many male footballers were interviewed as female, but those who openly identified as gay had at some point felt the need to leave mainstream leagues due to the abuse they encountered and join LGBT-friendly teams. The male interviewees identifying as heterosexual touched upon the inevitability of otherisation suggesting that any male footballer wishing to disclose his non-heterosexual identity in a mainstream league would most certainly encounter homophobia as a result. The overall feeling from the participants was that football is not yet ready for gay or bisexual players to 'come out' in the game, but that in future, this will become possible. The current cultural zeitgeist, with respect to the changing landscape of sexual identities, was predicted to soften sufficiently enough within sport culture so that over the next ten years, male professional players would be able to openly identify as non-heterosexual and safely carry on with their careers.

Conversely, in the women's game homophobia seems not to operate in such a central capacity within club cultures – it occurs more within the spectator communities surrounding women's football. Many of the female footballers interviewed gave examples of times when they had experienced homophobic bullying from males on their counterpart teams when travelling to away matches. The stigma most drawn upon in those cases was the inference that if a woman is a footballer, she must therefore be a lesbian, as if footballing ability and same-sex attractiveness were mutually inclusive. All of the female participants recounted the difficulty they had faced in having their sexual identities assumed prior to their disclosures, and of course assumed as being exclusively homosexual. This affected women of persuasions, those identifying as

heterosexual, bisexual, gay or unlabelled. External homophobia seemed to be reinforced by this binary notion that either a woman is heterosexual or she plays football, and many onlookers had taken this stigma as license to intimidate players from the side-lines and/or from the back of the bus. Perhaps the current zeitgeist in football culture is not yet ready for sexual identity diversity as certain dominant groups in the surrounding culture of football are still drawing mainly on polar opposite conceptualisations of sexuality to fuel their humour. Equally, diversity in the men's game is all but unheard of as yet.

Interestingly, the interviewees hailing from the male LGBT leagues also indicated that bisexuality and queer/fluid/non-labelled identities were not taken as seriously because they did not satisfy the normative criteria for sexual identity in those spaces which was to identify as exclusively gay. This also supports the main finding of this research, that even within LGBT-friendly sport spaces, inclusion is still identity-based, only the normativity is inverted (to homonormativity). As a result of this inclusion pre-requisite a variety of exclusionary practices occurred in these clubs: derogatory nick-naming that demarcated bisexual athletes as different from their initiation onwards; and discursive practices that created an imperative to choose a binary sexual identity in order to be included. There was also an imperative placed upon these athletes to prove their sexuality in a physical way. The bisexual identifying athletes in these spaces felt compelled to hide away their 'straight side' to the point where they would actively refrain from bringing female partners along to matches or club-based social events.

Female footballers in mainstream club cultures reported a similar state of affairs, that their identities were never treated as equal as the ways in which they had originally been included had already positioned them as somewhat ridiculous. Both bisexual and heterosexual women felt that they were presented with fewer opportunities to progress through the organizational ranks of their clubs on the basis of their incongruous sexualities. There was a similar pressure to prove such identities – women whose romantic relationships were not visibly happening within the confines of their footballing social circles were also subjected to practices of questioning that also demarcated them as different. However, some women managed to maintain their non-labelled identifications irrespective of these quite central practices although they reported having never been able to advance towards powerful positions, such as club captain or secretary, during the duration of their membership.

From this research it would appear that inclusion in football culture is *normative* sexual identity-based, whether that be heterosexual in the mainstream context of men's football, or the homonormative context of LGBT and women's football. Bisexual subject positions were possible

to openly occupy within the latter contexts but to the detriment of complete inclusion and recognized legitimacy. The uptake of binary discourses in these cultures has affected the reinforcement and reproduction of both biphobia and homophobia for the same reason. More progressive discourses of equality, diversity and multi-(sub)culturalism were not yet prevalent enough within sporting discursive practices to present any real competition to the ever-prevailing discourses of dichotomous sexuality. In addition, practices of bantering were shown to have similar effects to those of bullying in that participants whose sexual identities were inconsistent with the overall majority were othered by the jokes and humorous discursive practices that were there to include them. These in/exclusionary practices had a knock-on effect on another practice of self-silencing, where many of the players in these circumstances chose to refrain from discussing their relationship lives at all, despite the fact that relationships and sexuality constituted the predominant topic of conversation in those circles. Further research is warranted in the investigation of intra-minority identity politics, particularly in LGBT-friendly spaces, in order to better understand the lived experiences of 'friendliness' and/or otherisation. This would contribute to the critique on exclusions in sport and allow for the generation of more nuanced theorisations of phobic practices. This would also facilitate the development of more useful resources, based on the understandings that are specific to these sites.

9.2 Main contribution to knowledge

My most important contribution to sport sociological knowledge is that practices of inclusion within football culture are not ability-based but exclusively sexual-identity based. To be more specific, such practices are normative sexual identity-based, meaning that phobic discursive practices are mobilised in much the same way amongst gay-friendly settings as classically heteronormative mainstream settings. When asked what this means for football, I always give the analogy of the football shirt – participants told me that their names were not printed on their social shirts, but rather their *nicknames*. This gave rise to situations where players had 'greedy' and 'needy' written on their backs if they had identified as bisexual on being initiated. I would like to see a change in football culture whereby such individuals could have 'blondie' or 'lanky' on their football shirts, depending on their heights/hair colours or any other personal characteristics that did not demarcate sexual difference. Such practices of nicknaming may appear on the surface to be carried out in jest but they reinforce an unhealthy method of stratification that produces a hierarchical kind of citizenship. To identify as bisexual/queer/ non-labelled places athletes in a disempowered position insofar as their nicknames denote their acceptance, but also their semi-citizenship. Future research into the issue of banter and humour

would also add to a critique on inclusions/exclusions by exploring what such practices *do* and what they *mean* for those athletes who enjoy only partial acceptance as a result of their sexual identities.

9.3 Reflections and limitations

In 2008 I carried out a pilot study in the Bay area around San Francisco State University. I garnered thirty participants in three weeks and found that the people there were only too willing to take part in my short interview-based study. On returning to London I realised that the bisexual athlete community here in the UK was drastically different to that found in San Francisco. Perhaps unsurprisingly, and taking into account the fact that the UK has a far less conspicuous bisexual community within the overall LGBT community, never mind sport, I found it nigh on impossible to find participants who were prepared to go on record. I tried to circumvent this recruitment problem by myself taking part in LGBT sports research, namely focus groups on the topic of homophobia and gender discrimination in women's football. This was firstly to gain important insight into the personal fears associated with participants taking part in such sensitive research, and secondly to advertise my own plight in garnering interviewees for my project. On the one hand, this investigative move was very illuminating and helpful for advancing my understanding of these obstacles. On the other hand, all of this excellent illuminating material was said completely off the record. I realised what I was up against: intra-minority politics amongst the women's footballing community may pose the greater obstacle to my process than just the fear of speaking candidly with a stranger.

At the site of these focus groups I was taken aside several times by various female players who each had a reason why they *could* take part in my research but would nevertheless not be taking part. Their fears centred around the exposure of *behavioural* bisexuality when they outwardly identified as lesbian. Many of these women were apologetic for their inability to take part and all of them were inhibited by the fact that their participation would place a question mark above their heads regarding the true natures of their sexual identities. One woman said to me, 'I can't be seen to take part in the *bisexuality* research: what have I got to say about bisexuality? Well, I've got a lot to say, I've been seeing a guy for the last ten years but I don't want any of my partners to find out about that'. Another woman expressed a similar sentiment when she confided that her civil partner might doubt her commitment along with the authenticity of her identity, should news of her participation in a bisexuality study reach home. Another woman had recently been unfaithful with a man and worried that her participation would somehow catalyse the revelation of her 'indiscretion', as she termed it. Women whose

professional lives revolved around gay activism and advocacy also expressed concern at taking part in a bisexuality study, lest it affect their credibility in the eyes of their political contemporaries. This was my first experience of UK data collection on the topic of bi athletes in British sport and it felt like being met with barriers at every available turn.

Having re-grouped from this initial baptism of fire, so to speak, I set about advertising my research through sporting media sites, newspapers and networks, utilising the FA's offer of support from their contacts throughout football and establishing links with the UK's gay football league. In the first year of data collection I managed to conduct only three interviews. After much debate with my supervision team I made the decision to change the requirements for participation and to completely remove the bisexual/ queer/fluid/ non-normative identifier from the advertisement. My new advertisement called for participants of any sexual persuasion, it did not matter as they would not be required to disclose anything about themselves, who were happy to discuss the topic of bisexuality within sport culture. This marked a turning point in my research design process, but having changed the criteria to de-personalize them I effectually broadened my sample to cover all demographics. This decision I justified in two ways: bisexuality research is very new in sport sociology and participants were fearful of being exposed for many understandable reasons; secondly, there would not be any such bisexuality research if I did not match my pre-requisites to their needs at this time and in this climate. I saw my research as a kind of 'baby-step' towards the development of further research whereby future athletes could perhaps feel more comfortable and less fearful in disclosing their identities when bisexuality had itself been mapped into the broader culture and been given its own platform. Having made these changes I conducted ten interviews in just one semester. It appeared that participants were far happier with discussing the politics of sexuality and phobia from a less subjective position.

Participant recruitment could have been far more limiting, however, had it not been for the help of a good friend who happened to play football in a number of London-based women's teams. Once I had an ally to vouch for me, instead of just utilising the 'cold-calling' method of mass-emailing football clubs across the UK, I found that participants started to come forward with more frequency. My interpretation of this sudden influx of participation was that these people did not want to speak to *just anybody* about their personal and possibly sexual lives. This is such an incredibly sensitive topic that participants needed a recommendation, as to the nature of my character and trustworthiness, from a friend whose judgment they respected. Consequently, this change in the means of recruitment saved the entire project as prior to the

introduction of my advocate, I had seriously worried about the prospect of finishing this research being that I had no data.

My advice to anyone planning on carrying out sensitive research, particularly into the subject of sexual identity, is to make contact with someone who is a member of the community you are studying. Also, carry out the pilot study within the very same community, in the same part of the world as you are planning on exploring before you embark on the research. This way, any potential hurdles with regards to internal gate-keeping strategies within those arenas can be assessed, risk managed and circumvented prior to the study's on-set, lest those hurdles become obstructions later down the line. In addition, be warned that sensitive qualitative research can oftentimes be quite isolating: my advice would be to actively create a network or group of sensitive researchers who can meet and talk about all of the obstacles that inevitably materialise when one is investigating the invisible. Had it not been for my good friends who were also conducting very sensitive research at the same time as me, I do not know what I would have done or how I would have coped. I am eternally grateful to my friends at Brunel who counselled me through the hard times and celebrated the enjoyable times alongside me.

I recommend that sensitive researchers plan for possible recruitment delays and work them into a contingency plan. Once you learn to expect them you can more easily soldier on! Do not take it personally if your data collection takes you eighteen months longer than anticipated as this is no reflection on your character or abilities as a researcher. On the contrary, recruitment hurdles are entirely symptomatic of the sensitive nature of your research topic and these difficulties add credence to the justification that your area is problematic and in need of further research. There is still considerable fear associated with the discussion of sexual identity, even within LGBT friendly environments, as my research has shown me. This is why sensitive research is so important as the end result can genuinely help to give voice to communities that deserve to be heard and understood.

9.4 Recommendations for further research

To summarise the recommendations for further research that I have made throughout the latter half of this thesis, I would suggest that future research be conducted into the effects of bantering and bullying practices in sport. Oftentimes, as my findings have indicated, these seemingly oppositional cultural customs have similarly exclusionary effects. In terms of youth sport, this blurry borderline between the two has real implications for the decision-making processes of young football players. When considering a career in sport the prospect for a

young person of having their professional life overshadowed or dominated by the banter concerning their sexual identity is arguably just as inhibiting as the fear of any potential bullying. That is not to say that all inclusionary practices are marginalising but rather that some such practices can have duplicitous effects which can at once include and exclude, and on the basis of sexual identity. It is these sport cultural practices that I suggest are further researched, for example, the imperative to choose a binary sexual identity in order to be fully accepted warrants further investigation: there are many kinds of phobia that work discursively throughout the culture of team sport and there are new kinds of exclusions emerging as a result. I would also recommend that as a part of this further research into banter and bullying researchers pay close attention to the exclusion of *heterosexual* female players in women's football spaces, as this area represents the kind of exclusions that previous theorisations of homophobia would not necessarily account for.

In terms of UK professional sport, my main recommendation to future researchers would be to explore that actual demographic. I found it very difficult to garner participants from the men's mainstream professional league as the gate-keeping strategies were so impenetrable, as far as my access was concerned. They may not be so impermeable to somebody already working within professional organized sport. I found that I could only speak with either student athletes or amateur, grass-roots level players. Although my findings are useful for mapping these emergent issues onto the landscapes of sport sociology and bisexuality theory, I believe that from a practice-based perspective it will become increasingly important to interview players in these particular leagues in case the data gathered from the surrounding leagues do not explain their unique issues comprehensively enough. It could well be the case that certain practices of inclusion/exclusion are completely particular to these professional spaces, given the unique pressures placed upon hugely recognizable professional players whose lives are already micro-analysed by the tabloid media.

This research poses a strong case for the importance of studying bisexual experience outside of the bisexual activist community. Theorisation of homophobia from the 1980's and 90's does not properly explain the lived experiences particular to bisexuals in sporting contexts. However, the findings suggest that the issue of double-exclusion (from both mainstream and LGBT settings) is not particular to the context of sport as bisexual theory explains how biphobia occurs in this way in many other contexts. However, I would suggest that sport is still a useful arena within which to further examine biphobic exclusions precisely because the practices of choosing 'sides' are so intrinsic to those of inclusion in sport culture. Sport is actually a useful microcosm for the

study of otherisation because, as the literature has shown, prejudicial ideologies in general tend to become so amplified within the context of competitive sport. Where sexual identity discrimination is believed by some researchers to be diminishing in alternative areas of British culture, sport culture is lagging somewhat behind the broader culture in the sense that no professional footballers have ever 'come out' and stayed in the game. Much research is needed as to why this is the case and I hope that future research into exclusionary practices will illuminate a way forward for equality to be achieved for all.

9.5 Summary

Thank you for reading my thesis. I hope that it has provided its reader with a fresh perspective on the issues of biphobia and exclusions in sport. I hope that my research will open up important new forums for the discussion of intraminority politics within sport and their effects on the constant otherisation of bisexuals. We as a research community can take pro-active steps towards the improvement of sporting environments and their surrounding spectator cultures. In future, I would hope to see the day when non-heterosexual youths can equally aspire to become professional athletes without having to factor in the possible hindrance of sexual identity discrimination. I hope that my findings can provide something of a baton for future bi/sexuality researchers to run with so that awareness of biphobia can be raised within mainstream culture as well as within the bisexual and/or broader queer communities. This way, helpful knowledge-bases and new conceptualisations of bisexual identity will no longer be restricted to the bi community's own networks and publications. The scope can instead be broadened to effect greater transformative change. I also hope that this research will help to raise the profile of bisexuality as a *genuine* sexual identity position, that many individuals identify with. Biphobia thus warrants the same level of research as other forms of discrimination corresponding to prominent or binary sexual identities. When we as a research community better understand the workings of phobia in all of its forms, then surely we have a greater chance of eliminating it from sport as well as from the broader British culture.

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Appendices

Appendix A Ethics approval letter

Appendix B Informed consent form

Appendix C Recruitment advertisement

Appendix D Example interview transcript

Appendix A

Ethics approval letter

Katherine Maddocks
c/o School of Sport and Education
Brunel University

16th December 2008

Dear Katie

RE01-08 - Theorising Bisexuality in Sport

I am writing to confirm the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Sport and Education received your application connected to the above mentioned research study. Your application has been independently reviewed to ensure it complies with the University Research Ethics requirements and guidelines.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority, is satisfied with the decision reached by the independent reviewers and is pleased to confirm there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study.

Any changes to the protocol contained within your application and any unforeseen ethical issues which arise during the conduct of your study must be notified to the Research Ethics Committee for further consideration.

On behalf of the Research Ethics Committee for the School of Sport and Education, I wish you every success with your study.

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Bradford

Chair of Research Ethics Committee

School Of Sport and Education

Appendix B

Informed consent form

Katie Maddocks
School of Sport and Education
Brunel University
Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH
United Kingdom
katherine.maddocks@brunel.ac.uk
(44) 7949 557976

(Date)

Dear Athlete,

I am currently studying for a PhD in Sports/ Social Science at Brunel University under the supervision of Professor Celia Brackenridge. My specific focus is bisexuality in sport, within the more general area of homophobic bullying. There appears to be a lack of experiential information available in sports research concerning athletes who identify as bisexual. There is more of a bias towards studying the issues of either gay or lesbian sports persons. I aim to collect qualitative interview data from bisexual athletes in order to rectify this lack of visibility. Interviews should last between 30 minutes to an hour. In the end, I will be contributing to theory on this area, advancing understanding and putting bisexuality 'on the map', so to speak.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to contact me via telephone on 07949 557976 or by emailing me at katherine.maddocks@brunel.ac.uk.

Yours Sincerely,

Katie Maddocks

Brunel Research Student

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Project title: Theorising bisexuality in sport

INTRODUCTION

The School of Sport and Education at the Brunel University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether or not you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with the researcher or Brunel University.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of what it is like to be bisexual and also involved in sport.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

Whilst sexual preference can be a sensitive topic to discuss and participants may feel wary of disclosing or discussing their personal orientations, the study should nevertheless empower participants to discuss their own views and experiences of bi/sexuality in sport. Through the identification of common experiences, the principal investigator hopes to develop theory into bisexuality, within the context of sport culture.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Data gathered will not be presented in a way that identifies you. The transcripts of your interview will be anonymised.

All hardcopies of data will be kept in a secure location. Electronic files will be password protected with ID codes rather than names. This data will be destroyed on completion of the project or returned to you on request. By signing this form you give permission for the use of your transcript for purposes of this study and future publications.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this consent form and you may refuse to do so without any penalty.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORISATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Katie Maddocks, katherine.maddocks@brunel.ac.uk. If you cancel permission, your data will be removed from the database.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION

I have read this Consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (44) 7949 557976 or write the School of Sport and Education Department, Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH, United Kingdom, email katherine.maddocks@brunel.ac.uk.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent form.

Your Name (CAPITALS)

Date

Participant's Signature (electronic version is acceptable)

Researcher Contact Information

Katie Maddocks
 Research Student
 School of Sport and Education
 Brunel University
 Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH
katherine.maddocks@brunel.ac.uk

Celia Brackenridge
 Research Supervisor
 School of Sport and Education
 Brunel University
 Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH
celia.brackenridge@brunel.ac.uk

Appendix C

Recruitment advertisement

Advertisement calling for participants

Bisexuality research in sport

My name is Katie Maddocks and I am a PhD student at Brunel University, UK. Currently I am studying bisexuality and homophobia in sport and am looking for participants to take part in interviews on their experiences. I am looking for people who identify as bisexual and take part in either amateur level or professional level sport. All information will be kept confidential.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact me at katherine.maddocks@brunel.ac.uk

Thank you!

Appendix D

Example interview transcript

Natalie (Interview 7)

Interview 7

Natalie

KM: Well, once again, thank you so much for doing this interview. To begin with, would you say that homophobia is a problem in your sport?

N: Definitely.

KM: Really...

N: Yeah...uh, to try to elaborate a little bit, it's kind of, um... one of two ways: you can kind of go into your game or into your training session and, very early on, for example, starting in a new University team for the first time, you've got an immediate requirement to decide, and specify...and it is part of the sport, for everyone to guess whether you're...pre-empting what you are gonna be, or what you're gonna discover yourself to be.

KM: So, 'by Christmas she'll be'...

N: Exactly. I found that a lot of freshers, when I was at the stage of leaving Uni, were kind of like birds of prey, unfortunately. Not so much to the point where any individual would be excluded, for whatever it is that they decided they were, or labelled themselves as, but...just having that distinction, that categorising, that creates friendship circles and friendship barriers, to some extent.

KM: Like cliques?

N: Yeah, like cliques. So, within the sport there's definitely that element of categorising. I then would say that if you are in a football team and you specify yourself to be bisexual, or lesbian, even, outside of the football team, anybody who looks in bunches you all up to be a certain classification, whereas... So, on a football social night out, when we're all stood in the *gay corner* of the Union, um, rather than just where all the footballers are, if you like. So, even if you had half the team being straight in amongst the social circle at that time, it wouldn't be the case, you'd all have to have that same classification.

KM: Because that's an identity that other people have projected onto you.

N: Yeah, and it's to the extent that, I know that some of the straight girls in the team would never come out with us, because they'd never pull on a night out, because they'd *be* with us. Guys wouldn't even try, bless them.

KM: (Laughs)

N: When we went on a, um, kind of like a University-wide final to Cardiff, it was the women's first team and the men's first team on the same bus... (pause)...and that was *the* biggest teller for me. If there were any gay guys on that first team, they wouldn't have spoken up for the amount of...*supposedly* banter, but actually...bullying, effectively, that the guys were shooting across the bus at the girls.

KM: What kind of words were they using?

N: Oh, it was...it was the, 'Are you guys the carpet-munchers or the cock-suckers?' kind of...

KM: Oh, woah.

N: Jokey, but abusive.

KM: Very blurry.

N: Yeah, not entirely sure whether they were... childishly not knowing how to flirt with the ones that they were attracted to, or... yeah. Very immature, but definitely there. That was the big teller for me. It was a segregated bus journey, for starters: We were at the front, they were at the back and there was a massive six rows in between.

KM: Oh god.

N: Nobody dared to sit in the middle ground!

KM: No-man's-land!

N: Exactly, and then you had anybody that wasn't conforming to the real... girly-looking-tennis-player type attire, would've had to have been gay, there was no alternative about it. It's a shame it's like that, but... Those are some of the examples that I could think of. So yeah, definitely a problem.

KM: Wow. So, the current climate, is there... *within* the club is there a kind of acceptance? Like, from outside, there's people making judgments, especially from the male football team. But within the club, what's the climate like?

N: Um, yeah, I think it's one of the most accepting social circles you could be in. I think that's why sport is a real... a bit of a gravity thing for lots of bi, or curious girls, or lesbian girls. It's kind of, you will find one of everybody... so it's almost okay. I think that's probably different kinds of sports, I won't throw that in for all sports. I would imagine it's a lot more of a challenge to come out in a netball team.

KM: Oh yeah.

N: Or a swimming team. Um... than it would be in a sport like football, hockey, basketball or rugby, maybe, and I don't know why that is, but football's definitely one of those where you can be comfortable.

KM: As a woman in a women's team...

N: Yeah, exactly. It's almost the shocker to find the majority to be the straight girls, in a woman's football team, somehow. It's that normal, it's that okay in that environment.

KM: That's awesome. But with the men's team?

N: Complete opposite.

KM: They'd be frightened to come out, because then that banter would turn... I mean it's not really banter always, and they'd be the only one, the focus of it all.

N: And they would be the only one, if they were confident enough to come out. I think there wouldn't be a quick following of anybody else on the team that was 'that way'. I think it would just be an isolated attempt to break a boundary and it would be a bit scary, I would've imagined.

KM: Wow... So, second question: how about bisexuality, is that visible in your club, or in your sport?

N: Um, yeah, definitely. Um... (pause)... it is, but it's strange, because of the way that I'm thinking of it... My most recent club experience would be my University team, so looking back on that, it was almost that... it wasn't fully believed that someone *could* be both, could be bi. It was, there were either one, and when they got drunk they were the other.

KM: Oh, okay (laughs)

N: Um, or every now and then they got a little bit bored and wanted a little bit of experimentation, and there was no kind of real respect for the possibility that... But I kind of met in lots of social circles, I wouldn't just pin that down to football. It's kind of, 'well, you're either one or the other and you just want the best of both', rather than, 'actually, you could just be that open'. Um, yeah, definitely there...but...

KM: Definitely there... but not taken seriously?

N: Yeah, you would have those comments like, 'best of both', those kinds of comments that again, are in jest, but actually... kind of outline that you don't fit into this, or that. 'Make a decision!', almost. Not so drastic that you'd lose friends over it, I wouldn't have said.

KM: So, someone else spoke about fluidity, so is that... would you say there's a climate of fluidity? Is it acceptable to go from one gender to another?

N: It is, yeah. But it does form that day's headlines. So, it is totally acceptable in that you won't get your reputation tarnished for it, but you will... it will make the day's gossip almost, because it's not... it's not so okay that...

KM: It goes un-noted.

N: Yeah, people will make a point of highlighting whatever's happened. So, yeah, fluidity: definitely. There's no kind of... old fashioned, can-only-be-one-thing, um...

KM: You don't have to dance a foot apart...

N: Yeah.

KM: Some of the research shows that some people are reluctant to identify as bi because it's a category, rather than... so, when people are silent, it's not necessarily that they're being bullied, it's more a personal preference at having no label. Which would you agree with?

N: Yeah, I'm a no label person. I think... it frustrates me that anyone has to apply a label, for starters, um... And I always prefer, in all parts of my life, to kind of... just be who I'm with, regardless of who I was with before, or who I might be with in the future. It's about who I'm

with at the time. And it's difficult to say, for example, that you're in a relationship with another girl, um... if someone knows you've been with a guy, or do like guys. They'll be like, 'Oh, but what about...'

KM: Exactly, like you're contradicting yourself.

N: Yeah, you have to then explain yourself, or you have to justify, um, which... I think almost, someone who's completely gay or lesbian, or completely straight, doesn't have to do that. You're always with a girl, then you're with a girl and it's expected that you're going to be with a girl. There's no *extra* justification, other than your initial coming-out process, you're done with that now.

KM: Yeah.

N: But, actually, every time you switch, if you were to switch between seeing a guy and seeing a girl, you do have to go through that whole, 'But I thought you were this now!' (laughs) It's just kind of not accepted that you could just have that.

KM: 'We've just come to terms with the fact that you've got a girlfriend! We've just told your Grandma!'

N: (Laughs) Yeah. That's a really good example. Absolutely, yeah... my poor parents (laughs).

KM: People have difficulty, don't they. They say you're confused, when actually, *they're* confused. Do you know what I mean? I don't fit your boxes, so you're uncomfortable with that, but I'm perfectly fine. Do you have any insights? I mean, this may be slightly off-topic, but why do you think that is?

N: It is strange, very strange. In my relationships I've found that...my partner's found it difficult to know that I am bi. Maybe as a threat, I'm not entirely sure. Something that they potentially can't compete with, I don't know. Just kind of a perception that, 'well maybe this isn't your ideal, but that is', and this is kind of a settling. I don't know, that's the kind of voices that have been raised on that one. Um, with friends and family I'm not entirely sure. Lots of my friends just...love the variety and have good fun with it... um, and kind of act as if they're jealous that I could be attracted to *anyone* in one setting, where they'd be restricted to only fifty per cent of people in that setting. So, you have a laugh with that. For those that are really uncomfortable with it, I'm not entirely sure. I think it must just be kind of, to some extent, not knowing where *they* stand with you.

KM: Yeah, good point.

N: So when you're forming new relationships, and you've kind of got that...potential, they kind of... I don't know. I guess with all homophobia it's that fear of, 'Oh, are you coming onto me?', and I wonder if that's part of it. Because actually there's no... it's all a big grey area, isn't it, in their eyes.

KM: Yes.

N: Anybody's kind of at risk of being preyed upon. So...

KM: Yeah, that predator-prey perception as well, that bisexuals are 'greedy' and they're going to hone in on someone and target people, and there's that stigma surrounding them. The whole greed concept. I mean, I've experienced that insofar as my partner has been approached by people close to her, you know, saying 'Why are you going out with a bisexual? You're gay, you need to go out with someone else who's gay', like, 'you need bisexuality insurance!'

N: That's exactly how my current partner feels, absolutely the case. Big fear factor. Come from nowhere with no justification, but a big fear factor. If we didn't exist, bisexuals, that is, it would be a lot easier, she'd know where she stood entirely. So yeah, that is definitely a challenge.

KM: I find it hard because I believe anyone can change, at any time. Any woman that normally likes women could find herself fancying men, you know, for whatever reason. People do change. Likewise, someone could fall in love with the *person*, and leave the gender aside, and say 'well alright, I'm a straight girl, but I want to be with this woman.'

N: I like the way you put that. I think... for straight people, or for gay people, it's about gender a lot of the time. But for bi people, you'll hear a lot of them saying, 'it's about the person', which I think a lot of people don't understand. Um... but for me that's definitely the case. It's not about what form that somebody might come in. It's entirely about how you feel about them and your attraction to them as an individual, um, which I think scares a lot of people, that you have that potential to be attracted to anybody, almost.

KM: Well that's I guess where it gets blurry with polyamory and monogamy. Some people just assume that if you're bisexual then you must necessarily be polyamorous because you're not getting enough in a monogamous relationship. You must have him, and then her, and then him, and then her, otherwise you're just not satisfied because you've got this insatiable appetite.

N: Yes, again, well put. I've had this exact discussion with my partner recently. She's got this fear factor and my argument is, 'but I'm *with you*', regardless of who I might be attracted to I'm with you, whether it's another female or a male. We had a very hypothetical debate about... obviously cheating wasn't okay, but if I cheated with a girl it would be better than if I cheated with a guy.

KM: That's arguably not better.

N: I think it's worse!

KM: You can definitely see that as worse! I mean, if it's with a guy, then that could mean you just need something completely different. But if it's with a girl, then...

N: Then you can compare.

KM: Yeah!

N: Absolutely. It's definitely there, this perception that you're an insatiable personality, always at risk of straying, maybe, even with no just cause to feel that way.

KM: Well my next question is about stereotypes, or names, or even slurs. Say, on your team, if somebody identifies as bi do they get the whole, you know, 'best of both worlds' thing... I mean, what other things get said?

N: Oh god, to think of the names, but yes they're definitely there. Um... 'swinger', 'swinger' is a definite one; 'plays for both teams'...ironic. They're definitely there, but almost I guess, in the same way that you wouldn't get away with being lesbian and getting the similar sort of names. You'd be the 'carpet-muncher', or whatever. You'd definitely, everybody would have a label.

KM: So it's not exclusive to bisexuals, everybody's got some kind of label.

N: Or a tag. And if you were straight you'd be equally as ostracised for it! (Laughs) It's never... there are no fair weather areas, it's just that everybody has a different way of being put in a box.

KM: That's interesting. Is that part of the camaraderie as well?

N: It's definitely part of the banter. Um, yeah, definitely, and I'm sure it would probably apply to every area. It would apply to people that were tee-total, or were really heavy drinkers, or experimented with drugs, they'd all have a name as well. You'd have a name if you were the one that *did* go to the Thursday morning lectures after the Wednesday night out. I think that's a part of what sport culture is about, everybody has a name, a nickname.

KM: That's a really good point about sport culture. That's just what sport culture is.

N: It just does it all the time. Everybody doesn't get a shirt with their name on it, everyone gets a shirt with their nickname on it, and you've had that nickname from the very first day of training.

KM: Gutted if you'd eaten a dodgy curry the day before. That's it, really!

N: That's it. That's exactly it. And if you haven't been given a name, it's almost as if you haven't been fully accepted into the group. If you remain as just your name, it's kind of like, 'I didn't really find anything about you to kind of click with.' It is like a kind of acceptance, really.

KM: I've heard someone similar to that, that if you weren't 'Half-pint' or whatever, and you didn't have a nickname, you'd feel left out.

N: Yeah, people wouldn't know you, almost.

KM: That's a really interesting point. That's kind of a positive, in a sense, because it can also be used for acceptance, rather than bisexuality being this taboo, awful thing, it can now be, 'Come on Half-pint, we're off to the pub', kind of thing, 'We accept you', in a sense. Maybe it depends on the individual.

N: I would say that, because whether or not they take ownership of it in a way that means, 'Yeah, I've been accepted', or whether it's just constantly seen as a barrage of bullying and name-calling. I think on the whole, you'll find that it's seen as acceptance, I would say.

KM: That's really positive. I was looking at biphobia and bullying, but I'm finding quite a few positives, or certainly positive interpretations, and positive ramifications of these names.

N: Especially within the group. You're not looking outside the group, you're sticking within. Your Wednesday night training session, or your Wednesday night social, all of the things that kind of come with that initial *having* to come-out, *having* to be labelled one way or the other in the very first week, with all the bets coming up for Christmas... it's all part of being categorised, yeah, but kind of embraced, in the way that you are going to be embraced. So, it's a very secure environment.

KM: And that's maybe what contributes to the safe space as well.

N: Yeah.

KM: So do you think, given the nickname-acceptance thing, that issues are the same for the lesbians and the straight women on a team, therefore? Is it really just that everybody's called something? Would it be the same for bisexual? I'm just wondering if it's a different experience to be bisexual than it is to be gay or straight in a team.

N: I would say so. Um, I'm just thinking how it would apply. (Pause) I wonder if, specifically for straight girls, you'd be excluded from a certain element of the gossip, of the kind of incestuous behaviours of a female football team. Straight girls would be completely excluded from that. I wonder whether or not... I don't think I was ever, kind of, I would never get too involved in that drama.

KM: What kind of drama? Everybody going out with one another?

N: Everybody going out with each other, and everybody knowing each other's business to a ridiculous level. How do bisexuals get treated differently? Yeah... I would say there's definitely kind of... I don't even know if it's because they would've been bisexuals, or because they would've been excluded from the social group from the very outset, slightly, and put in a different group. But I wouldn't be able to think of an example where it was really problematic, or anything like that. It wouldn't go so far as when you're getting bibbed-out in training that you'd get different colour bibs! (Laughs) It's not that bad! No, no, I can't really think of how it kind of stands out.

KM: So it's more a case of 'everybody's different'.

N: Yeah, um. I'm trying to think of it as... how our behaviour and labelling in football affects our social life with those exact same people. Say, if we went out on a Wednesday night, everybody would be in the same social shirts that we'd all had made up at the start of the year, with our nickname and our club role on it, Team Secretary, or whatever. I can't think how it would really impact, unless... if everybody was comfortable being in that gay circle in the gay corner of the Union, it would be fine. But if you were the straight girl or the bi girl that wasn't comfortable being in that corner, um, you'd have to take yourself out of it. There wouldn't really be any, kind of, understanding from the real lesbian girls, about how strong their persona is in that group.

KM: Oh.

N: And how, this is the wrong word to say, 'associate' themselves with, but by being part of that, you've labelled yourself as that. So if I spent my entire Wednesday night out at the Union in that corner, like I say, I wouldn't get spoken to by a single guy. It would be a very intimidating little circle... that a lot of the lesbian girls would *love*, or would be acknowledged, or aware of as that strong. Um, and you'd find that a lot of the straight girls would either not be in that group, or would come and go from different parts of the club. Or not wear their social T-shirt, and still be out with us...not wear their football social shirts to show that they weren't part of our group.

KM: So that's to give themselves an identity...

N: Yes, because it's a label before you've even labelled yourself. To put on your purple football social shirt, um...

KM: It's almost having a gay colour, then, isn't it.

N: It is, yeah. Um, and it almost is just to say that you're in the football team, but whether you're straight, lesbian or bi, you're immediately gay. If you're in a female football team, especially at Uni. Outside of football, in my career, for example, if I say to colleagues that I play football, the initial assumption isn't, 'You're gay then', at all. But I would imagine, and there has been the case that in some instances that if I did say that I was... I would never say I'm bi, it's easier to say I'm gay. Strangely enough...rather than having to explain it. Or just to say that I'm 'with a girl', rather than to go into it. But then, they always relate that back to your football, and blame it on that, or understand that that's where you're comfortable. So that's outside of Uni.

KM: That's interesting though, would that be because they're assuming that you joined the football team and it *turned* you?

N: Good debate! That's a whole debate in itself, and I have it with my family all the time: Did I join the football team because I was comfortable in that environment *for a reason*, or did I join the football team and then grow to open my eyes to that environment? I wouldn't know the answer to either. But I do know that at the age of twelve when I joined my first football team, that was the first time I felt fully comfortable... but I was sure that it was because it was the first time I could play football with girls, and I wouldn't have to always be with the boys and be the only girl. So I totally associated it with it in that way. Um... but I think for most girls, the football team is probably where they find their first girlfriend. Because it's that safe environment, where it's accepted.

KM: That's a complete contrast to men's football. I mean, you *might* find your first boyfriend, but...

N: Yeah, but would you ever tell anybody about it and be comfortable in that environment as a couple? Whereas, in female football, that's what everything's about. It's 'who's coupled up with who?' this week.

KM: And all the drama that goes on when it's not next week.

N: Yeah, exactly. And often, it's the girls that are in couples that become the glue of the groups... and become the ones that *lead* the club, to the point that they would volunteer

themselves as Club Secretaries, Club Chairman, because inherently and intrinsically they've got an attachment to the group now, and they're gonna commit to the group. Whereas... it might be a big tar-brush scenario here, but actually, how many straight girls were on our club committees? It would be minimal, because maybe they weren't... their whole lives weren't in that football club.

KM: They're not investing in a 'safe space', they're playing football.

N: They're there to play football, they're committed for every training and for match days, but that might be as far as it goes. But actually, for the... incestuous lesbians in the group, that's where everything is: their friendships, their relationships, their football, their hobby, and they're the kind of ones that knit the group together, almost. And that can be very cliquey, but that can add to the... (pause) how long that team lasts, almost, and how long it holds together as a squad, because actually, you've got that core.

KM: They're the pillars.

N: Absolutely, yeah. Definitely the case for my home football club, where I left it to go to Uni and came back six years later, and what had changed? Not a lot, except the same group of gay girls were kind of holding the fort. And you might have lost a few along the way, and they'd probably be the straight ones, um... that tend to fall out of football quicker, than a lot of the gay girls do.

KM: It's community, isn't it.

N: It is a little community, the kind that a lot of adult female footballers are gay...and all of the really high standard players that, at fourteen, fifteen, started dating boys and had to go out of the social circle of football to meet boys, started fizzling out.

KM: Oh!

N: And a lot of studies about the drop-out of females in sport at fourteen, fifteen, never look at this issue. I find it very funny!

KM: You should trademark that!

N: It's very naively overlooked, and it's always about... old fashioned, and self-esteem, and the culture of the sport, no, sorry, the *nature* of the sport. So, if it was a rough game, then girls would want to be looking more effeminate around about fourteen or fifteen, so they drop out of football and rugby. Well, is that the case? Or is it actually that... (pause)

KM: They couldn't find boys?

N: Yeah, they couldn't find their partners on a gay team; they'd be called 'gay' to remain in a sport that was very cultured in lesbian ways, and they'd start to kind of leave that circle. Or maybe that it was having an impact on their physique, being involved in a rough, tough team sport, that they felt wasn't attractive to men... according to the... (pause)

KM: Hyperfeminine...

N: Absolutely. That went off on a bit of a tangent, there! Definitely a way in which straight girls would *not* get the same sort of treatment... um.

KM: So really, in female football, anyway, it's sort of a bit more difficult to be straight? Do you think it's easier to be bi, then?

N: There's a lot of straight girls in my Uni team that felt excluded, massively excluded. They almost felt that they weren't gonna get picked for a squad, because the Captain was going out with the Club Secretary, and the Club Secretary got picked every week, whether she was at training or not, um...and actually, they'd say, 'I've been at training without fail every week, why have I still not got left-back position?'

KM: Nepotism, then. They see it as very...

N: Yeah, because it is a cliquey, cliquey group that you're the one that's different in, for the first time. So it's a bit of a role-reversal from how society normally behaves.

KM: It is actually! It's almost as if there were women in suits controlling the Premiership, rather than men in suits.

N: I can't stress how... how much more accepted you were in the group if you were dating someone *within* that group. You could be the person with no banter or no commitments in the team, but the minute you started dating somebody in the team, you're in. Strange, but I saw it a lot of times, in a lot of ways.

KM: So, is there a hierarchy, then? Is that in terms of a social status, or is it in terms of access?

N: Definitely an access thing, like... suddenly people knew who you were, almost, you're on the map now, because you're dating the Captain. Um, and it's difficult to be, whether straight or bi or lesbian, but *not* in a relationship with anybody in the team. For example, I don't think I've ever got involved with anybody in my club team, um, and I think I played football for two years without anybody knowing that I was bi. There was an assumption that I was straight because I didn't get involved in the incest. I think the first time I told one of my team-mates that I *was* in a relationship with a girl, and she was actually away travelling, um, and hence why I hadn't dated anybody, and it was a real shock, that it was a female. There was an assumption that if I was gay, why wasn't I dating anyone in the football team? Or why haven't I been attracted to anyone, or why wasn't there banter or flirting?

KM: 'We're not good enough for you, then?'

N: Almost (laughs). It can be a bit of a barrier, I think. A) if you're not that way inclined, or B) if you're not willing to disclose yourself as that way inclined. At the initial first weeks when you're given those labels, there's a big barrier, there's a big kind of, I don't know.

KM: That's really fascinating.

N: I enjoyed football for my first year and a bit at Uni, but I didn't really get involved in the social scene, and a lot of people asked me why, and my comment was, 'It's a little bit too gay for me.' It's a little bit too much in my face. Um, if I get involved I'm gonna be labelled that way and I

don't want that label. If I... if I get too involved in that group I felt like my straight circles would be a little bit... and it was definitely the case. My housemates who were all straight in my fresher's hall, and my football team who were all gay: it was literally two different circles that I couldn't mix on a night out. If I went in my football shirt and I'd go and find my straight girls, I'd be well behind on their drinking games, um and actually, they'd be doing a whole different thing that night. If I went out in my straight clothes with those girls and wanted to catch up with the football girls half way through, you'd have missed out on whatever was going on there and you wouldn't quite fit in. So it was a bit of a tough judgment call, and you'd have to marry them together. Yeah, so that's I guess one way in which being bi kind of meant you were not... unless you were willing to just *adopt* that label, which I very stubbornly wasn't. I found it a lot easier when I *did*, in my third year when I just let it go a little bit and wasn't so... um, putting myself in that 'black or white'. I found that they were probably a little bit more accepting that what I was gonna give them credit for. Went out in the gay shirt, had a great time, kind of just let go of, you know, how other people were responding to my being out with gay girls in the gay corner. But it was definitely the case that I still couldn't mix my two friendship circles.

KM: Oh I see what you're saying, about marrying the two together.

N: It might have been just because of the make-up of the two groups. My hall-mates... I could've easily been the first gay person they'd met. That could've been a big part of it. Or the first 'out' person, you know.

KM: It makes me think, I should really do some more research into straight girls' experience, because it seems to me that there's more of a taboo. Say, if you're an out-bisexual and you're open about having a relationship with a girl, then it's more okay for you to say, "This is too gay for me". Whereas if a straight girl says, "This is too gay for me", suddenly it's like, 'You homophobic cow!'

N: Absolutely. Yes.

KM: It's like I have a friend who's a teacher and he said to me recently that one of his gay colleagues was talking really overtly and in the staff room about his personal life, and it made him feel uncomfortable. But before he told me this, he actually prefixed it with, "I hope I'm *allowed* to say this, but... it made me uncomfortable." I was like, "you know what, it's fine, you really can say that."

N: Yeah, that is exactly the same in women's football. All of the talk is about... all of that stuff. Actually a straight person might A) be uncomfortable and B) not have anything to contribute to the situation.

KM: I think often it depends on the content of the conversation, like how graphic people are, because there are some contexts in which that's okay, but there are others where that just doesn't wash.

N: Yeah, and it *is* very graphic, A) and B) very exclusive. So I've never been in a conversation like that where I've felt comfortable being bi, because I've found that, for example with my straight girls, I had those conversations, talking about knobs and all the rest of it, but I would find that either I wasn't invited into the conversation because I'm 'gay', or that I didn't really feel

comfortable contributing to the conversation for fear of any other questions being thrown in my direction about other stuff.

KM: Repercussions...

N: And the same in the other direction, almost. Um... yeah.

KM: It does throw up a lot of questions.

N: It does. Um, I've never been in that situation and been comfortable because the girls are *that* open and that okay... there's always a kind of a line, or a taboo. So I've often just been involved in the conversation, not comfortably, but not contributed.

KM: You've made a boundary line for yourself, then.

N: Definitely. Um, and when I have my reunions with my fresher girls, from halls who are all straight, and they're talking about all sorts of naughties and nasties, they're always like, "Oh, sorry mate", "Oh sorry mate" and you're like...(pause)

KM: 'Why are you apologising?'

N: Yeah... so it is kind of... again, it's that one or the other. They know I'm bi, but actually it's still an apology because I'm with a girl right now. Well, actually, they don't really believe that I'm bi, 'you're just definitely gay.'

KM: I think that's what bisexuals find a lot. It's sort of, again, people not knowing where to place you and how to address you. It's almost like there aren't any cultural resources, as we're just about learning how to talk to gay people! What do you do about the people in between? 'What do I say?', again it's the 'What's my role?' Straight people or gay people don't have a lot of experience, it seems, talking to people who identify as bi.

N: It's a little bit unexplored, socially.

KM: Absolutely. It's fascinating. But moving more onto homophobia in general, with regards to say a comparison with racism in football and the progressions since the 1970's and '80's to now, I mean I was interviewing someone yesterday who was saying we're so behind in comparison, and this is because, to bat racism out of football doesn't mean that you're gay. But to bat homophobia out of football necessarily raises a question mark, or certainly raises the *risk* of a question mark being raised above the heads of those batting it out...

N: Absolutely the case. And I think the struggle, and the differences that... race is overt and it's an immediate visual. You know immediately that someone coming in, being White say, is sticking up for a Black or Asian or ethnic person, or being Black and sticking up for a White, or Asian person. Um, bit like you say, with homosexuality, or with sexuality generally, it's something that somebody puts on *you*, that label. You don't necessarily exert it, especially in sport where you're not likely to find somebody completely camp, because of their physique in sport, it's slightly more disguised. It's a lot easier to spot a gay female in sport... when I say that, I mean according to stereotypes of what a gay female looks like, with the muscles and the bulk and that kind of thing. And if you're not fitting into that pretty, tennis player, swimmer's, netball

player's physique then you could be A) gay, B) bi or C) actually maybe a man. That's definitely in there. I've almost forgotten what the question was!

KM: It was just about homophobia in general and what needs to change. It seems like homophobia's a trickier thing to get rid of.

N: I think the easiest way for the beginnings of combating the racism was the large number of ethnic people, Black in particular, that are in the game, at a high level, that could *voice* that as role models...that could help campaign, could help lobby, so that the 'Kick Racism' campaign actually has a footing. Until you know...until gay people come out in sport, football in particular, men's football in particular, confidently and comfortably, um, it's difficult to begin to combat it. And I know that the 'Kick Racism' is actually an equality campaign that tries to deal with homophobia, but very silently and very exclusively to gay leagues and lesbian leagues... In mainstream football, they don't really have anything to latch onto. And in women's football, all you see, and it frustrates the hell out of me, in an FA cup final, when the ladies are sitting in the box, commentating, or when they are describing, um, the player attributes of each player on the squad, often it is, "And she's married, and she has kids", for some of the players. For those that don't, alright, nothing's mentioned. You never find that when they go through the names of a male squad...about his wife and kids and his history, um, or his *lifestyle*.

KM: No, I see.

N: But it's... in women's football, they highlight the good straight girls, and it's all, "Oh she's taking a year out to have a baby", kind of comments. Um... and it's difficult, I think, for women in football to start coming out, as difficult as it is for men in football to start coming out.

KM: In professional leagues, do you mean?

N: In professional, yeah. And it's all that kind of...and I do feel that it's those kinds of higher levels of the game that are always the ones that set the patterns. In every element: in behaviour in sport, in abuse to referees, it's always the professionals that set the standards and start the culture. I think until you can change those kinds of things, those kinds of behaviours, it's so much more difficult to combat it in grass-roots sport. I work in grass-roots sport, trying to implement respect in the game, and positive behaviours on the side-line from parents to referees. It's never going to change if we allow the thugs into match day stadiums. I think it's exactly the same for the homophobia side of stuff: until the players can comfortably come out, which they can't, and I can understand why they can't... Who was it that recently came out in another sport? Whilst in his career...was it a cricketer?

KM: There's been a rugby player, and I think, an Australian diver recently as well.

N: Um, and that's bloody brave, to do it whilst you're still in the game.

KM: Until now it's normally when they retire, isn't it.

N: Yeah, then they write their autobiography on their deathbed. So until we get more of that, I think it's going to be a big challenge, because people fear what they don't know about. Only when taught about it through professionals in the media is it going to be less of a shock when

little Timmy in the under 12's suddenly one day goes...(laughs) 'Yeah, actually, I might be gay, Dad.' It's going to be less of a shock. But it's a taboo now, it's not known. There are no gay men in professional football, apparently. Where are they?

KM: Well, one in ten, there should be gay men on every team.

N: Absolutely. I think that's probably the biggest way to kind of...begin to...(pause)

KM: In the media, you mean? For people to come out?

N: Well, media response to it being one massive thing, the way that the media responds. But also, at the highest level, creating some form of cultural protection, for the players that want to, so that they can feel able to. Um... I would hope that we're at a stage where if a player did want to come out, in a current Premiership starting sixteen, um, there'd be no risk or doubt in his mind about whether he'd still get picked, whether he'd still get the wage he's on, or whether he'd still get accepted by his team-mates in the same way. I would *hope* that that would be the case. But, otherwise, actually, why are they not coming out? What are the threats that they've got? And it's got to be the social media...protection of their partners and their families. There is a cultural barrier.

KM: So is it sport culture that's got to change, as well? So that when they do come out, they come into a more friendly environment?

N: Yeah, perhaps, but I think it's sport specific. I would imagine a gay dancer on Strictly Come Dancing coming out isn't going to be a big deal.

KM: No.

N: When you see the rugby players enter that TV show, Strictly Come Dancing, they do it in a masculine way, which they will get praise for. They're just reinforcing their heterosexuality. They're not allowing them to adopt a camp dancing style because actually, that's what looks great on a dance floor when you're a *woman*...um, it's everywhere, isn't it: that one way is the *right* way. Anything that deviates from that is...a little bit of a challenge.

KM: It disrupts, it's disruptive.

N: Yeah.

KM: Well, those are my questions! Is there anything I haven't covered? Or that you'd like to add?

N: Um...(pause)...no, but thank you, really. It's nice to kind of talk about this stuff. You don't normally do, do you?

KM: No, there doesn't seem to be much of a forum for discussion.

N: Not a safe forum...because you'd have these discussions and get confronted on everything, more often than not. If I said to *any* of my team-mates, who are my *friends*, on my Uni team, that there was a name, a labelling and a stigmatisation according to what you went in with, or what you became, or what you came out as, they wouldn't understand where I was coming

from, I wouldn't have thought. If I try to explain to my friends that they didn't know I was gay or bi for the first few years of football because of how they behaved around each other and how obtuse they could be sometimes, they wouldn't understand.

KM: How intimidating that was for you...

N: Absolutely, they wouldn't understand where I was coming from. So yeah, I'd agree that there isn't a forum for it. It's not really...it's not really touched on, is it, homophobia in sport. Like you say, with racism, or disability, equality, um...the big argument about gender rights, generally, for women who are not represented in sports that are male dominated...but actually, the homophobia discussion isn't really had.

KM: I took part in a focus group recently with activists in football, and a lot of those women were saying that actually the issue is gender, and homophobia is just another way of stigmatising women. So if you play football, you're a 'geezer bird', and if you're good you're 'gay'. First you're seen as manly, and *then* you're denigrated for being lesbian. But I didn't know if I entirely agreed with that, because, particularly in schools, the skinny guy can be labelled as gay just for being skinny. It's like you say, it's also down to whatever label you're *given*, and then the abuse comes with that. Homophobia can be suffered by anybody.

N: I'd agree with that. It's really interesting to see how it's changing, so that...I see boys coming out of school in their *altered* school uniforms, in the skinniest jeans and the campest outfits, and they're surrounded by girls, because that's kind of what's *in*. That very 'emo' thing, that's very cool. I was only at secondary school, nine, ten years ago, and any guy that looked like that would have been absolutely slaughtered! (Laughs) It's interesting to see how it's changing.

KM: Thank you so much for your insights, they've been amazingly helpful. Thank you.