

**“Some are gay, some are straight, no one  
actually cares as long as you’re there to  
play hockey”: Women’s field hockey  
players’ engagement with sexual identity  
discourses**

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## Abstract

This research investigates the discourses that have impacted recreational women's hockey players' perspectives and experiences surrounding sexual identity. Furthermore, the participants' engagement with sexual identity discourses and through what discursive practices and disciplinary techniques sexual identities became dominant or alternative is examined. The experiences of and towards non-heterosexual sportspeople is a developing area of research, though little research focuses on recreational level sport that is not identified as a 'gay sport space'. This study contributes to sexuality and sport research by investigating a recreational women's team which is not restricted to the 'gay sport space' label to develop understandings of the dynamics and complexities that sexual identity discourses have on both heterosexual and non-heterosexual sportspeople. A poststructural, Foucaultian theoretical framework underpins this study with the utilisation of Foucault's work on discourses, techniques of power and the technologies of the self. Data is generated from semi-structured interviews with seven hockey players, who discuss their experiences regarding sexual identity at Castle Ladies Hockey Club. By analysing the participants' talk through discourse analysis, discourses of acceptance and inclusivity towards non-heterosexual identities are found. Firstly, non-heterosexual identities are regarded as 'normal', secondly, the focus was on if the player was a good team player rather than sexual identity, and thirdly, there was an increased acceptance of sexual fluidity leading to decreased tolerance towards homophobia. This research highlights that players engage with multiple discourses associated with sexual identity, often complexly. This raises questions surrounding the dominance of heteronormativity, as non-heterosexual identities are not presented as marginal.

## **Declaration**

I confirm that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or examination. I have read and understood the University's regulations on plagiarism and I declare this as my own original work.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **1.0 Chapter One – Introduction**

‘ “I feel quite proud that I was brought up around hockey, where there have been lots of different ethnicities, religions, sexualities and so on. It's normal, and I feel proud of that.” ’ (Williams, 2014).

Kate Richardson-Walsh, previous England and Great Britain women's hockey team captain and Gold medallist at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, speaks in an interview about being gay and marrying her fellow team-mate. Her above comment indicates how she has found hockey to be a space that has facilitated acceptance and the accommodation of people from different backgrounds including the inclusion and acceptance of differing sexualities and the normality of it all.

### **1.1 Introduction**

This research investigates the discourses that have impacted upon recreational women's hockey players' perspectives and their experiences surrounding sexual identity. Heterosexuality has long been regarded as the dominant sexual identity within western culture due to its reinforcement through social institutions including but not limited to the media and education, which has led to its dominance within everyday thought (Herz & Johansson, 2015). However, with changing legislation surrounding the rights of those who identify as non-heterosexual due to an increase in liberal and inclusive attitudes (Clements & Fields, 2014), more people feel that they are able to be out and open about their sexuality within society (National LGBT survey, 2018). In sport, attitudes towards and the experiences of non-heterosexual sportspeople, meaning those

who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer (LGBQ), are mixed, being either exclusively positive or negative (Anderson & Bullingham, 2015; Krane, 2016).

With sport's continuous reinforcement as a male domain through public opinion, often shaped by the media and the biomedical sciences (Burton, 2015; Cahn, 2015), sport is often a hostile and unpredictable setting for those who are non-heterosexual (Hargreaves, 2000). Specifically, women in sport are plagued by western gender discourses of what it means to be feminine and heterosexual, leading to their involvement in sport and sexual identities being questioned and scrutinised (Choi, 2000; Griffin, 1998; Mean & Kassing, 2008). Waldron (2016) has indicated that there is a myth of the lesbian athlete that dominates women's sport and includes the belief that any woman playing sport is a lesbian and that the lesbian identity is presented by being muscular, aggressive and successful at sport. Leading on from this, in women's team sports, if a player comes out it casts suspicion surrounding the sexuality of the rest of the team (Anderson, Magrath & Bullingham, 2016). Through the myth of the lesbian athlete and the suspicion surrounding women playing sport, lesbian sportswomen are often victimised. This can be evidenced through the differential treatment they receive and the homophobia they are subjected to (Griffin, 1992).

However, Bullingham (2015) argues that the twenty-first-century sports climate for non-heterosexual women is becoming more open and inclusive. This is due to a decreased tolerance of homophobia and a general consensus that sexuality no longer matters when playing sport. Further to this, lesbian-identified sports clubs and LGB sports leagues have shown to create a space to resist the heteronormative requirements imposed on women who participate in traditional

mainstream sports clubs and leagues (Drury, 2011, 2014; Caudwell, 2007; Ravel & Rail, 2007). Despite such research indicating a deviation away from heteronormative expectations, non-heterosexual identities need to be considered as normative in comparison to heterosexual identities becoming marginalised in order to challenge heteronormativity (Drury, 2014). Women's field hockey has previously been identified as a space which facilitates the inclusion of a variety of different sexual identities (Anderson, et al., 2016; Bullingham, 2015; Davis-Delano, 2014; Litchfield, 2011; Shire, Brackenridge & Fuller, 2000). Therefore, by undertaking further sociological research within a hockey context, the experiences of non-heterosexual individuals and those around them will be essential to gain understandings of the complex workings of discourses impacting upon sexual identity. Hence this justifies the purpose of conducting this study.

The main research question of this study was:

**(1) What discourses have impacted upon recreational women's hockey players' perspectives and experiences surrounding sexual identity?**

To examine this question further, the following questions were also used:

(1) How do women's hockey players engage with discourses of sexual identity to construct their subjectivities?

(2) Through what discursive practices and disciplinary techniques do sexual identities become dominant or alternative within women's hockey?

## **1.2 Significance of the research**

Despite a growing amount of sociological attention into sexuality and sport, very little research has focused on critiquing heteronormativity through investigating a team or club that is not exclusively categorised as a gay or lesbian identified space or within an LGB league. Furthermore, much of the literature surrounding sexuality within sport has focused around high school and university sports teams and their attitudes towards gay or lesbian players, leading to limited research examining recreational sport. Specifically, such literature has shown that there are no universal patterns relating to lesbian athletes' experiences of acceptance or hostility (Anderson et al., 2016). Also, Anderson et al. (2016) indicated that "little research has examined the impact of decreasing homophobia on the lives of heterosexual women, and this is a topic that certainly requires more researcher attention" (p. 152). Focusing this study on a structurally traditional, recreation level women's club that has evidence of a variety of sexual identities, will attempt to provide coverage and insight into the areas identified above that have previously been neglected. Such previously unidentified areas will be discussed in this research.

This research also contributes to the sexuality and sport research area by adopting a poststructural perspective, overtly utilising the work of Michel Foucault to facilitate theoretical understanding. Through adopting such an approach this research attempts to question and disrupt the taken-for-granted

notions and assumptions regarding sexuality that have marginalised sportspeople. When Ravel and Rail (2007) adopted a poststructural perspective for their sexuality and sport research they noted it was advantageous when understanding “how subjectivity was constituted through discourses and social practices and how subjects positioned themselves along several discourses” (p. 417). Through the recognition that multiple discourses can exist at the same time (Foucault, 1998), it will help provide understandings of the complexities of sexual identity.

### **1.3 The researcher’s position**

This study incorporates a poststructural approach, so it is therefore important to first outline and acknowledge the researcher’s (my) position in relation to the study. By doing this it helps to explicitly and implicitly declare any impact or effects I am bringing to the study. Subsequently, this aids both myself as the researcher and the reader to understand and investigate my research intentions. Additionally, this also helps the reader to understand any bias that could have directly impacted upon the data generation, analysis phase (McEvelly, 2012) or even the interpretation of results from this research. I will firstly begin outlining my relationship with hockey and then how I came to engage with poststructural theory.

I have been involved in field hockey since I was eleven and I have continued to play ever since. I have also been involved in recreational women’s league teams since I was thirteen. Within the hockey environment I have always felt comfortable, and am, openly gay. I have found that my sexuality has not been a hinderance in hockey, and beyond that, my fellow teammates have always been

supportive in my decisions to come out and live my life truthfully with regards to my sexual identity. My choice to research sexual identity within women's hockey was therefore influenced by my experiences of being openly gay in the sport I have played and have grown up in and around. I also have an invested interest in wanting to understand how discourses associated with heterosexuality and non-heterosexuality operate in a hockey setting which has always been a safe place for me to be 'out' and open about my relationships. If I was not gay and involved in women's hockey my interest and approach to researching sexual identity in this context may have been different or even remained neglected. Furthermore, I am known within the club that is involved in this study. I recognise that this may have an impact on the data collection process, which will be discussed in full in Chapter Four. However, I feel that there will be positive implications of this in that the participants may have felt more comfortable in discussing their experiences. On the other hand, my involvement may have had negative implications due to my sexual identity already being known and this may have affected their responses in regard to the questions asked. However, since this research is interested in whether hockey facilitates identities outside of the heteronormative ideals, my presence within this study is appropriate and justified.

Before undertaking my master's degree, I had not come across poststructuralism directly. However, my subsequent engagement with it from starting my degree resulted in the realisation that poststructural assumptions, beliefs, and practices seem to fit in with my views. For example, it problematises binary thinking and attempts to interrogate discourses and power relations which contribute to what society and the individuals within it define as

normal and what is deviant. Through taking a poststructuralist approach, my research is committed to listening to the voices of those who are marginalised due to being perceived as being different.

#### **1.4 Reading the thesis**

Chapter two now discusses and examines the current literature available on sexual identity in sport. The chapter is split into two sections: the first documenting the intersections between gender and sexuality leading to the reproduction of a heterosexual sporting identity and the second discussing the decline in levels of homophobia in sport, specifically including research showing resistance to heteronormativity through non-heterosexual women's experiences of sport. Chapter three then outlines Michel Foucault's work surrounding discourse, power, the technologies of power, and the technologies of the self which makes up the theoretical perspective that this research utilises to make sense of its findings. Chapter four provides the outline of the methodology utilised by the study. As such, this chapter explains the data generation and analysis procedures involved. In Chapter five the findings of this research are presented which include discourses of acceptance and inclusivity towards non-heterosexual identities. The final chapter then draws upon the findings discussed in Chapter five to present the conclusions that can be made from this research. This is also where I reach my final conclusion after having considered and discussed my research questions and any limitations posed by this study. I then finally outline the recommendations for future research based on my findings.

## **2.0 Chapter Two – Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the current academic literature and previous research surrounding the study of sexuality in sport which is applicable to the current study. This chapter is split into two sections: the first documenting the intersections between gender and sexuality leading to the reproduction of a heterosexual sporting identity and the second discussing the decline in levels of homophobia in sport, specifically incorporating research showing resistance to heteronormativity through non-heterosexual women's experiences of sport. Firstly, this chapter will outline the definitions of sex, gender and sexual identity followed by a discussion of the dominance of heteronormativity within society and the growth in sexuality as a subject of research. Sexuality and sport literature will then be discussed including: the complexities of gender and sexual identity discourses in sport and the concept of homophobia and its impact on male teams and women's teams. This chapter will then outline research showing resistance to heteronormativity within women's sport through a research focus on gay sports teams. Finally, there will be an examination of the literature surrounding sexual identity in women's field hockey. This will help to justify and contextualise the focus of this current research.

### **2.2 Sex, gender and sexual identity**

Before discussing research concerning sexuality and sport, I will outline the differences between sex and gender and how such concepts relate to the definition of sexual identity. Sex is defined as the biological function of an individual which is split into the two binary sex categories of male or female (Oakley, 2015). Based on the sex binary, gender is socially constructed through

a classification of what is considered masculine and what is considered feminine (Oakley, 2015). An individual's identity refers to who they are and how they are connected to the social world and society (Coakley & Pike, 2014). Sexuality can be defined as experiences of sexual attraction, feelings and relationships (Plummer, 2010). Therefore, an individual's sexual identity is how they define themselves in relation to who they are sexually and romantically attracted to. According to Plummer (2010) "homosexuality has been a key focus in recent decades and it can be shown that there have been massively contrasting attitudes towards it across different cultures and times" (p. 170-171). In contemporary western societies heterosexuality is the dominant sexuality and is often referred to as heteronormativity (Bilton et al., 2002).

### **2.2.1 Heteronormativity**

Heteronormativity is the assumption that only two sexes exist (male and female) and that there are gendered identities and norms associated with the two-specific sexes (Herz & Johansson, 2015). For example, relationships and attraction between two people of the opposite sex (heterosexuality) are seen as the norm. Therefore, the heterosexual sexual identity holds the most prestige in society (Herz & Johansson, 2015). Sartore and Cunningham (2009) refer to heterosexuality as the "taken-for-granted norm" (p. 289). Academics often refer to the dominance of heterosexuality as compulsory heterosexuality, as heterosexuality operates as a key foundational structure within society and culture to maintain male dominance and power (Herz & Johansson, 2015; Sartore & Cunningham, 2009). Those sexual identities that are outside of the heteronormative expectation such as those who identify as non-heterosexual, meaning anything but straight, are often deemed as abnormal, deviant and find

themselves on the margins of society (Griffin, 1998). Social institutions such as the media, education and sport, categorise what is 'normal' sexual behaviour and what is classed as deviance (Parker, 2009).

Despite the longevity of heteronormativity, in recent decades, there has been increased levels of social and political acceptance of those who identify as non-heterosexual (Parker, 2009). For example, the World Health Organisation declassified same-sex attraction as a mental illness in 1992 and same-sex couples in England and Wales have been allowed to legally marry since 2014 (Clements & Fields, 2014). Such advancements in policy have led to more people being open about their sexuality in everyday life (National LGBT survey, 2018). In the recent National LGBT survey (2018) undertaken by the United Kingdom's Government Equalities Office, it was reported that of the 108,100 respondents "61% identified as gay or lesbian and 26% as bisexual. Less than 10% of survey respondents identified as pansexual (4%), asexual (2%), 'other' (2%) or queer (1%)" (p. 15). Such figures indicate the growing presence and awareness of different sexual identities in the UK. Research that puts sexuality at the forefront of its analysis has been termed 'sexuality studies' and is growing in depth and magnitude (Green, 2007).

### **2.2.2 Sexuality as a subject of research**

Sexuality studies is an interdisciplinary field. However, for the purpose of this study sexuality will be viewed from a sociological theoretical perspective, with emphasis on poststructural perspectives to inform understandings of previous literature and the data presented. Through taking this approach sexuality will be studied as a "an analytic category rather than an ascribed characteristic" (Irvine,

2003, p. 431). This means that sexuality can be analysed through its exposure to power relations and discourses of knowledge all of which can contribute to its overall social construction (Irvine, 2003). Through moving away from the nineteenth century biological and medical discourses that non-heterosexual sexual identities are a mental illness, sexuality can be seen as being shaped by the social world (Irvine, 2003). Ravel and Rail (2007) have commented on scholars who have challenged sexuality as a fixed construct by viewing it as changing and fluid and through this have been able to deconstruct how individuals negotiate discourses of sexual identity. Furthermore, studies by Paris (2011) and Diamond (2000) have indicated that there should be a removal of sexual identity labels. According to a longitudinal study of sexual identities in 80 women (Diamond, 2000), the findings demonstrated that the women had altered their identity label more than once over a period of ten years. But Diamond (2000) only accounted for the fluidity of sexual identities and behaviours and did not document whether the women had received acceptance and inclusivity regarding their sexual fluidity. For the purpose of the current study, sexual identity labels will be utilised to aid the analysis of experiences between heterosexual and non-heterosexual players.

### **2.3 Sexuality and sport**

Research into sexuality and sport has been influenced by the socio-cultural and historical significance of sport as a male preserve in western societies (Hargreaves, 1994). The intersections of gender and sexuality within sport are therefore complex as sports participants are required to constantly negotiate their identities in line with broader socio-cultural ideals (Waldron, 2016). The

impact of gender discourses within sport are therefore a vital introduction to the complexities of negotiating sexual identity.

### **2.3.1 Masculinity and femininity discourses in sport**

Sport's historical background as a male domain is continuously reinforced (Burton, 2015; Cahn, 2015). Specifically, sport is a sphere where hypermasculinity, is continuously celebrated and reproduced (Hargreaves, 1994). Hypermasculinity refers to an exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour through a heightened emphasis on physical strength, aggression and overt heterosexuality (Messner, 1990). Sport is therefore seen as empowering men and has been that way since the Victorian period as it was believed that sport would produce muscular Christian gentlemen as the discourses that allied with muscular Christianity reflected the Victorian ideal of a sportsman who was fair, respectful and rule-abiding (Dellamora, 1990; Dunning & Sheard, 1979). Furthermore, in Victorian society, the development in scientific thought led to women being medically deemed physically and mentally inferior to men, resulting in their discouragement from playing sport (Hargreaves, 1994).

It has been documented that due to the discursive notion of sport as a masculinising process, women's sport continues to "struggle for sporting legitimacy" (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 94). The presence of women in sport has led to what has been described as 'gender troubles' (Hargreaves, 2000). Specifically, studies have shown that women who play contact or team sports frequently have their femininity and sexuality questioned and scrutinised (Choi, 2000; Griffin, 1998; Mean & Kassing, 2008). Such questioning leads back to the gender binary that sport operates under, which serves to marginalise and

isolate those who do not fit the distinct gender and sexuality binaries (Griffin, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994). For a woman to be accepted and successful in sport she is obliged to act “in conformity with the patriarchal rules that ensure she is first and foremost recognised as a heterosexual feminine being” (Choi, 2000, p. 8). Therefore, women’s participation in sport is directly linked to heterosexual roles, specifically regarding their ability to be mothers and wives (Mean & Kassing, 2008). The concerns over the loss of a woman’s femininity if she participates in sport is central to a myriad of studies documenting women’s inclusion (Mean & Kassing, 2008). Although there is no plausible way to exclusively confirm heterosexuality, overt displays of femininity aid the reproduction of the heterosexual image (Griffin, 1998).

### **2.3.2 The lesbian discourse**

Waldron (2016) through the use of a feminist poststructural perspective, examines the complexity of lesbian athlete and coach experiences. Specifically, Waldron (2016) highlights a dominant discourse in sport which she refers to as the myth of the lesbian athlete. When referring to the myth, Waldron (2016) is not exclusively identifying a stereotype, but rather she argues the myth to be a set of false beliefs and widespread ideologies that aid the reproduction of social inequalities. Within the myth there are two false beliefs. The first belief is that any woman playing sport must be a lesbian (Waldron, 2016). The second is that a lesbian identity encompasses butch gender presentation through possessing a muscular body, being stronger than other women, being aggressive, having short hair and physically presenting as masculine (Waldron, 2016). In sport, such a myth acts as a form of social control to not only discourage women from

participating in sport but also by alienating non-heterosexual female athletes. Another term for this type of 'fearmongering' is homophobia (Anderson, 2009).

### **2.3.3 Homophobia**

When developing the inclusive masculinity theory, Anderson (2009) established the concept of homophobia. Firstly, inclusive masculinity theory accounts for the existence of multiple masculinities rather than one hegemonic form of masculinity in the form of an overtly masculine man (Anderson, 2009).

Therefore, the theory can account for decreasing levels of cultural homophobia (Anderson, 2009). Although, inclusive masculinity theory is critiqued by De Boise (2015) for predominantly theorising white, middle class, gay men when addressing declining levels of homophobia, therefore subsequently excluding lesbian and bisexual individuals. Homophobia refers to the fear of being perceived as homosexual. Anderson (2009) argued, through inclusive masculinity theory, that when levels of homophobia and homophobia are high, hegemonic masculinity exists, leading to the exclusion and isolation of other masculinities and women. On the other hand, when levels of homophobia and homophobia are low, multiple masculinities can operate and exist (McCormack & Anderson, 2014). Anderson's (2009) use of homophobia, like the application of inclusive masculinity theory, has only been applied to understand how homophobia has impacted men's gendered behaviours within team sports (McCormack & Anderson, 2014). However, Anderson and Bullingham (2015) have recently argued that homophobia is more prominent in women's sport due to the notion that if one woman identified as a lesbian then suspicion can be cast on all other members of that team (Hargreaves, 2000). This theorising also leads back to the gender discourses outlined at the start of this chapter. I

will now discuss both male and women's team sports, highlighting why women's team sports need more academic attention when researching sexuality.

## **2.4 Male team sports**

The majority of studies investigating sexuality within male team sport settings have focused on rugby teams (Anderson & McGuire, 2010) and university-based sports teams (Anderson, 2011). This research has explored the attitudes towards gay athletes and homophobia amongst predominately heterosexual sports teams through drawing on the concept of hegemonic masculinity and inclusive masculinity theory. The research focus on male team sports and gay athletes has resulted in discussions surrounding the gender discourses associated with gay males (Anderson, 2015). This is because the stereotype of a gay male being feminine and weaker significantly differs from the hypermasculine man who embodies hegemonic masculinity and is successful in sport (Anderson et al., 2016). Anderson (2011, 2015) has documented, through three decades of research on gay men in sport, that there has been a decline in homophobia towards male athletes due to the decline in the prominence of hegemonic masculinity particularly within university sports environments. Also, Bush, Anderson and Carr's (2012) quantitative study of university athletes' attitudes towards gay males also documented acceptance and concluded that "it is no longer sociologically responsible to generalise all sports, and all men who play them as homophobic. Increasingly, it appears to be the opposite" (p. 116). However, such claims must be met with scepticism as the quantitative research method does not allow for the researcher to fully capture the feelings and emotions of the participants. For example, the data collection method of questionnaires seems inappropriate for researching such an emotive topic

(May, 2011), as the participants may have responded that they are accepting of gay athletes when really their physical behaviour may be indicative that they are not. Furthermore, such studies are critiqued for the narrow focus on predominantly white younger generations, who are already highlighted to have liberal and open-minded attitudes to different sexual identities in comparison to older generations (Morgan, 2013).

Anderson's (2011, 2015) studies have indicated that when one gay man comes out it does not cast suspicion onto all other members of a team due to the assumption that gay men are a rarity within sport due to the dominance of hegemonic masculinity (Anderson et al., 2016). However, the very act of 'coming out' demonstrates the pervasiveness of heteronormativity as straight people are not expected to or have to 'come out' about their sexuality as it is the assumed norm (Rasmussen, 2004). In women's sport when one person comes out this casts suspicion on the sexual identity of the rest of the players on that team and Anderson et al., (2016) has attempted to explain this finding by stating: "Imagine one drop of orange squash put into a glass of water making the whole glass become orange" (p. 140). What Anderson et al., (2016) means is that the stereotypical judgement of female athletes in sport all being gay is heightened when one of the players comes out because there is the belief that a domino effect will occur.

## **2.5 Women's team sports**

There are conflicting bodies of literature surrounding women's sport and sexuality. They appear to show that the presence and experience of non-heterosexual women in sport follow no distinct pattern of acceptance or

rejection (Anderson et al., 2016). Based on the discourses of what it means to be a successful female athlete, women who participate in team sports frequently have their sexuality questioned (Griffin, 1992). Griffin (1992, 1998) was one of the first researchers of lesbian sportspeople, documenting their experiences of homophobia and unequal treatment. Griffin's (1992, 1998) studies found that lesbians in sport were verbally and physically harassed, silenced, reduced to states of denial, required to flaunt a heterosexual image and deemed un-hireable for coaching positions. The concept of silencing, also known as the 'don't ask, don't tell' barrier, which refers to when non-heterosexual athletes are forced to keep quiet about their sexual identities, has been one of the most enduring features of discrimination towards lesbians in women's sport (Bullingham, 2015). More recently Anderson and Bullingham (2015) have outlined how women present themselves as hyperfeminine through wearing make-up and jewellery when competing to adhere to a heterosexual image. Such an overt presentation of femininity to reinforce heterosexuality is referred to as the female 'apologetic' and is closely associated with homophobia (Anderson & Bullingham, 2015).

When studying women's sexuality within sports cultures the work of Jayne Caudwell has been valuable. Caudwell (2002) recognised the struggles women within team sports faced to distance themselves away from the lesbian stereotype. Caudwell's (1999) study explained how the 'butch' lesbian label plagues both heterosexual and lesbian women in sport as the negative connotations of this identity place doubts over sporting performance and can lead to further gender verification questioning. Furthermore, Caudwell (2003) also stipulated that the butch label is frequently associated with lesbianism in

sport and often leads to discrimination and homophobia by sportswomen of all sexual identities. Despite such research being dated, this label is still enduring and continues to produce prejudice in women's sport (Waldron, 2016).

## **2.6 Decreasing levels of homophobia in sport**

According to Anderson et al. (2016) homophobia and homophobia are decreasing in sport, especially in university sports teams due to the creation of supportive team environments impacted by more accepting and inclusive views being held by younger generations (Morgan, 2013). One of the most significant pieces of research that investigated women's sport and homophobia that is directly applicable to this current study is Rachael Bullingham's (2015) PhD study. Bullingham (2015) highlighted a deviation away from the previously identified hostile environment women's sport presents for non-heterosexual women. Bullingham (2015) indicated that the fear surrounding the lesbian label has declined and the silences endured by lesbian athletes were no longer one of the processes of homophobia.

Despite evidence of the impacts supposed decreasing levels of homophobia has on non-heterosexual athletes, there is a current lack of research examining its impact on heterosexual players (Anderson et al., 2016). If homophobia in sport affects all participants, for example the bullying of non-athletic boys and the labelling of athletic girls (Hemphill & Symons, 2009), it would be interesting to see if decreasing levels of homophobia has a positive impact on all participants in sport regardless of their gender or sexual identity. Furthermore, research claiming to show that homophobia and homophobia are under rapid decline must be met with levels of scepticism. Those outlining their attitudes

through questionnaires or structured interviews may only be presenting themselves as accepting and inclusive when they could be withholding their true beliefs over the fear that they may be labelled as homophobic or discriminatory.

## **2.7 Resistance to heteronormativity in women's sport**

Ravel and Rail's (2007) study investigated that narratives of fourteen sportswomen in Canada who identified themselves as non-heterosexual and their findings suggested that sports spaces can normalise a version of lesbian identity. Specifically, through the utilisation of a poststructuralist perspective Ravel and Rail (2007) asked the following research question: "How do women with non-conventional sexualities discursively construct their sport space?" (p. 403). What was advantageous about Ravel and Rail's (2007) study was that through utilising interviews participants' talk was able to be collected and analysed to determine how discourses were constructed. Interestingly, the participants expressed that sport was a space for socialisation with other non-heterosexual identities to develop friendships and even fall in love (Ravel & Rail, 2007). However, Ravel and Rail's (2007) study was conducted in Canada which in wider society have had more progressive equality laws than here in the United Kingdom. Although, a growing area of research also indicating the resistance to heteronormativity are lesbian-identified sports clubs and LGBT sports leagues within the United Kingdom. Drury (2014) refers to such settings as 'gay sport spaces'.

### **2.7.1 Gay sport spaces**

Gay sports teams have developed out of mainstream sport to provide an inclusive sporting space to combat the homophobia and hostility that has been

faced by gay and lesbian athletes (Drury, 2014). Studies investigating gay sports spaces have adopted a poststructural or queer theoretical framework to explain their findings (Drury, 2011, 2014; Caudwell, 2007). Caudwell's (2007) analysis of lesbian culture and communities in women's football utilised a queer-feminist approach to understand marginalised players' experiences. Such an approach was advantageous as it enabled Caudwell (2007) to view sexuality as fluid and unfixed. Caudwell (2007) found that within a lesbian identified team space the butch identity was the ultimate lesbian gender and that their place within the team based on sporting ability was very high. Drury's (2011) study followed a more structured binary view of sexuality and her findings were that bisexuality and heterosexuality were silenced which enabled the lesbian sexual identity to hold a privileged discursive position. The privileged discursive position was achieved through creating a space where the women were able to be open and out.

Both Caudwell (2007) and Drury (2011) outline their own research positions, through disclosing their sexual orientation. Through discussing their own impacts on their research, both scholars are critically reflective of how their own experiences will have impacted the data collection and analysis. This aligns with the poststructuralist stance that researchers cannot fully detach themselves from the research and in the case of the aforementioned studies, the experiences of the researchers were shared to encourage rapport with the participants when conducting the semi-structured interviews (May, 2011). Due to the potential sensitivity of the topic of sexuality (Israel, 2002), the researchers' own experiences could have facilitated the participants' willingness

to open up about their experiences as they could have recognised that the researcher understood their experiences.

A significant issue with focusing on gay or lesbian identified sports spaces for research purposes is the exclusion of other non-heterosexual identities.

Anderson et al. (2016) highlighted how research into sexual identities in sport is limited to experiences of those who identify as straight, lesbian or gay. For those who are bisexual, an absence of their experiences is termed 'bi-erasure' (Holthaus, 2015). A contributing factor to bisexual erasure within sexuality research is that researchers are reluctant to see beyond the polarisations of sexuality into the heterosexual or homosexual sexuality categories (Dyar et al., 2015). Within Magrath, Cleland and Anderson's (2017) research into the presentation of bisexuality in the media, specifically focusing on Tom Daley, there was the indication that bisexual athletes may be reluctant to present themselves as bisexual due to the societal stigma this identity can entail. Furthermore, until Magrath et al.'s (2017) research there was "no academic work on the experience of bisexual individuals in sport" (p. 5). Thus, when studies utilise the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and all other identities (LGBTQ+) umbrella term, the researchers must ensure their study covers all the identities mentioned to avoid leading to the oversimplification of experiences (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011).

Drury (2014) concludes that fully challenging heteronormativity requires homosexual players to be considered as dominant rather than seen as the 'other' sexual identity. Replacing heteronormativity with homonormativity therefore requires non-homosexual identities to be marginalised in the same

space homosexual identities are dominant (Drury, 2011). However, Drury (2014) suggests that homonormativity is not as straightforward as implied, as there has also been evidence of transgressive gender identities in the form of exclusion and marginalisation of 'butch' female identities. Therefore, based on Drury's (2011, 2014) findings more research needs to be conducted on the presence of discourses that lead to the construction of individual's subjectivities as they can often be multiple and complex. Furthermore, aside from research on women's football, which is frequently focused on within this research discipline, women's field hockey has also been identified as a space that facilitates a diverse spectrum of sexual identities (Davis-Delano, 2014) which could prove to be advantageous when investigating the state of heteronormativity and discourses of sexual identity.

### **2.7.2 Women's field hockey**

Women's field hockey from elite to recreational level has been identified by previous research and public media accounts to provide a space for non-heterosexual women to be open about their sexual identity in spaces outside of lesbian only teams and LGBT leagues (Anderson et al., 2016; Davis-Delano, 2014; Litchfield, 2011; Shire, Brackenridge & Fuller, 2000). In elite level hockey, specifically in the Great Britain and England squads, Kate and Helen Richardson-Walsh became the first openly gay married couple to compete at an Olympic Games in Rio 2016. Both Shire et al.'s (2000) study of a student hockey club and Davis-Delano's (2014) research into the development of women's same-sex relationships in sport found that hockey had been an important support base for them to express and explore their sexuality. Furthermore, the women interviewed saw their sexual identities as fluid and

complex (Shire et al., 2000), which closely aligns with the poststructural notion of identities not being fixed or set to specific binaries.

Shire et al., (2000) study utilised a longitudinal research design which documented a varsity field hockey team over a 10-year period where an increase in the number of non-heterosexual players meant that homophobic discourses were replaced by inclusivity discourses towards non-heterosexual identities. The participants indicated that being on the team meant they could escape surveillance from their family and employers through being their own authentic self, free of judgement from others (Shire et al., 2000). Similarly, Litchfield's (2011) case study of a hockey club in Melbourne utilised interviews with eight players as a way to explore the social context of the club, which led to the participants discussing inclusivity, senses of belonging and acceptance of all sexual identities.

## **2.8 Summary**

From the literature and research presented surrounding sexuality and sport in this chapter it is evident that sexual identity within women's sport is complex. Not only do women have to negotiate their sexual identities due to the perception that all women who take part in sport are lesbians (Griffin, 1998; Waldron, 2016) but they also have to take into consideration western gender norms too (Hargreaves, 2000). Drawing on these negotiations of sexual and gender identity discourses, the experiences of non-heterosexual women in sport have received mixed academic research coverage. On the one hand Griffin's (1998) work has highlighted hostility whereas Bullingham's (2015) recent PhD study has indicated growing levels of inclusivity and acceptance. Particularly,

there is a growing awareness of sexuality within wider society and this has led to research and the production of documentation by the government within the United Kingdom on sexual and gender identities through the National LGBT Survey (2018). This signifies a growing concern surrounding the understandings of how to facilitate inclusive social environments for such individuals.

Specifically, within sport, gay sports spaces have provided non-heterosexual participants with the ability to take part in sport without fear of homophobia or stigma (Drury, 2011, 2014). However, these studies have been limited to football. But as outlined by Drury (2014) to fully interrogate the dominance of heteronormativity a lesbian-specific club or league is limited in its ability to do so. Therefore, my research will investigate the discourses of sexual identity within a hockey club that is not structured as a lesbian only club and has the ability for heteronormativity to be challenged. Furthermore, the poststructural perspective has been advantageous in this area of study allowing the researchers to investigate the discursive practices that have led to certain sexual identities becoming dominant or alternative. Chapter Three will now outline the study's theoretical framework.

## **3.0 Chapter Three – Foucault**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter Two provided a review of the literature surrounding sexuality and the negotiations of heteronormativity within sports contexts. Chapter Three will lead on from this highlighting the theoretical approach taken by a number of studies (Caudwell, 2007; Ravel & Rail, 2007; Drury, 2011; Waldron, 2016) that have been inspired by poststructuralism which draws upon the work of Michel Foucault. Although Foucault did not directly write about sport or leisure, his concepts have significantly impacted upon and been frequently utilised within sports sociology (Markula & Pringle, 2006; Rail & Harvey, 1995). Specifically, his engagement with sexuality and theorising of the restrictive impact identity categorisation has on people (Foucault, 1998) has resonated with sports scholars (Caudwell, 2003; Drury, 2011; Waldron, 2016). Through adopting a poststructural theoretical stance, research has highlighted a shift in the understanding of non-heterosexual athletes' experiences and has begun to interrogate the negotiation of heterosexuality within sports contexts (Drury, 2011; Waldron, 2016). This chapter discusses the poststructural, Foucaultian theoretical framework that underpins this research study. Firstly, this chapter provides an overview of poststructuralism which is then followed by an examination of Foucault's work on sexuality. This chapter then discusses Foucault's term discourse before examining his understanding of power with focus on disciplinary power, the techniques of power and the technologies of the self. I draw on the outlined concepts in Chapter Five to interrogate the ways in which the participants engaged with sexual identity discourses.

### **3.2 Poststructuralism**

The terms postmodernism and poststructuralism are frequently used interchangeably (Wright, 2006). Specifically, Wright (2004) has explained that 'postmodernism' is more frequently referred to in North America and 'poststructuralism' is used when taking a European approach. Therefore, within my study I refer to 'poststructuralism' based on the outlined distinction by Wright (2004). A direct explanation of what poststructuralism or poststructural theory entails is difficult to outline, however Wright (2006) indicates that poststructural perspectives tend to question the taken-for-granted assumptions, practices and theories. Specifically, poststructuralism is the theoretical approach that directly critiques structuralism through highlighting that "there is no absolute knowledge, no absolute reality waiting 'out there' to be discovered" (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007, p. 23). Whereas, structuralism relies on collecting and studying data to understand the social world through 'truth' and 'reality' (Olssen, 2003). The poststructural perspective is therefore advantageous when critiquing the taken for granted ways of thinking that are European based, scientific and predominantly encouraged by the patriarchy (Wright, 2006). Therefore, this theoretical approach is important to this current study as it seeks to investigate and deconstruct the heteronormative ways of thinking about sexuality.

Poststructural theory is thought to be heavily influenced by the work of Foucault (Olssen, 2003; Wright, 2006). The poststructural theoretical perspective has also been essential to the formation of queer theory (Huffer, 2010; Namaste, 1994) and has influenced the work of Judith Butler (1990). Specifically, through Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity, the humanist view of identity and the self is critiqued, stipulating how reality is not fixed and is context

dependant (Namaste, 1994; Weedon, 1997). Foucault was interested in matters of subjectivity and how particular realities are constructed and the discursive resources that are drawn upon to constitute the self (Caudwell, 2003; Weedon, 1997). Subjectivity refers to a person's conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings and how this impacts the understanding of that person's relation to the world (Weedon, 1997). The poststructural perspective makes "visible the ways in which power and knowledge operate to privilege certain practices and forms of subjectivity and to examine their effects on the lives of individuals and groups" (Wright, 2006, p. 60). This now brings the theoretical framework discussion onto the work of Michel Foucault.

### **3.3 Foucault and *The History of Sexuality* volumes**

Foucault was concerned with how categorising people can restrict and subject them to certain ways of life, identities or ways of behaving (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Foucault critically engaged with science to investigate how knowledge was produced to construct individuals, especially homosexuals, as objects and how such objects became subject to sets of scientific truths (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Foucault produced three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. The most significant in terms of direct engagement with sexuality was his 1976 publication, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge*, where Foucault sought to outline experiences of sexuality which varied historically (Foucault, 1998; Markula & Pringle, 2006). Through his enquiries about "the production of the homosexual" (Namaste, 1994, p. 221), Foucault argued that the existence of homosexuality was based on the knowledge instilled from the judicial and psychiatric fields (Downing, 2008; Markula & Pringle, 2006). Particularly, Foucault proposed that sexuality that is recognised in modern day

society was formulated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries due to the developments in scientific knowledge (Downing, 2008). In *Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure* (Foucault, 1992) and *Volume 3: The Care of the Self* (Foucault, 1990) of the *History of Sexuality* series, Foucault was concerned with how, historically, sexuality has undergone a process of normalisation to then classify groups falling outside of the sexuality norm, such as homosexuals, as deviant.

Foucault's work is particularly influential when studying sexuality as he called for a critical approach towards sexuality, through questioning the statements made about sexuality and how some sexual practices were normalised over others (Downing, 2008). Foucault's texts have not only influenced the development of subsequent queer and gender studies but have outlined the methods of analysis regarding the operations of discourses and power which will now be discussed.

### **3.4 Discourse**

Discourses are ideas, concepts and beliefs that over time have been cemented as knowledge (Bilton et al., 2002). According to Foucault, discourses are products of socio-historical practices and socialise individuals through processes of constraining, shaping and monitoring behaviour (Foucault, 1972, 1982). Foucault (1973) defines discourses as sets of 'truths' which are (re)produced through power connections and social practices which function within institutions including schools and prisons. Within the current study the institution is the specific hockey club. 'Truths' are often defined as the building blocks of discourse (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Specific discourses hold more power and prestige over others and these discourses are often products of institutions such as law, medicine and education (Weedon, 1997). The outlined

institutions place particular emphasis on what is 'natural' or 'normal' (Weedon, 1997). Discourses compete to become established as the 'norm', which leads to the categorisation of practices and specific knowledge (Foucault, 1973; 1998). Therefore, alternative discourses, practices and knowledges are omitted and disregarded (Foucault, 1972, 1998). For example, Waldron's (2016) research outlines how sexual identity discourses that align with gender discourses such as femininity are idealised within certain sporting spheres. Due to sport's deep-rooted association with the reproduction of masculinity, female athletes who are muscular are often labelled as lesbians. This has encouraged some women to display hyperfemininity to distance themselves away from the lesbian discourse to avoid marginalisation and stigmatisation (Waldron, 2016).

Discourses have also been described by Danaher, Schirato and Webb (2007) as "language in action" (p. 31). However, discourses cannot just solely be reduced to language and speech (Foucault, 1972) as discourses are "not just linguistic, but are expressed and produced in our actions and practices, as well as in the environments we create" (Dahlberg et al., 2007, p. 31). Discourses are linked to power in that they produce and broadcast it (Foucault, 1998).

Specifically, discourses can be used to exercise power over us as they provide us with language used to produce our thoughts and knowledge (Foucault, 1998). Our communication and ways of carrying out certain practices are often done so naturally without being exclusively tied to particular power relations (Danaher et al., 2007). Due to being under the constant influence of discourses (Weedon, 1997) our meanings we attach to things and our subjectivities are formed through discourses (Wright, 2004).

In this current study, Foucault's technologies of the self are also utilised to aid the understandings of the participants' engagement with sexual identity discourses. The technologies of the self suggest that individuals are not passive recipients of discourses and can therefore resist and make individual choices. Therefore, it is important to outline that contradictory and opposing discourses can exist in the same place and at the same time (Foucault, 1998). This was evident in Ravel and Rail's (2007) study whereby the participants negotiated their subject positions with multiple and contradictory discourses. Specifically, Ravel and Rail's (2007) participants indicated discourses of acceptance and inclusivity towards being gay but they also recited discourses that were derogatory to 'butch' players which often reinforced dominant gender discourses.

This current study also incorporates a method of discourse analysis which utilises and is influenced by Foucault's work on discourses. Foucault was not solely focused on the truths that discourses were built upon but was concerned with how the discourses functioned and operated (Foucault, 2000). Foucault argued that the articulation of discourses was best understood through focusing on individuals and how they engaged with discourses, in comparison to exclusively focusing on the themes and concepts that discourses portrayed (Foucault, 2000). Therefore, this study, involves the interrogation of how and why individuals engaged with specific discourses to construct their subjectivities. Also drawing upon Foucault's concern with the disregard of alternative discourses, this study's analysis considers the absence and silencing of particular discourses surrounding sexuality (Ferfolja, 2008). Discourse analysis will be discussed in Chapter Four.

### **3.5 Power**

According to Foucault (1991), power is not exclusively owned by people but instead is dispersed throughout society. Rather than viewing power as solely top-down and repressive, he suggested that it is more complex and operates through capillary-like networks (Foucault, 1991, 1998). Therefore, all individuals are actively in varying relationships of power (Lynch, 2011). Foucault highlighted how power is fluid and drew attention to its operation (Foucault, 1991). Foucault focused on power at macro level through structures and ideologies and at micro level through how power impacted individual bodies (Markula & Pringle, 2006). He also stipulated that power can be productive and positive as well as oppressive and restrictive (Foucault, 1991, 1998). Notably, Foucault draws attention to the premise that where there is power, there is also the likelihood of resistance to that power (Foucault, 1991, 1998). Therefore, power relations are not exclusively fixed and are susceptible to alterations (Foucault, 1991, 1998).

#### **3.5.1 Disciplinary power**

Foucault's work heavily focused on disciplinary power (Markula & Pringle, 2006). According to Foucault (1991) disciplinary power involved the discipline and control of bodies; such power was frequently exercised as a form of surveillance and as a tool of bodily domination (Rail & Harvey, 1995). Foucault stipulated that disciplinary power is having hold:

over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies.

(Foucault, 1991, p. 137-138)

Power operates through and within institutions that ultimately influence individuals in an orderly way (Wright, 2006). Therefore, disciplinary power involves techniques of internalised norms in order to instil control (Rail & Harvey, 1995). To fully comprehend the dominance of disciplinary power on bodies, it is imperative that the techniques of power are identified and investigated to give insight into how it operates (Markula & Pringle, 2006).

### **3.5.2 Techniques of power**

Foucault's (1991) understanding of disciplinary power as a form of bodily control and regulation emerged out of his focus on modern societal institutions including prisons and hospitals. His analysis of disciplinary power within the prison (Foucault, 1991), provided the theoretical grounding for the analysis of pedagogy (McEvelly, 2012). Specifically, the work of Gore (1995) is frequently cited within sport and exercise research when elaborating on the micro-practices and techniques of power, as Gore applied such concepts to pedagogy. The aim of the current study is to examine through what disciplinary techniques of power do sexual identities become dominant or alternative in women's hockey. Although the hockey club setting does not directly relate to pedagogy, Gore's (1995) techniques of power can still be applied, this is due to the continued focus on understanding power relations at a micro level through the hockey players' individual experiences.

Drawing on Foucault's work on power, Gore (1995) outlines eight techniques, as follows:

- *Surveillance* – “supervising, closely observing, watching, threatening to watch or expecting to be watched” (p. 169)
- *Normalisation* – “invoking, requiring, setting or conforming to a standard – defining the normal” (p. 171)
- *Exclusion* – “the reverse side of normalisation – the defining of the pathological” (p. 173)
- *Classification* – “differentiating groups or individuals from one another, classifying them, classifying oneself” (p. 174)
- *Distribution* – “arranging, isolating, separating, ranking” (p. 176)
- *Individualisation* – “giving individual character to oneself or another” (p. 178)
- *Totalisation* – “the specification of collectivities, giving collective character” (p. 179)
- *Regulation* – “controlling by rule, subject to restrictions, invoking a rule, including sanction, reward, punishment” (p. 180)

Gore's (1995) framework was pivotal to this study to explore how techniques of power were used to instil disciplinary control within a women's hockey setting and how specific discourses of sexual identity were formulated and normalised. Furthermore, in addition to Foucault's enquires about discourses, he was also concerned with how knowledge is ingrained through discursive practices (Foucault, 1998). Therefore, this study aimed to not only identify dominant

discourses impacting sexual identity but to investigate how such discourses operated and how they affected players' subjectivities.

### **3.5.3 Technologies of the self**

Foucault's early work on discourses and power has been frequently critiqued by researchers for his overreliance on the concept of disciplinary power which he suggested created docile bodies (Downing, 2008). Therefore, such work has neglected notions of agency, change and resistance (Markula, 2003). However, Foucault later acknowledged that he had "insisted too much on the technology of domination and power" (Foucault, 2000, p. 225). Therefore, in his later work, Foucault placed heightened interest on an individual's ability to resist and disrupt dominant discourses through the technologies of the self (Markula, 2003). Foucault described the technologies of the self as permitting

individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain stance of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.

(Foucault, 2000, p. 225)

Therefore, the technologies of the self are indicative of modes of self-governance, meaning that individuals are able to reflect on themselves (Foucault, 2000). Individuals, through the technologies of the self, understand the consequences of their own behaviour and are free to mould themselves as they deem fit (Foucault, 2000). A central part of this process is how individuals learn to problematise discourses through critical self-awareness (Markula,

2004). According to Markula (2003), critically self-aware individuals question normality and what is expected of their identity. Therefore, there is the potential to interrogate subjectivities which are an individual's conscious and unconscious thoughts and ways of understanding (Weedon, 1997), to create new forms of subjective experiences (Markula, 2003). Within sport, an analysis of the technologies of the self is defined as identifying "the actions of an individual within discursive power relations and then map out how these actions have moulded discourses and the individual's identity alike" (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 140).

The technologies of the self may prove to be a useful analysis tool within this study when investigating the participants' engagement with heteronormative and non-heterosexual discourses. Due to the recent emergence of literature documenting declining levels of homophobia in sport and wider western society (Anderson et al., 2016), more participants may be critical of the place and presence of heteronormativity. It may be that hockey has provided the basis for the participants to engage in critical self-awareness, leading to the active problematisation of sexual identity discourses and their impacts upon identity formation. Such findings may be likely as Foucault has previously indicated that individuals are not just passive recipients of dominant culture (Foucault, 2000; Markula & Pringle, 2006).

### **3.6 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the relevance of a poststructural, Foucaultian theoretical framework for this study. Foucault's key concepts will be crucial to understand how hockey players engage with discourses of sexual identity. This

research will elaborate on how discourses have restrictive capabilities but also how such discourses can be challenged and resisted. To aid analysis further, techniques of power, specifically those outlined by Gore (1995), and the technologies of the self will be drawn upon to examine how specific sexual identities become dominant or alternative. Chapter Four now outlines this study's methodology.

## **4.0 Chapter Four – Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research procedure, specifically discussing the data generation and data analysis processes. The chapter begins by first outlining the main research question and the sub-questions. Secondly, this is then followed by a discussion of the data generation procedure including the selection of the club studied, ethical considerations, the data generation method of semi-structured interviews, the participants involved and a discussion of how I reflected on the research process. In addition to this, I then explain how I sought to produce high quality qualitative research. Finally, I will then outline the data analysis process.

### **4.2 Research questions**

The main research question of this study was:

**(1) What discourses have impacted recreational women's hockey players' perspectives and experiences surrounding sexual identity?**

To examine this question further, the following questions were also explored:

- (1) How do women's hockey players engage with discourses of sexual identity to construct their subjectivities?
- (2) Through what discursive practices and disciplinary techniques do sexual identities become dominant or alternative within women's hockey?

## **4.3 Data generation**

### **4.3.1 Introduction**

The data generation process was informed by the above research questions and the poststructural, Foucaultian theoretical framework. As outlined in Chapter Three, poststructural perspectives evolve around the interrogation of discourses (Wright, 2006). Within this study the research questions required me to identify the sexual identity discourses at one hockey club and investigate how hockey players engaged with these discourses. Additionally, poststructural perspectives also place importance on understanding how power relations work to determine what meanings have importance in specific contexts (Wright, 2006). Hence, this study employed a case study design, focusing on one specific case in one specific context. This study was not seeking to establish set truths in the form of establishing unquestionable knowledge but was concerned with exploring how the participants socially constructed their sexual identities (Bryman, 2012). My intention was two-fold in that I was to identify the discourses of sexual identity at the club and then to interrogate the workings of these discourses. Therefore, this research followed a qualitative line of inquiry to directly engage with the participants within their natural settings. This was carefully considered in order to attempt to gain understandings of phenomena through the meaning's individuals bring to them (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

According to the LGBT Foundation's (2015) research guidance, when researching LGBT participants, researchers need to ensure they are "amplifying the voices of the LGBT participants, rather than trying to speak for them" (p. 4). Therefore, I conducted semi-structured interviews to encourage the participants to speak openly and freely about their experiences.

### **4.3.2 Selecting the hockey club**

The aim of this study was to develop an understanding of the discourses of sexual identity with one hockey team, rather than to generalise the findings to the larger population. A large-scale quantitative approach involving a large number of clubs and participants would have been counterproductive by not allowing for the depth and detail of experiences that the study required (May, 2011). As such, the small scale, in-depth qualitative approach was therefore more appropriate. I also focused on one hockey club rather than two so that I could gain a context specific understanding.

Since this study was not focused on achieving generalisations, a purposive sampling method was utilised. Purposive sampling is defined as the process whereby “a selection is made according to a known characteristic” (May, 2011, p. 100). I therefore purposefully selected Castle Ladies Hockey Club. I also engaged in convenience sampling as I was a full club member at Castle Ladies from the 2010/2011 season to the 2013/2014 and returned as a social member for the 2017/2018 season. Therefore, I had established contacts with potential gatekeepers and had insider knowledge that the players at the club would fulfil the study criteria.

Castle Ladies Hockey Club is a single sex, two team women’s hockey club based in the West Midlands. Both the first and second team play within a recreational hockey league and those over the age of thirteen and of all abilities, sexual identities, races, and religious backgrounds are welcome to join and play for the club. Previous studies such as Caudwell (2007) and Drury (2011)

focused exclusively on lesbian identified football clubs. However, this study was open to those of all sexual identities through focusing on a club that is not exclusively identified or formally structured as a lesbian team. The reason for targeting such a team was that Anderson et al. (2016) stipulated that in order to fully understand the decline of homophobia both the experiences of heterosexual and non-heterosexual players need to be explored. Furthermore, in Chapter Two it was outlined that recreational sports teams are under-researched with regard to the topic of sexuality (Anderson et al., 2016). Therefore, it was hoped that by focusing on recreational level hockey players in this study, some insight would be provided into how sexual identity is presented in this setting.

To undertake this research, ethical approval was needed from the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Life Sciences research ethics committee. Once ethical approval was granted (see Appendix A), as I was recruiting from a club I was already involved with, to avoid coercion I created a recruitment poster (see Appendix B) which was submitted to the clubs' committee for approval to be distributed on the club's private social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). Through this method of recruitment, participants could voluntarily contact me via email if they wished to be involved in the study. Upon being contacted by the participants, a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix C) was sent to them outlining what their involvement in the study would entail. It was emphasised that being involved would be entirely confidential and that their involvement would not be disclosed. To protect anonymity and reduce the likelihood of identity recognition, the participants' names and other information that could potentially lead back to them was changed. Specifically, all participants were

given pseudonyms including the official name of the club. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of this study, it was important that I did and followed the outlined procedures discussed above. One of the main aims was to make sure all of the participants were comfortable with what their involvement entailed and that there would be no likelihood of their data to publicly 'out' them with regards to their sexuality. I will now discuss the research methods that were utilised.

#### **4.4 Data generation methods**

##### **4.4.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are considered a less scripted and more flexible practice than structured interviews (Jones, Brown, & Holloway, 2013; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Despite the interviewer following an interview guide with pre-determined questions, through semi-structured interviewing there is also the flexibility to ask additional or new questions and facilitate interviewee expansion on the answers given which is important to gain a more in-depth account of the interviewee's experiences (Jones et al., 2013; Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews has proven to be advantageous when researching issues surrounding sexuality and the experiences of those who identify as non-heterosexual (Drury, 2011). As discussions surrounding sexuality can sometimes still be regarded as a 'taboo subject' (Israel, 2002), semi-structured interviewing can facilitate a rapport to be built up between the interviewer and the interviewee (May, 2011). Evidence of such a rapport can be found in Drury (2011) and Ravel and Rail's (2007) studies, where the semi-structured interviews were treated as a conversational exchange due to a disclosure of the interviewers' own identities. In addition, because I had consciously disclosed my identity as non-heterosexual and

having had previous experiences of playing hockey (as outlined in Chapter One) it was hoped that adopting such an approach would create a climate of mutual understanding. This would therefore potentially minimise the dominance of my interviewer status, allowing the participants to open up about their experiences in their own time and to someone who has insider experiences (May, 2011; Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Before the interviews commenced, the participants were asked to provide their verbal consent to participate and they were also required to sign a Participant Consent Form (see Appendix D). Due to the potential sensitivity of the topics being discussed, participants were reminded prior to the start of the interview that they could stop the interview at any time. They were also reminded that they could withdraw from the study without any repercussions.

A total of seven participants were recruited and took part in one individual interview ranging from 20 to 35 minutes. The study placed importance on gaining detailed accounts of participants' experiences and views to understand the specific context. Therefore, the sample size was justified due to the need for quality and richness of data over the quantity of responses and the number of participants involved (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The study also focused on a single club, therefore limiting the number of potential participants that were recruited. I followed the guidelines outlined by Wood and Kroger (2002) which entailed interviewing participants until I could see I had built up sufficient accounts of participant experiences which could then be used to support my analysis.

The interviews were conducted wherever and whenever was convenient for the participants with five being conducted in meeting rooms and two in cafés. The interviews were completed face-to-face. Face-to face interviewing was advantageous for this study, as reading the participants' body language when asking potentially sensitive questions allowed for the interview to be stopped or the questions to be brought back onto a different topic (Leech, 2002). Of the seven participants, three self-identified as heterosexual and four self-identified as non-heterosexual. Specifically, three identified as 'straight', one identified as 'bisexual', and three identified as 'lesbian'. The age range of this research's sample was between 22 and 51 years old. Research such as that by Anderson's (2015) have documented declining rates of homophobia and increases in positive experiences of those who identify as non-heterosexual in sport, predominantly focused on university or high school teams. It has been suggested by Morgan (2013) that the younger generation can be more accepting towards different sexual identities. Therefore, the age range of this study enables an analysis into the different generational experiences but does not generalise these findings. Of the seven participants, six were White British and one was British Asian. The socio-economic status of the participants was not noted as it was deemed not necessary for this study. However, any future research into this area may wish to take account of this demographic information as a future avenue for investigation into the impact of socio-economic status on sexual identity. The Table 1 displays the participant information for each of the seven participants:

**Table 1 – Participant details**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Club level</b>	<b>Age started playing hockey</b>	<b>Sexual identity</b>
Mary	36	Recreational	11	Bisexual
Emma	22	Recreational	11	Lesbian
Sam	27	Recreational	11	Straight
Abbie	29	Recreational	11	Lesbian
Ruth	51	Recreational	13	Straight
Flora	47	Recreational	11	Straight
Mel	43	Recreational	11	Lesbian

As the interviews were semi-structured, there was a combination of formal and unstructured interview features such as an interview schedule and open-ended questions, respectively. The interview guide (see Appendix E) featured open-ended questions that focused on the participants' experiences in hockey based on their sexual identity. The interview guide allowed the interviews to follow a similar line of inquiry with each participant (Leech, 2002). I was also able to tailor the questions to be applicable to each participant based on how they identified in relation to their sexuality. For example, for those who identified as non-heterosexual, I could ask about how they felt coming out to their teammates, whereas for those who identified as heterosexual, I could adapt the question and ask why they thought they did not need to come out to their teammates. The interviews opened with demographic questions regarding the participants' age when they started playing hockey, their current age and their sexual identity. This was followed by open-ended questions on how and why the participants started playing hockey, why they continued to play, and how and why they came to play for the club they do now. Although these

introductory questions were not explicitly related to their experiences regarding their sexual identity, such questions were important to provide contextual background and slowly ease the participants into the questions on sexuality that followed. The interviews were recorded using two Dictaphones and upon completion the interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word to aid the analysis process. I will outline this process towards the end of the chapter. For now, I shall briefly provide a reflection on my research process and how I strived to produce and maintain research quality throughout my study.

#### **4.5 Research reflection**

Research is often judged on its ability to be reliable, valid and replicable (May, 2011). However, this research does not seek to make any of those claims due to its interpretivist origins in comparison to the positivist origins of the above judgements. Reliability infers that an investigation will produce similar results under the same conditions each time (May, 2011). However, the qualitative underpinning of this research means that reliability was of limited concern due to the investigation of individual and context specific in-depth experiences. Validity refers to the ability of the research to investigate what it set out to document (Golafshani, 2003). This research, specifically the data collect phase, took place in a real-life setting therefore this is one of the ways which issues of validity was addressed (Golafshani, 2003). Replicability is a combination of reliability and validity through which it refers to the ability of another researcher to replicate the study and produce similar findings to that of the original study (Golafshani, 2003; May, 2011). Since this study was researching individual context specific experiences, replicability was not a research concern.

I employed different strategies from those identified above to ensure I strived for high standards of research quality. The primary strategy I engaged with was acknowledging how or if my own intentions and subjectivities affected the data collection and analysis process. Specifically, this involves an awareness and acknowledgement of any conscious or unconscious effects I bear upon the study. Such bearings could impact upon the data collection process including the physical interactions with the research participants through to the interpretation of the interview data (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017). I engaged in reflexivity through outlining my researcher position in Chapter One and acknowledging the impacts of my identities on the recruitment and the interview process earlier on in this chapter. Furthermore, I have fully outlined the intentions of this study throughout the various chapters. I will now outline the data analysis process.

## **4.6 Data analysis**

### **4.6.1 Discourse analysis**

The interviews were transcribed using a Microsoft Word document and examined as physical texts. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, my analysis is constructed within a poststructural, Foucaultian theoretical framework. I investigated the discourses of sexual identity within a women's hockey club with the view to attempt to understand and examine how such discourses operated and effected the players. Through utilising Foucault's techniques of power – explicitly making reference to Gore's (1995) framework – and Foucault's theorising on the technologies of the self (Foucault, 2000), I problematised the players' interactions with these discourses.

According to Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) discourse analysis involves language examination and reading into the context of the data before placing specific segments of data into themes. Specifically, to undertake the Foucauldian discourse analysis I followed the guidelines set out by Carabine (2001, p. 281) which includes the following steps:

- Know your data (read and re-read).
- Identifying themes, categories and objects of the discourse.
- Look for evidence of inter-relationships between discourses.
- Identify the discursive strategies and techniques employed.
- Look for absences and silences.
- Look for resistances and counter-discourses.
- Identify the effects of the discourse.
- Be aware of the limitations of the research, your data and sources.

As well as Carabine's (2001) guidelines, I also adapted the work of McEvilly (2012) and Ravel and Rail (2007) through constructing a set of analytical questions to help analyse the data. Specifically, the set of questions helped to identify the dominant discourses from the transcripts. The questions included: what discourses related to sexual identity are circulating? What sets of 'truths' about sexual identity have been formulated and established? Whose voices are well established and whose are silenced? Furthermore, to understand the operations of such discourses I asked the following questions of my transcript texts: in what way do the players present themselves in relation to the dominant discourses of sexual identities? How do they govern themselves in relation to

sexual identity discourses? How do they maintain their subjectivities? What are the impacts of their actions for themselves and others?

Prior to examining the interview transcripts with the above analytical questions, I placed the interview data into six overarching themes. The themes were: Hockey background/How started playing/Reasons for being at the club; Socialisation element of playing hockey; Sexuality awareness/Awareness of others' sexual identities; Attitudes towards sexuality; Experiences of homophobia; Sexual identity outside of the hockey context. Once the data was split into the outlined themes I then began interrogating the interview texts. The discourses that were drawn and examined from the data are discussed fully in Chapter Five.

## **5.0 Chapter Five – Findings/Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This research involves the investigation of discourses of sexual identity which have shaped the experiences of recreational level women's hockey players. Upon analysing the interview data via discourse analysis, a myriad of heterosexuality challenging discourses were established. Specifically, these discourses were of acceptance and inclusivity towards non-heterosexual sexual identities. These discourses include: the normalisation of non-heterosexual identities including discussions of heterosexuality seen as the 'other' and questioning straight identities, a focus on the playing ethos and the importance of a good team player over their sexual identity, and the increased acceptance of sexual fluidity, decreased tolerance of homophobia.

This chapter investigates how the participants engaged with these discourses to construct their subjectivities. Furthermore, the discursive practices and disciplinary techniques through which these discourses became dominant will be investigated, making overt use of Foucault's theorising on power (1991) and the technologies of the self (2000). I will begin first with a discussion of the normalisation of non-heterosexual identities.

### **5.2 Discourses of acceptance and inclusivity towards non-heterosexual identities**

### 5.2.1 The 'normalisation' of non-heterosexual identities

*Normalisation* and *exclusion* often occur simultaneously with *exclusion* being the opposite of *normalisation* (Gore, 1995). As previously outlined in Chapter Three *normalisation* refers to the “invoking, requiring, setting or conforming to a standard – defining the normal” (Gore, 1995, p. 171). Whereas *exclusion* refers to “the reverse side of normalisation – the defining of the pathological” (Gore, 1995, p. 173). In this study, non-heterosexual identities were presented as the ‘norm’ in a variety of different ways. Whereas, heterosexual identities were often challenged and sometimes the heterosexual participants felt excluded.

According to Drury (2014) “the dynamics of homonormativity and heteronormativity are more complex than a simplistic dichotomy” (p. 316). All of the seven participants said that they were open about their sexual identities to their teammates. Specifically, unlike previous studies (Anderson & Bullingham, 2015) that indicated athletes had to make a big statement when they came out, this current study did not find that. Therefore, the disengagement with heteronormative ‘coming out’ process, also signified the *normalisation* of players who identified as non-heterosexual. For example, Abbie commented on her experiences stating:

it's probably not coming out but I just kind of one day introduced a teammate to someone I was seeing as my girlfriend, so it wasn't like I made a big 'guys I've come out of the closet' like 'send a parade' kind of thing [laughs]. It's just like, yeh this is the person that I'm with. (Abbie)

Abbie's above comment also indicates that Griffin's (1998) identified concept of silencing seemed no longer applicable, as Abbie was happy to discuss and

openly present her sexual identity to other teammates. Furthermore, when Emma and Mel (who both identified as lesbians) were asked whether they had to 'come out' to their teammates about their sexual identity, both stated that they did not and that they did not have to. Specifically, Emma stated, "I just assumed it was common knowledge" and similarly Mel said, "I think it was assumed". Also, Abbie commented, "well a lot of people have a mindset that it's a whole lesbian game and its full of lesbians." The above comments indicate the *classification* of hockey players based on their sexual identity and by this *classification* refers to "differentiating groups or individuals from one another, classifying them, classifying oneself" (Gore, 1995, p. 174).

In Waldron's (2016) research it was highlighted that the intersections of gender and sexuality within sport are complex, with sports participants constantly negotiating their identities to fit in line with the broader western socio-cultural ideals (Waldron, 2016). When describing hockey five of the seven participants made reference to the physicality of the game and how this could be seen as engaging in non-feminine behaviour leading to the stereotyping of lesbians within hockey. Comments included:

It's quite aggressive which isn't seen as very feminine behaviour. (Mary)

I think within hockey teams and clubs there is the expectation that at least one player is going to be gay due to the nature of the sport being physical.  
(Emma)

If you are a girly girl, you don't come to hockey. (Sam)

It's a bit of a bolshie sport, is that the right word? It's a bit of a physical sport... you have to be tough, if you get injured you have to get up and run it off. (Flora)

The lesbian sports discourse seemed to not only dominate perceptions of sexuality in hockey but outside the game too. Specifically, Mary's conversation with her cousin reiterates this, as she said her cousin said, "i'm glad to see you've stopped playing sport and hockey now' and I asked him why and he said, 'well we were all starting to think you were gay there for a while.' " The participants were also frequently asked to engage in self-reflection (Foucault, 1992) whereby within the interviews they were asked why they answered the way they did. When Mary was asked why she thought her cousin had assumed her sexuality in that way her response was:

because of my mannerisms and the way, I am, I've never been the girliest of girls, yes I have girly moments, but that's to be expected... erm... but I'm not very butch in my appearance either, I quite enjoy being girly on occasions. (Mary)

Mary's comment indicates that the butch label identified by Caudwell (1999, 2003) and Waldron (2016) still exists within sport and is utilised as the epitome of what a non-heterosexual woman is characterised as in sport. However, unlike Waldron's (2016) previous study, none of the ladies were bothered about the lesbian stereotype, stating that they really did not care about what people thought of them when playing hockey. Mel stated that, "the club I play for has a high number of lesbian members and therefore it has become very accepted and 'the norm' ". Mel's comment could signify that this particular club is moving away from the fear that one player coming out casts suspicion on all other

players (Anderson, et al., 2016). Specifically, participants such as Sam individualised herself by stating:

I'm pretty happy to carry on like... I think it might bother other people but I'm just fine with it... I think I grew up with a lot of people who are gay, so you just get on with it. (Sam)

Here *individualisation* refers to “giving character to oneself or another” (Gore, 1995, p. 178). This attitude towards not caring how the players are perceived based on the lesbian stereotypes, made it easier to normalise non-heterosexual identities within the club environment involved in this study. Furthermore, Abbie provided another example of how this attitude impacted her acceptance of her sexuality within the club through commenting that, “it has given me the environment to grow as a person, experience things like homophobia but also at the same time I've been around people who have supported me whether they are straight or whether they are gay themselves.” Also, the outlined attitude could also indicate the impact decreased levels of homophobia is having on women's hockey players of all sexual identities (Anderson et al., 2016).

In addition, this research also continues to highlight the importance of trailblazing amongst lesbian sports participants. Specifically, Anderson et al. (2016) and Bullingham (2015) outline that trailblazing is when a lesbian athlete comes out to their team and results in other teammates being able to come out as a result. Both Abbie and Emma commented on the positive impacts this had on them and how it helped to normalise their identities:

I could see that people were living their lives fine by being gay and I didn't think that there was anything wrong with it. (Abbie)

There are quite a lot of gay couples at the club and a lot of them have kids now too. It is just the norm to me. Their visibility really did make me at ease with myself and my own sexuality. It was like I'm going to be ok because they don't care and are getting on just fine. (Emma)

Two of participants were subjected to a questioning of their sexual identity. This caused the participants to be subjected to *surveillance* (Gore, 1995) and *classification* (Gore, 1995). *Surveillance* within this context refers to "supervising, closely observing, watching, threatening to watch or expecting to be watched" (Gore, 1995, p.169). *Surveillance* was used by other members within the club to monitor other members' sexual identities and then categorise them based on pre-made assumptions about their involvement within the club. Specifically, Mary discussed how one of her teammates had reacted to her mentioning her female partner to them for the first time:

I said her name and one of them turned around and went... 'I knew it! I guessed correctly' It was like she had an internal bet with herself and she was just waiting for me to say that I was seeing somebody, and it was female. (Mary)

Furthermore, Sam, who identified as straight, commented on how she was asked about her sexuality when she first joined the club and tried to provide justification as to why her teammates did this by saying, "in ladies sport there

are a lot of gay people, so I don't know whether it was just seeing if you are one of the few that aren't." This focus on new club members sexual identity is nothing new as Litchfield (2011) also highlighted this in a study of a hockey club in Melbourne. Although, what is interesting to note about Sam's experiences of sexual identity questioning is the process by which she was questioned by other members of the club. Such questioning has been outlined through Sam's interview response:

'are you gay or are you straight?' and I was like 'why?!' [laughs] then they are like 'I wanna know' 'But why do you want to know?' And then because of my clothing or my style, a lot of people were like you're deffo gay but no, so a lot of people questioned it for quite a while actually...still certain people you will go out with will still say you're so gay and its literally like it's just because of the clothes you wear and the way you act. (Sam)

The above comments from Sam demonstrate how *surveillance* and *distribution* (Gore, 1995) was utilised to isolate Sam leading to the questioning of her heterosexual sexual identity. Specifically, *distribution* refers to "arranging, isolating, separating or ranking" (Gore, 1995, p. 176). Furthermore, when asked what position the players asking these questions held within the club Sam commented that they did not hold "a high position in the club but had been there for a long time so they had been there when the club sort of went through a thing where there were a lot of gay people in the club." *Surveillance* of Sam's behaviour led her sexuality to be closely and continuously observed and then critiqued for not meeting the assumptions made based on her outward

presentation of gender. Therefore, this process also contributed to the *normalisation* of non-heterosexual identities within this context as Sam's heterosexual identity became excluded.

Techniques of *totalisation* (Gore, 1995) were also evident in all of the heterosexually identified players' talk through the use of the pronoun "they" when referring to people of the opposite sexual identity. *Totalisation* specifically refers to "the specification of collectivities, giving collective character" (Gore, 1995, p. 179). For example, Ruth (who identified as straight) used "they" to highlight her difference from her non-heterosexual teammates through stating, "you can see who is a lesbian and they have got their partner with them but why should that be any different to heterosexuals?". However, the above comment also indicates an engagement in critical self-awareness (Markula, 2003), as she is also asking why non-heterosexual identities should be treated any differently to heterosexual identities. Furthermore, *totalisation* was also evident when the non-heterosexual participants were talking about their experiences. In this instance the pronoun "we" was used. For example, (Emma) used "we" to reiterate the collective coming together of non-heterosexual identities to normalise the physical presence of their sexual identities as she said, "I honestly do think people are scared of difference and that if we continue to expose them to everyone's everyday life then maybe we can educate and show them acceptance and tolerance."

Furthermore, three of the participants commented on how the elite hockey players had helped normalise non-heterosexual identities. Such comments included:

Helen Richardson Walsh Kate Richardson Walsh...they've gone a long way as far as hockey goes particularly since Rio and breaking that down... you know Britain's first married couple and the same team winning a gold... it went a long way to raising awareness. (Mary)

Kate Richardson-Walsh and Helen Richardson-Walsh and being the highest people in their sport are more role models (Abbie)

Furthermore, evidence of *totalisation* was apparent through Emma describing why hockey may *normalise* non-heterosexual identities on a wider scale. For example, Emma stated:

I really do think that hockey players don't care how you identify. We are all pretty relaxed and are just there to play a game that we love. I think what helps is that hockey isn't really a big spectator sport... like it doesn't draw the same crowds that say football does, it also barely has any television coverage either...What I'm trying to get at is that when a high level hockey player comes out only the people who follow hockey seem to take notice and not the rest of the world as there is very little media exposure. (Emma)

Here Emma indicates the pressures a gay man may have to go through when coming out in men's professional sport (Anderson, 2015). As hockey is not regarded as a frequently televised sport, the visibility of elite players such as Kate and Helen Richardson – Walsh means that they are not a big media presence and the fan base is not on the same scale as elite footballers.

Furthermore, due to the coverage not being on the same scale, Kate and Helen received little backlash from fans (Williams, 2014). As hockey is away from the public spotlight this may facilitate the development of inclusive sexual identities. Also, the fact Abbie indicated that Kate and Helen are role models shows how homosexual identities are celebrated rather than victimised.

### **5.2.2 Being a good team player over sexual identity**

It was demonstrated in Chapter Two that literature on sexuality is beginning to show players acceptance towards different sexual identities. This study mirrors that of Ravel and Rail's (2007), Drury's (2011) and Bullingham's (2015) studies that specific sport contexts can provide a safe space for the negotiation of different sexual identities. However, there is an indication that the inclusivity of sexual identities has resulted in players putting aside and almost disregarding sexual identity. The participants replaced concerns over sexual identity with descriptions of what makes a good team player or by adopting what Ravel and Rail (2007) have previously described as a "focus on sport" (p. 410).

Specifically, comments included:

everyone just seemed accepting of one another no matter what their sexuality was. No one hides it or expresses negativity towards it because at the end of the day you are there to play hockey, so your sexuality should not matter. (Emma)

they don't care what your colour is what your weight is, whether you're fast, whether you're slow, as long as you go out there, play hockey, you're a nice person and that's all they need. (Mary)

I always look at it that it doesn't matter who you are, we are all out there to have fun, play the game and enjoy it. (Flora)

The above comments indicate how the *normalisation* of sexual identities at the club has meant that the participants are more likely focus on the ability of a player to sustain their love of the game and competitive edge to be a good teammate instead. This point was further reiterated by Mary who commented that, "no one actually cares what you identify as. When you are on the hockey pitch it's more you're wearing other teams' colours and I'm coming for you and I want to beat you." In line with Bullingham's (2015) findings, the above comment from Mary highlights that athletic capital continues to have no impact on when and if a player comes out. Rather than a player having to have high athletic capital, meaning being a talented and successful member of the team, to come out and be accepted, the participants did not even consider this as an option. This is summed up by Mary's comment that, "some are gay, some are straight, no one actually cares as long as you're there to play hockey."

Drury (2011) highlighted how the lesbian identified club structure created a friendly and understanding environment for non-heterosexual identities to socialise and participate in football without facing stigma and homophobia. However, this current study has indicated that such an environment can be created without the need to create an exclusively non-heterosexual space. All of the participants commented on how their fellow teammates had become like a 'hockey family'. This notion of family also added to the discourses of acceptance and openness towards different sexual identities and demonstrated

how the *totalisation* of the 'hockey family' through creating a collective identity rather than seeing players as singular identities, facilitated inclusivity. For example, Abbie commented, "you're like a family, you love that person for who they are rather than judge them for being gay so it's just kind of seen as the norm." Mel also commented on the importance of the family like structure by stating, "it's very important. If I disliked the majority of the players I wouldn't carry on playing." Furthermore, Emma commented:

whenever anything is going wrong or I feel down or snowed under with something the hockey family and what I mean by that is that everyone at hockey has each other's back like a family would. They pick you up, dust you off and take you exactly as you are, it's like you always have a sense of belonging. (Emma)

The "sense of belonging" within Emma's above comment is important to highlight as she has indicated that her club have created a space where she is not only able to be out and open, but she indicates feeling part of a wider collective and not being on the outskirts of that sporting space. This differs from Griffin's (1998) previous findings of lesbian athletes being marginalised and isolated and even having their identities silence. The sense of having a collective identity in the form of a 'hockey family' also resulted in the decreased tolerance towards homophobia.

### **5.2.3 Increased levels of sexual fluidity, decreased tolerance towards homophobia**

When asked to describe homophobia in their own words all of the participants commented on how such practices stemmed from negativity towards difference.

These were some of the responses to that question:

homophobia is the fear of difference and ignorance towards those who are different. And when I say different I mean it in big inverted commas! I think homophobia can occur in a variety of different ways from verbal and physical abuse to emotional abuse. (Emma)

People who hate people who aren't straight. (Sam)

Prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviour based solely on someone's (homo)sexuality. (Mel)

Someone that really has an issue with someone that's gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. That doesn't see them as fitting into their norm category. (Abbie)

Within Abbie's definition she implies that homophobic individuals view non-heterosexuality as deviant which further highlights how discourses of heteronormativity operate through the categorisation of what is regarded as deviant and what is regarded as normal (Herz & Johansson, 2015).

What is interesting to note here is that the participants who identified as heterosexual picked up on homophobia more than the non-heterosexual participants. Both Sam and Flora described a similar experience of homophobia where they were training, and a group of teenage boys were shouting derogatory comments aimed at the whole team. The following statements present the accounts of that particular occurrence:

They shout a load of random abuse at you and you're like we are just playing a sport, how do you know if I'm gay, straight... it's because you are playing sport, its winter, it's raining and its cold, dark and so they shout abuse and call you gay like that... it just doesn't make sense. (Sam)

And there were heterosexuals and same sex couples in there, so it was aimed at all of us, so I don't know how you'd take that. (Flora)

Again, both Sam and Flora are drawing on the complex interconnections between discourses of gender and sexuality in relation to the presentation of women within sport. Here Sam highlights the confusion between what other individuals outside of the hockey think of the women that play the sport and her own experiences. Furthermore, Flora indicates that the lesbian stereotype (Waldron, 2016) in sport still influences outsiders, even if it does not explicitly bother those within the club. Flora expressed her disgust further by stating: they have no right to say that to anybody even if you are heterosexual, lesbian or whatever, don't know what you are kind of thing. It's your choice what you want to do. (Flora)

When expressing her intolerance towards homophobia Ruth engaged in disciplinary *regulation* (Gore, 1995). Specifically, *regulation* refers to “controlling by rule, subject to restrictions, invoking a rule, including sanction, reward, punishment” (Gore, 1995, p. 180). This is evident within the following comment:

having been vice captain for a few years and being one of the older members for the 2nds, I think I would've stamped it out ... if that would have been directed at someone on our team I would've pulled the person aside, had a word with them, along with the captain at the time and said 'hang on this isn't acceptable' (Ruth)

Ruth's actions may concur with Foucault's (1982) claim that punishment can arouse fear and regulate others to conform. Therefore, the *regulation* technique in this instance reiterates Foucault's (1991) claim that power can be positive as well as restrictive. Specifically, what is meant by this is that the technique of power used in this instance helps to counter discriminatory behaviour.

The reactions identified by the participants' responses towards homophobia is influenced by the previous two discourses of inclusivity. Decreased tolerance towards homophobia is a result of the *normalisation* of non-heterosexual identities. Furthermore, an emphasis on being a good team player rather than solely focusing on a players' sexual identity leads to other teammates within the collective identity of the 'hockey family' to come together and silence homophobia.

The *normalisation* of non-heterosexual identities had become so ingrained that the participants engaged with the technologies of the self to problematise homophobic discourses and question why such attitudes existed.

Probably because they aren't really educated, are they? Let's be honest.

They probably haven't grown up with anyone who isn't straight, if that makes sense? So, everyone they know is straight, everyone they talk to is straight, everyone in the family is straight so they have never experienced someone who is gay or bisexual, so they just aren't educated on it. (Sam)

Sam's above comment also reiterates Shire et al.'s (2000) findings that the hockey setting provides a space for heterosexual identities to integrate with non-heterosexual identities and that those outside of sport may not.

Foucault's (2000) technologies of the self implies that individuals do not passively accept discourses and therefore can act against technologies of power (Markula, 2003). Participants would have been subjected to heteronormativity its associated discourses, but the participants were able to resist these discourses. Specifically, Ruth and Emma were increasingly aware of the language they used when answering the questions on sexuality. For example, Emma said, "I hate using the word normal, as what's normal really?". Also, Ruth questions who decides "what's right and what's wrong?".

Furthermore, within the technologies of the self there is also the processes of critical awareness, whereby an individual questions normality (Markula, 2003).

Flora engaged in critical self-awareness when she recalled her views on seeing same sex couples at the club for the first time when she was young and

implying it was “not normal”. However, her criticism of her past attitude resulted in her reflecting on how her attitudes have changed into embracing and accepting different sexual identities as she has grown older, which is reinforced in the following:

if I'm to be honest say hockey has probably helped me to come up with that kind of attitude. Because there are people in the team that have been in a heterosexual relationship and then go the other way and I thought nothing of that because if that's what you need to do then that's what you need to do, that's fine. And I would say that seeing it and growing up with it has made me understand that if that's who you love then that's who you love. (Flora)

### **5.3 Summary**

This chapter has investigated the discourses of acceptance and inclusivity towards non-heterosexual identities that were identified from the discourse analysis and the ways in which such discourses became dominant and how the participants subsequently engaged with them. The findings in this chapter concurred with those found by Anderson et al. (2016), Bullingham (2015), Drury (2011) and Ravel and Rail (2007) in that homophobia is declining, thus facilitating heightened acceptance of non-heterosexual identities and sports settings are being identified as becoming more inclusive. Specifically, all eight of Gore's (1995) techniques of power were identified through the data. Of the eight techniques of power *normalisation* was the most dominant technique followed by *surveillance*, *totalisation*, *regulation*, *distribution*, *classification* and *individualisation*. All of the outlined techniques contributed to the *normalisation*

of non-heterosexual identity discourses leading to heteronormativity being challenged within this specific context and amongst the participants studied. Furthermore, Foucault's (2000) technologies of the self showed how the participants were able to negotiate the dominant discourses associated with heteronormativity. Similarly, to that of Ravel and Rail's (2007) research, this current study highlighted how players' sexual identity was not exclusively focused on due to the primary focus being placed on enjoying the game, being a good team player and the social experiences of playing for the club. However, players did comment on how the lesbian myth and label outlined by both Caudwell (1999, 2003) and Waldron (2016) still existed and was negotiated. In Chapter Six I will now conclude the main findings of this current study including a discussion of the limitations of this research study, the significance of the findings and future research recommendations.

## **6.0 Chapter Six – Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This research was conducted with the aim to investigate the discourses that have impacted recreational women's hockey players' perspectives and experiences surrounding sexual identity. Specifically, the dominant sexual identity discourses were identified and an examination into the discursive practices and disciplinary techniques which influenced the sexual identities to become dominant or alternative was conducted. This research sought to add to the growing research area of sexuality in sport with emphasis on the importance of providing further sociological understandings of individual's experiences. Previous literature on sexual identities in sport has indicated the complexities of sexual identity, specifically highlighting the interconnection of gender discourses too. Therefore, this research set out to answer this main research question:

**(1) What discourses have impacted recreational women's hockey players' perspectives and experiences surrounding sexual identity?**

To investigate this primary research question further, the two following sub-questions were also used:

- (1) How do women's hockey players engage with discourses of sexual identity to construct their subjectivities?
- (2) Through what discursive practices and disciplinary techniques do sexual identities become dominant or alternative within women's hockey?

The sociological grounding of this study meant that to address the outlined research questions a poststructural theoretical framework was utilised, which closely aligns with the work of Foucault. Foucault's work on discourse, power and the subsequent techniques of power and the technologies of the self was utilised to aid theoretical understanding throughout this study. Such use of the poststructural theoretical perspective allowed this study to investigate the context-specific and the individual micro level of participants' experiences to determine and analyse how sexual identity discourses operate. Furthermore, Gore's (1995) techniques of power aided the questioning of the discourses existence and how power relations were either explicitly noticeable or not. The utilisation of the technologies of the self also aided the investigation into the participants' conscious engagement and resistance towards the dominant discourses associated with heteronormativity.

## **6.2 Findings**

### **6.2.1 Discourses of sexual identity**

Through discourse analysis the first stage of investigation involved identifying the dominant discourses impacting upon the participants' perspectives and experiences of sexual identity within the hockey context. By analysing the participants' talk, three discourses of acceptance and inclusivity towards non-heterosexual identities were found. Firstly, the players spoke of the 'normalisation' of non-heterosexual identities at the club. This was particularly evident through the non-heterosexual participants indicating that heterosexuality was seen as being the 'other' sexual identity at the club. Furthermore, the non-heterosexual members spoke of having their sexuality assumed, whereas the heterosexual participants had their straight identities questioned. Secondly, all

seven participants recognised the importance of focusing on the game and being a good team player rather than the sexual identity of their fellow teammates. Again, all seven participants commented on the nurturing side of the club and how the hockey team had become a 'hockey family'. This collective identity of a 'hockey family' meant that the players frequently looked out for each other and stamped out any homophobia. Furthermore, if homophobia was endured they collectively experienced it and dismissed it as a team. This leads on to the players having an increased acceptance towards sexual fluidity leading to a decreased tolerance towards homophobia. Through learning to accept people of different sexual identities, the players were able to problematise the presence of homophobia within their club and the wider hockey environment. Further to this some of the participants engaged in critical self-awareness and reflection through asking themselves 'what is normal?' when speaking about sexual identities. It should also be highlighted that the discourses found through the data were also interlinked with gender discourses.

### **6.2.2 Hockey players' engagement with sexual identity discourses**

The participants engaged with discourses of sexual identity in complex ways often resulting in the interlinking and overlapping of gender discourses too. Despite all participants acknowledging the lesbian label dominating the sports context and their involvement with the hockey club, I argue that the participants were able to resist dominant discourses of heterosexuality and in turn femininity, in order to create their own individualistic identities. Through *individualisation* the participants were able to create attitudes of not caring when faced with the lesbian label. Therefore, this made it easier to normalise and support non-heterosexual identities. However, it must be recognised that these

engagements were completely context dependant as due to the changing nature of discourses, this does not mean that non-heterosexual identities will continue to be normalised. Furthermore, Flora engaged in critical self-reflection (Markula, 2003) on her past attitudes towards non-heterosexuality when she was younger and then indicated that she no longer engages with heteronormative discourses now she is older. Future research may benefit from analysing generational discrepancies regarding the investment in certain sexual identity discourses.

### **6.2.3 How these discourses became dominant**

Through examining the participants' talk it was evident how the discourses of acceptance and inclusivity towards non-heterosexual identities became dominant and were incorporated into the participants' overall playing experiences at and with the club. Specifically, these discourses became dominant due to the influences of the techniques of power and the technologies of the self. Through discourse analysis, the eight techniques of power outlined by Gore (1995) were identified throughout the data, therefore contributing to the normalisation of non-heterosexual identities. In addition, the technologies of the self indicated how the players were able to actively engage with the gender discourses closely tied to the heterosexual sexual identity discourses in order to individualise their own identities to facilitate inclusivity and acceptance towards non-heterosexuality. Furthermore, through critical self awareness (Markula, 2003) the participants problematised their own sets of norms. Through problematising heterosexuality, homosexuality was seen as the norm within this specific hockey context. In particular the homosexual sexual identity was reinforced through disciplinary techniques one of which being longstanding

members of the club and another being the techniques enforced upon the participants.

### **6.3 Significance of the results**

This research has contributed to the literature surrounding sexuality and sport, through indicating how negotiations of heteronormativity are possible within specific sporting contexts, leading to discourses of acceptance and inclusivity towards non-heterosexual identities. Whilst it is still importance to recognise the complex interconnection and overlapping of gender and sexuality discourses, this research indicates that homonormative sports contexts can exist outside of lesbian specific clubs and LGBT sports league structures. The heterosexual members of the club displayed little resistance to the homonormative environment signifying new levels of acceptance and inclusion. Furthermore, this analysis has begun to address Anderson et al.'s (2016) call for a focus on the impact decreasing levels of homophobia have on heterosexual sportspeople as well as non-heterosexual sportspeople. But I also agree with Bullingham (2015) that this area of research requires continued attention to examine a variety of different sporting contexts to further understand how inclusive sports spaces and experiences can be created and maintained.

### **6.4 Limitations and future recommendations**

Both within Chapter One and Chapter Four, I outline my researchers' position. I was already known to all of my participants; therefore, the participants could have withheld information or experiences from the research process due to already having a relationship. However, I believe for the purpose of this study my prior knowledge and relationships with the participants enabled me to

explore experiences that would have otherwise been unknown/untold. However, the full extent of the affects my prior relationship with the participants could have had is unknown.

This study explored the discourses that have impacted recreational women's hockey players' perspectives and experiences through the use of semi-structured interviews. However, a potential hinderance of utilising this particular method was that the participants could not have fully disclosed their experiences and opinions due to the fear of being perceived as homophobic. Therefore, similarly to the research approach adopted by Drury (2011), participant observations coupled with interviews would have been advantageous for researching this topic to understand how the participants physically reacted towards, with and around different sexual identities.

Ethical diversity was also limited within this study with only one participant not categorised as white British. Also, it was likely that most of the participants were middle-class, however this demographic question was not asked. Furthermore, an interesting point made by my participant Mel was that those of a "higher socio-economic group are less likely to hold homophobic attitudes" therefore this could be a future further avenue for research. This research also only focused on one club, therefore future studies would benefit from analysing two clubs or teams in order to gain comparisons of the workings of discourses.

This research like previous other studies in this field (Bullingham, 2015; Caudwell, 2007; Drury, 2011) featured a limited presence of bisexual participants. This study only featured one woman who identified as bisexual,

therefore it is not in this researches interest to say that all sexual identities were fully represented and accounted for. Furthermore, it could be argued that bisexual or queer participants are more likely to remain silences within research due to the social stigma such identities entail (Dyar et al., 2015). This point was reiterated by Mary within the research through the following comment:

The lines between what is heterosexuality and what is homosexuality and then you've got all the hundreds of different types of sexuality and things become blurred and much more confusing... so describing what you are is becoming much more difficult and complicated. (Mary)

Therefore, future researchers must strive to see past the polarisations of sexuality in order to produce research that is inclusive and documents all sexual identities to a full extent to fully understand participants' experiences (Dyar et al., 2015).

## **6.5 Concluding thoughts**

This current research has highlighted that a specific hockey context can facilitate discourses of acceptance and inclusivity towards non-heterosexual identities ultimately leading to its normalisation. Through disciplinary techniques of power and the technologies of the self, heteronormativity can become challenged and potentially seen as the marginal sexual identity. However, it is important to note that discourses of sexual identity are complex. Due to the interconnection between gender and sexuality discourses in women's sport, heteronormativity is likely to remain dominant until equality of sporting opportunities is achieved and maintained. Furthermore, the constant fluctuation

of social attitudes surrounding sexual identity in sport means that there is the likelihood for the discourses outlined in this study to change highlighting the need for research of this kind to be constantly built upon. But through utilising a poststructural, Foucauldian theoretical framework sexual identity discourses are able to be continuously critiqued and deconstructed, putting the taken-for-granted assumptions of sexual identity under constant interrogation. This constant interrogation is important as at the same time it can help to deconstruct the binary ways of thinking regarding sexual identity which need to be broken down to disrupt any 'truths' that exist leading to the marginalisation of non-heterosexual identities. I hope that this research has put into context that heteronormativity is not fixed or stable and that in this case, hockey players are able to negotiate their sexual identity subjectivities outside of the exclusionary discourses of heterosexuality.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A – Letter of ethical approval**



**Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Life Sciences  
Research Ethics Committee**

frec@chester.ac.uk

Thursday, 17 May 2018

Lauren Whitehouse  
7 Chronicle House  
Commonhall Street  
Chester  
CH1 2AB

Dear Lauren,

**Study title:** A sociological study of heteronormativity within women's hockey.

**FREC reference:** 1416/18/LW/SES

**Version number:** 2

Thank you for sending your application to the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee for review.

I am pleased to confirm ethical approval for the above research, **provided** that you comply with the conditions set out in the attached document, and adhere to the processes described in your application form and supporting documentation.

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Document	Version	Date
Application Form	2	April 2018
Appendix 1 – Summary CV for Lead Researcher	1	March 2018
Appendix 2 – List of References	1	March 2018
Appendix 3 – Copies of advertisement material(s)	2	April 2018

Appendix 4 – Social media consent form	1	March 2018
Appendix 5 – Interview schedule(s) or topic guide(s)	1	March 2018
Appendix 6 – Permission to recruit participants from Castle Ladies Hockey Club	2	April 2018
Appendix 7 – Participant Information Sheet(s) (PIS)	2	April 2018
Appendix 8 – Participant consent form(s)	1	March 2018
Appendix 9 – Risk Assessment form(s)	2	April 2018
Appendix 10 – Signatures	1	March 2018
Response to FREC request for further information or clarification	1	April 2018

Please note that this approval is given in accordance with the requirements of English law only. For research taking place wholly or partly within other jurisdictions (including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), you should seek further advice from the Committee Chair / Secretary or the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office and may need additional approval from the appropriate agencies in the country (or countries) in which the research will take place.

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Stephen Fallows**  
Deputy Chair, Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Enclosures: Standard conditions of approval.

Cc. Supervisor/FREC Representative

**Appendix B – Participant recruitment  
poster**

# SEEKING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS



Looking for women who play hockey.

Required to participate in one interview which will last approximately up to 60 minutes.

If you are interested please contact:

Lauren Whitehouse  
1718087@chester.ac.uk



## Participant Requirements:

- Women who play hockey in a recreational league
- Over 18 years old
- All sexual identities welcome



## Aims of the research:

- Examine the hockey environment
- Explore views and attitudes towards inclusivity especially sexuality in hockey
- Explore and understand player experiences

# **Appendix C – Participant information sheet**

## Participant information sheet

### **A sociological study of heteronormativity within women's hockey.**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of the study is to explore your views and experiences regarding the levels of acceptance and openness towards sexual identities and sexuality within hockey. I am interested in exploring and learning about your perceptions of how the hockey environment can have either prohibited or facilitated your ability to be open about your sexual identity and how your experiences have shaped you and those around you as a result.

#### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen for this study because you are a woman who plays hockey in a recreational league and you are over 18 years old. You have also been chosen because you are comfortable with talking about sexual identity including your own.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time up until the point of analysis, without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time during the study, or a decision not to take part, will not affect you in any way.

#### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

The study will require you to complete one individual interview. The interview will be conversational, discussing your views and experiences of the extent you have been able to be open regarding your sexual identity in hockey. The interview will last approximately up to 60 minutes and will take place in a quiet public setting and at whatever time suits you best. Your interview will be recorded and transcribed by Lauren Whitehouse (the researcher). When writing up or presenting the findings of the study, pseudonyms (false names) will be used so that you will not be identifiable.

#### **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no major disadvantages or risks foreseen in taking part in the study. If you feel uncomfortable with any questions being asked, you do not have to answer them. If you wish to stop and withdraw from the interview at any time this will also be respected.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

By taking part, you will be contributing to the current and growing body of academic knowledge on sexuality in sport. The study will also provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your views and experiences of the nature of the hockey environment to either facilitate or hinder your openness towards different sexual identities. Such a reflection may be beneficial to you in acknowledging and understanding how your actions and experiences could have affected yourself and others around you, leading to the presentation of yourself in society today.

### **What if something goes wrong?**

If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Life Sciences, University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester, CH1 4BJ, 01244 511000.

### **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential so that only the researcher (Lauren Whitehouse) and the researcher's academic supervisor (Dr. Nollaig McEvilly) will have access to such information.

*Participants should note that data collected from this project may be retained and published in an anonymised form. By agreeing to participate in this project, you are consenting to the retention and publication of data.*

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results will be written up into a dissertation for a final project, contributing towards the achievement of an MSc and potentially subsequent academic publications or conferences. Individuals who participate will not be identified in any subsequent report or publication.

### **Who is organising the research?**

The research is conducted as part of a MSc in Sociology of Sport and Exercise within the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences at the University of Chester. The study is organised with supervision from the department, by Lauren Whitehouse, an MSc student.

### **Who may I contact for further information?**

If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact:

*Lauren Whitehouse*                      *1718087@chester.ac.uk*

**Thank you for your interest in this research.**

# **Appendix D – Participant consent form**

**Title of Project:** A sociological study of heteronormativity within women's hockey.

**Name of Researcher:** Lauren Whitehouse

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
  
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.
  
3. I understand that my interview will be audio-recorded.
  
4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Researcher	Date	Signature

1 for participant; 1 for researcher

## **Appendix E – Interview schedule**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time:</b>	<b>Identification:</b>
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**Demographic Information**

Player's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Clubs played for: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Level  
played/playing at: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Age started playing  
hockey: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sexual identity: \_\_\_\_\_

## Interview Schedule

Can you tell me what you *mean* by \_\_\_\_\_?  
Can you tell me *more* about \_\_\_\_\_?  
Can you *explain* \_\_\_\_\_?  
Can you give me an *example* of \_\_\_\_\_?  
Can you tell me *why you think* this?  
Can you tell me how this came about?  
What if I said to you \_\_\_\_\_? What do *you think*?

**1) Would you tell me about how you started playing hockey regularly?**

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**2) Why did you start to play hockey?**

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**3) Would you tell me why you continued to play hockey?**

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**4) Would you tell me why and how you started playing for the club you do now?**

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**5) How would you describe the friendship element of playing for your club?**

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**6) Has playing for a women's hockey team led you to socialise with a variety of different people with different sexual identities?**

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**i) Why do you think this is the case?**

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**7) In your own words, what do you think heterosexuality is?**

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**i) Why do you think you have described heterosexuality in the way that you have?**

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**8) In your own words, what do you think homosexuality is?**

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**i) Why do you think you have described homosexuality in the way that you have?**

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**9) Are your teammates aware of your sexuality?**

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**10) Did you have to 'come out' about your sexuality to your teammates?**

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**i) Why did/didn't you do this?**

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**11) Have any of your teammates ever questioned your sexuality?**

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**i) Why do you think they did/didn't do this?**

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**12) Have you ever hidden your sexuality from your teammates?**

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**i) Why did you feel you needed to/ didn't need to do this?**

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**13) Has a teammate ever made an assumption about your sexuality?**

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**i) How did this assumption impact you and make you feel?**

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**14) Has a teammate or another player ever treated you differently because of your sexuality?**

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**i) How and why or if not, why do you think they haven't?**

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**15) How have you been open about your relationships and sexuality around your teammates?**

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**i) Why do you think you have/haven't been open?**

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**16) In your own words what do you think homophobia is?**

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**17) Have you ever experienced homophobia directed at yourself or another teammate when playing hockey?**

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**i) Why do you think this did or hasn't happened?**

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**ii) How did you react? And why did you react in this way?**

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**18) Have there been any lasting impacts on yourself due to experiencing homophobia?**

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**i) What and why? And if not, why do you think it hasn't impacted you?**

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**19) How do people outside of the hockey environment treat you based on your sexuality?**

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