

# **THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER**

## **Faculty of Business, Law and Sport**

### **The construction of masculinities among adolescent and emerging footballers**

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



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Title: The construction of masculinities among adolescent and emerging footballers.

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## Abstract

Association football has traditionally been an institution hostile toward sexual minorities. Boys and men in the sport have deployed high levels of homophobia for multiple reasons, including as an act to dispel homosexual suspicion. However, in interviewing 60 heterosexual male footballers from two Premier League academies and one university-based football team, I show that intolerant attitudes towards gay men are today heavily challenged. These young men – many of whom are potentially on the verge of achieving professional status – reflect the ethos of their generation more broadly, espousing inclusive attitudes towards homosexuality and intolerance of homophobia. Importantly, this was found to be the case independent of whether they maintained contact with gay men.

Participants strongly advocated their support for gay men coming out on their team. This support includes athletes being unconcerned with sharing rooms with gay players, changing with them in locker rooms, or relating to gay men on a social and emotional level. Few players – notably those with strong religious beliefs – held reservations about same-sex marriage, yet suggested they would still support a gay teammate. While many were concerned as to how having a gay teammate might alter homosocial banter, as they would not want to offend that individual, they were confident that this would not impinge upon their friendship.

While attitudes towards homosexuality have shown to be improving in the United Kingdom, scholars have argued that such attitudes are accommodated by hegemonic conceptions of masculinity, without having a profound effect on male privilege and their associated oppressive behaviours. This research explores the extent to which improving attitudes towards homosexuality influence the masculinised behaviours of these men, showing that decreasing homophobia has positively impacted on their gendered expression – many of these participants construct and develop close emotional relationships with one another.

The near-total institution of Premier League academies, however, often facilitates more conservative forms of closeness, particularly compared to the university-based football team and other contemporary research. This closed environment also permits the construction of unique forms of banter that can also include language that some might classify as homophobic. I classify these banter types as jocular and physical, and show that banter often plays a paradoxical role, as it both facilitates *and* potentially disrupts the friendships these men enjoy. In line with more recent research on homosexually-themed language, I also show that participants used language associated with homosexuality, while policing discourse deemed homophobic.

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## **Publications**

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Sections of Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 are currently under review in revised form in the *British Journal of Sociology*:

Roberts, S., Anderson, E., and Magrath, R. (under review) 'Young men in the men's game: Continuity, change and complexity in the performance of masculinity among elite young footballers', *British Journal of Sociology*.

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Rory Magrath



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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

For much of his career, footballer Graeme Le Saux was consistently ridiculed for failing to convey an acceptable masculine image. Fans chanted, 'Le Saux takes it up the arse' on a regular basis while opposing players consistently labelled him 'queer' and a 'faggot' (Le Saux, 2007, p. xiii). This infamously culminated in an impassionate exchange with Liverpool striker Robbie Fowler in February 1999 who, during a match in front of 35,000 people at Stamford Bridge, provocatively bent over in front of him. As a boyhood Chelsea supporter, I remember this event well; my father had taken me to the stadium that day. Though only nine years old, and too young to completely comprehend what had happened, I still remember the exchange between the two players; the discomfort of the assistant referee who was standing close by, and the angry response of the Chelsea supporters sat nearby. Little did I know that over a decade later this moment would prove so significant for the study of football and homophobia.

Fourteen years on, in February 2013, Robbie Rogers – an American-born football player – publically came out, simultaneously announcing his retirement from the game, citing football's intolerance to homosexuality (Rogers, 2014). Three months later, though, following widespread support from the media and old teammates, he returned to America, signed for the Los Angeles Galaxy, and took to the field as the world's only openly gay active professional footballer. He received a standing ovation when introduced to supporters, and has not been taunted by crowds, nor shunned by teammates or opposition players (Cashmore and Cleland, 2014; Magrath and Anderson, 2015).

Examining the cultural shift between these two examples is a particularly interesting and important focus – one that thesis attempts to address, specifically focusing on the next generation of professional footballers.

### **Constructing a Heterosexual Identity**

During my adolescence, I attended an all-boys state school which was notorious for bullying. From my first day, it was clear to me that I needed to quickly learn how to look after myself – physically and mentally. In this environment, behaviours associated with femininity (Pollack, 1998), such as physical closeness, were stigmatised. Indeed, to be gay – or suspected of being

gay – would result in harassment and marginalisation (Ellis and High, 2004; Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Phoenix, Frosh and Pattman, 2003). Having identified this, I learned that failing to demonstrate my heteromascularity (Kimmel, 1994) would result in me being treated as an outcast. Thus, I frequently engaged in the ridicule of others, albeit not through conscious choice; more so to distance myself from being thought of as gay – something Anderson (2009) calls homohysteria.

This ridicule normally came in the form of challenging one's sexuality through employing certain discourse, maintaining heterosexual dominance (Burn, 2000). While I did not think my school was particularly homophobic (and I still don't), I *do* believe that one had to demonstrate a heterosexual identity in order to avoid the consequences of a variety of 'homophobic' taunts and epithets. I also believed that the discourse employed by these boys did not carry strong homosexualising or homophobic intent (Lalor and Rendle-Short, 2007; McCormack, 2011, 2012a; McCormack and Anderson, 2010; Phoenix, Frosh and Pattman, 2003).

While I knew that I was not gay, and was comfortable with my heterosexual identity, it was something which still had to be proved to other boys. After all, the expression of anything related to femininity would arouse homosexual suspicion (Pollack, 1998). At times, due to various behaviours and traits – such as 'flamboyant' gesticulation, excessive physical tactility, music and film taste, or even some of the things I said – I occasionally deviated from the norm, straying from the strictures of hypermasculinity (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010). As a result, I became the target of such ridicule that I began to 'blur the lines between masculinity and femininity' (Anderson, 2009, p. 96). My relatively large physique – I have stood tall at 6'1 since around the age of 13 – alongside my love of sport pardoned me from excessive bullying. In other words, I was protected from marginalisation by possessing just enough masculine capital (Anderson, 2005a).

Despite occasional ridicule, I was for the most part respected and well-liked by the majority of my peers. I also observed that a number of social groups existed within my school setting. Throughout my five years at this school, I witnessed cliques – notably jocks, goths, nerds (Anderson, forthcoming) and chavs (Nayak, 2006). Interestingly, although previous research notes how school boys

are hierarchically stratified according to a hegemonic mode of masculine dominance (Connell, 1995; Epstein, 1997; Mac an Ghaill, 1994), I seldom noticed any friction between these social groups. Contrary to previous high-school settings (Light and Kirk, 2000), jocks did not dominate; physical education was *not* the focus for the reification of dominant masculinities (Connell, 2008). There was, in fact, occasional crossover; boys could be accepted as a member in more than one of these groups. I was one of those who was a member in several subcultural groups, and faced little hostility.

I later learned that the educational experience I had been a part of was one in transition. A plethora of research has shown high levels of homophobia reside in educational institutions (Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Stoudt, 2006; Thurlow, 2001), but this is not what I witnessed. However, neither did I experience a *complete* absence of homophobia or homophobic discourse, found by McCormack (2012a) in later school-based research. Nor did I witness extensive physical tactility: boys, for the most part, attempted to present a rigid identity. Although you were not marginalised and ostracised if you deviated, you were likely to be homosexualised through a variety of homophobic epithets.

Thus, making sense of my schooling experience is difficult as it sits between traditional and evolving masculinity research (Anderson, 2012a). Through reflection, I describe it as transitional; a time when homophobia had decreased (see Loftus, 2001) but was not completely absent.

### **Becoming a Sociologist of Football**

From a young age, I was (and continue to be, to some extent) socialised into a culture in which sport – in particular, football – is valued as an all-encompassing, socio-positive institution (Anderson, 2010). Whether at home or at school, I loved to play football recreationally, although it was obvious to me at a young age that I was never good enough to achieve the heights of professionalism. Not disheartened, I realised that my aim of being involved in professional football could still be achieved in another capacity. At the age of 13, I studied on a referee's course, quickly qualifying and progressing to semi-professional level football by the age of eighteen.

Around the same time, upon successful completion of my A-Levels, perhaps unsurprisingly, I enrolled on an undergraduate degree course entitled

‘Football Studies’ at Southampton Solent University. Here, the commonly-held, socio-positive beliefs about sport, and indeed football, continued – at least at the beginning. When I began my second year, though, one of my modules, ‘Sociology of Football’, changed this. My tutor for this unit, Dr. Richard Elliott, argued that viewing football sociologically would result in viewing football differently, challenging commonly-held beliefs. It was here that I was first encouraged to utilise my ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills, 1959), and my passion for viewing football – and sport more broadly – sociologically, began. As I continued to develop my sociological imagination, I excelled in my academic achievement, particularly in sociology-based units, including my dissertation. As a result of this, I was inspired and encouraged by my course leader, and other tutors, to pursue my interest in the sociology of sport and study for a master’s degree. I successfully completed my undergraduate programme, and was accepted into Loughborough University on their MSc Sociology of Sport programme.

When studying at Loughborough University, I began to further interrogate the divisive nature of football. Issues that I had rarely considered, or had merely accepted as ‘part of the game’ – such as classism, racial discrimination and gender and sexuality inequalities – I began to challenge. I began to think differently about some of the mythical qualities promoted by what Giulianotti (2004, p. 356) calls ‘sports evangelists’. Previously, I had been socialised into believing that sport promotes teamwork, builds character, tackles the exclusion of minority groups and endorses fitness (for critiques see Anderson, 2010; Miracle and Rees, 1994; VanDyke, 1980). Indeed, the mythical qualities that sport brings have helped secure its dominance in Western culture (Burstyn, 1999). They are the same ‘qualities’ my first-year undergraduate students repeat in the opening weeks of their degree programmes. Those who have espoused these qualities merely use anecdotal examples, rather than empirically-based investigations (Carlson *et al.*, 2005; Laurson and Eisenmann, 2007). Developing a deeper sociological imagination has allowed me to be increasingly critical about sport (and football’s) fabled importance.

I now see sport as a dangerous institution which costs the taxpayer millions of pounds as high numbers of injured athletes visit NHS hospitals for treatment (Abernethy and MacAuley, 2003) – often from children having been pushed too hard by their coaches (Hyman, 2009). Highlighting the risk of injury

through football, Delaney *et al.* (2008) show how almost 50% of adolescent footballers suffered concussion in the year of study. I am also critical of the way sport reproduces classism, sexism (Anderson, 2013a) and elevated nationalism (Giulianotti, 1999), yet purports to be inclusive and meritocratic. Further, I had a growing awareness of the way which sport produces masculine hierarchies (Anderson, 2013a) and subsequently, homophobia. In other words, understanding these issues differently allowed me to contemplate how something both divisive and dangerous could be so encouraged and celebrated.

I was, at first, extremely defensive of the socio-negative effects that sport has (Anderson, 2013a) – to an extent I still am – yet I now see and understand the social problems it generates, leading me to adopt a much more critical approach. When critiquing sport, Anderson (2010, p. 8) notes that it is important to, ‘ask yourself how you have benefitted (or not) through or because of sport’. Reflecting on personal experiences in this manner vindicates a critical approach. Participating in football – notably through a ten-year refereeing career – caused me to have two unsuccessful operations on my right knee before the age of 23. During my rehabilitation from my second operation, I was subject to extreme pressures from my superiors, the Football Association, to resume refereeing as soon as possible. I was under pressure to train and referee through pain, running the risk of aggravating my injury. Eventually, unhappy with the lack of empathy shown and my knee no longer being able to cope with the physical demands of refereeing, I retired from refereeing at the age of 24. Naturally, this has caused a great deal of physical pain and of course, mental anguish at never being able to realise my once-dream of becoming a Premier League and international referee.

Similarly, I am equally as critical of my experience as a spectator of football: as a season-ticket holder at AFC Bournemouth I am now aware of the exploitative nature of professional football clubs towards their supporters (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009) through increased ticket prices. Though I continue to attend football on a weekly basis, my relationship is somewhat detached. No longer will I pay elevated ticket prices; no longer is my weekend ruined if the team I support lose; no longer I subscribe to the values I once did. Whereas previously I would accept anti-social behaviour – like racism and homophobia – I now complain to stewards or police. I have even sent emails to the appropriate club demanding action be taken. I am now critical of the state of

dissonance I had previously been in: though remnants of my love of football remain, I no longer prioritise it as the most important aspect of my life.

### **Studying Football, Masculinity and Homophobia**

Understanding the wide array of socio-negative issues created by football led to my academic interest in gender, sexuality and football. When studying at Loughborough University, I became aware that although football had long been viewed as a masculine domain (Giulianotti, 1999; Russell, 1997), very little empirical research had been conducted on the extent of homophobia within the game. Instead, football has merely been culturally-perceived as homophobic: Cashmore and Cleland (2011, p. 421), for example, argue that football is, 'not known as a paradigm of liberalism'. Journalist Owen Jones (2014, n.p.) also takes this view, claiming that, 'football remains one of the greatest fortresses of homophobia'. Presumably, the vilification of Justin Fashanu – who came out in 1990 – is the reason for this assumed homophobia, as well as the lack of openly gay players in the contemporary game.

For that reason, there is a cultural fascination with uncovering which professional footballers in Britain are gay (Willis, 2014). Such conversations are usually borne out of fan speculation, fuelled by media discourses. Highlighting this, Lileas (2007) describes how in 2004, a professional player kissed a teammate on the lips in celebration; the following day, the kiss was spread in a national newspaper, and the player's family bombarded with questions about if the player had 'turned gay'. Similarly, in my own experience, excessive hearsay is commonplace each time I attempt discussion about this subject with my undergraduate football students – I am bombarded with conjecture about a large number of high-profile Premier League players. Occasionally, this even extends to footballers who compete in the lower leagues of English football. Indeed, a *Google* search of these names confirms the speculation through *Twitter* or links to rumours in tabloid newspapers. There are also consistent questions as to when a gay player will publically come out, and what the reaction will be.

This is something my PhD advisor, Professor Eric Anderson, and I speculated upon our first meeting in March 2011. Here, Eric shared his story of being the first openly gay high school coach in the USA (Anderson, 2000). When he came out in 1993, he and his heterosexual athletes faced high levels of

discrimination, much in the same way Justin Fashanu had. He informed me that cultural homophobia was particularly elevated during the 1980s (Anderson, 2009), but is now continuing to decrease in Western cultures (Anderson, 2012a, 2013b; Clements and Field, 2014; Keleher and Smith, 2012; Loftus, 2001; Savin-Williams, 2005; Weeks, 2007). This, he told me, permitted a greater number of behaviours for men in contemporary society, such as increased physical and emotional tactility without the fear of being culturally homosexualised (McCormack, 2012a; McCormack and Anderson, 2014a). He theorises this as *inclusive masculinity* (Anderson, 2009).

I witness these inclusive behaviours each time I meet my first-year undergraduate students; I marvel at the way they demonstrate inclusive masculinity, be it through traditionally effeminate forms of fashion, including tattoos, or the elevated forms of physical tactility I see in class. Through engagement on social media websites, I also see how these young men frequently share beds, or show their love for each other on nights out by excessive kissing and/or cuddling (Anderson, Adams and Rivers, 2010; Drummond *et al.*, 2014). This is not something completely unfamiliar to me: indeed, I engaged in similar activities on nights out as an undergraduate student. However, it appears the frequency of these events is growing (Anderson, 2014).

The decreasing homophobia that Eric and I spoke about in our discussions has also been reflected in sport (Adams, 2011a; Anderson, 2002, 2005a, 2008a, 2011a; Channon and Matthew, 2014; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; Southall *et al.*, 2009). We spoke in some length about these issues and my interest in researching this area developed further. I was particularly interested if this cultural liberalism we had discussed had paralleled in the apparently homophobic culture of football (Caudwell, 2011; Hughson and Free, 2011; Jones and McCarthy, 2010): Cashmore and Cleland (2014, p. 4), for example, proclaim that it is, 'reasonably assumed that football is a prohibitive environment for gay people'. However, following my reading of a large body of research suggested by Eric, evidence points towards a positive and inclusive environment for openly gay footballers (Anderson, 2014).

Anderson's reasoning was supported in February 2013, when Robbie Rogers – an American soccer player (who had played for Leeds United and Stevenage in England) received widespread support from peers after publicly coming out (Magrath and Anderson, 2015). Similarly, when Thomas Hitzlsperger –



a German soccer player who played in the English Premier League for a number of years – came out in January 2014, he too encountered a positive reaction (Cleland, Magrath and Kian, under review). Despite this, both these men maintained football was a homophobic environment; Rogers initially immediately retiring from the game after his announcement, whilst Hitzlsperger waited until he had retired to reveal his sexuality. It is this *assumed* homophobia I investigate in this doctoral research, analysing views of (potentially) future elite footballers.

### **The Research**

Traditionally, issues of access have made it difficult to penetrate and explore the closed community of football (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010). Highlighting this, very few studies have examined professional players in what can be described as a particularly closed culture (see Davies, 1996; Parker, 1996a). It is also fair to say that homophobia receives limited direct attention (Caudwell, 2011), compared to hooliganism (see Armstrong, 1998; Armstrong and Giulianotti, 2001; Bairner, 2006; Dunning, Murphy and Williams, 1988; Murphy, Williams and Dunning, 1990) and racism (see Back, Crabbe and Solomos, 2001; Burdsey, 2007; Garland and Rowe, 1999; Orakwue, 1998).

Recently, however, there has been an increase in the amount of research conducted on masculinity, homophobia and sport. Those who have previously studied this area have found men's competitive team sport to be hostile and unwelcoming environments for sexual minorities (Clarke, 1998; Hekma, 1998; Messner, 1992; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel, Toma and Morphew, 2001). Since the turn of the Millennium, though, sport has paralleled the decrease of cultural homophobia. This has predominantly been shown in amateur and educationally-based sport (Anderson, 2002, 2005a, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2011a; Anderson and McGuire, 2010; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; McCormack and Anderson, 2010; Michael, 2013). Further, there is growing interest in football (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2011b; Cashmore and Cleland, 2011, 2012, 2014; Cleland, 2013a, 2014; Cleland, Magrath and Kian, under review; Magrath, under construction; Willis, 2014).

Significantly, though, there has been no academic scrutiny of future elite-level footballers with regard to their attitudes towards homosexuality. Even less is known about the way future-elite level footballers construct their masculine identities and create relationships with teammates. Accordingly, this

doctoral research bridges this gap, investigating the cultural shift which has occurred since the turn of Millennium. By conducting 60 interviews with young male footballers (aged 16-21), it provides insight as to the inclusiveness of the future generation of potentially professional footballers. Players interviewed were sought from three independent football clubs (see below). Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of each of the football clubs involved in this research.

- *Academy 1* – 22 players from the academy of a Premier League football club based in a major English city;
- *Academy 2* – 18 players from the academy of a Premier League football club based in a major English city (different from Academy 1);
- *University FC* – 20 players from a university-based football team who compete in a semi-professional regional football league (the same city as Academy 1).

Reflecting the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of Premier League academies (Elliott and Weedon, 2010), players were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds were interviewed.

In an attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of the attitudes of these footballers, a variety of questions were asked – not all related to football. Discussions on the following topics occurred:

- Attitudes towards homosexuality and other sexual minorities;
- Support of same-sex marriage;
- Friendships with those from a sexual minority.

Specific discussions related to players' own team were addressed, specifically on topics such as:

- The creation, development and maintenance of friendships within members of the squad;
- Attitudes towards openly gay teammates;
- The construction of banter within a close team environment;
- Homosexually-themed language (see McCormack, 2011; see also Chapter 11).

Players were asked questions about varying experiences between their current team and previous teams. In some instances, players provided specific examples to illustrate their points. In order to further understand players' perceptions on

these issues, they were also posed hypothetical questions regarding team relationships and how these may differ.

### **Approach to Research**

Results and patterns emerging from the data were empirically situated using Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory. Anderson's theory incorporates Connell's (1987, 1995) hegemonic masculinity theory, recognising that Connell's theory remains accurate in times of high homophobia when boys adapt their behaviour to avoid being thought gay. When there is a lack of cultural homophobia, and homophobia is relatively low, the stigma attached to homosexuality decreases (Anderson, 2009), and, as a result, boys' masculinity is softer and less rigid. This masculinity is also inclusive of sexual minorities and behaviours traditionally associated with homosexuality. Connell does not take these factors into account in her theory. In a culture of decreased homophobia in the West (Anderson, 2009; Clements and Field, 2014; Keleher and Smith, 2012; Loftus, 2001; McCormack, 2012a; Savin-Williams, 2005; Weeks, 2007) Connell's theory is outdated.

In an attempt to further address this, Anderson (2009) calls for an increase of scholarly work to evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive masculinity in a variety of social settings. In the concluding chapter of his book *Inclusive Masculinity: The Changing Nature of Masculinities*, Anderson (2009, p. 160) appeals to graduate students and young scholars to:

Investigate the intersection of inclusive masculinities in other arenas. Examine what is occurring among youth of colour, those from impoverished areas, and those with no college education. Help paint a broader more accurate picture of what it means to be multiple types of young men, in a rapidly changing culture.

This doctoral research adds to a growing body which employs inclusive masculinity theory to conceptualise the contemporary nature of masculinity.

Unlike many other theoretical perspectives, Anderson's theory is, 'designed to be inclusive of most all readers' (2014, p. 19), rather than a subgroup of certain academics. He continues:

I eschew dense theoretical writing and post-structural writing. If a sociologist can't explain his or her ideas in a relatively straight-forward manner, with language that any undergraduate can understand, then that academic probably is not worth listening to' (*ibid*).

This is an approach which I hope this thesis also takes. Rather than complex, long-winded, and inaccessible language, I attempt to present my research in a coherent and accessible style, consistent with that of others who have employed inclusive masculinity theory (Anderson, 2009; Channon and Matthews, 2014; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; McCormack, 2012a; Michael, 2013). Thus, my aim for this thesis is for it to be interpreted as a form of 'public sociology' (McCormack, 2012a).

Finally, it is important to note that throughout this thesis, I draw upon scholarly research and arguments from both the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Although attitudes towards homosexuality have been consistently better in Britain than in the United States of America (Anderson, 2009), both these cultures share a common culture, and similar trends have occurred in both nations. Further, these nations host a number of the world's prolific sport sociologists (see Malcolm, 2014).

### **Impact of Research**

Despite a number of high-profile social problems (Cashmore and Cleland, 2014), football is the most popular sport in the United Kingdom (Harris, 2009). Following years of hostility, the positive findings in this research help present football as increasingly inclusive for sexual minorities. Moreover, I hope that this will challenge the persistent anecdote of football as a homophobic institution. Overall, I am hopeful my research will have an impact in two major ways.

Firstly, I hope this research will encourage and inspire more researchers – whether they are young or old, male or female, qualitative or quantitative – to examine the construction of contemporary masculinities in football today. Of course, my positive findings are not generalisable to *every* football team and *every* footballer in the country. Indeed, a number of subcultures exist in football, some of them currently exempt from academic research. Decreasing homophobia is an uneven social process (Anderson, 2009), and levels of homophobia can be dependent on socio-demographic factors such as gender, ethnicity, and religiosity (Collier *et al.*, 2013; Froyum, 2007; Hicks and Lee, 2006; Pompper, 2010; Worthen, 2012).

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, I am hopeful that such positive findings act as a contribution towards providing closeted footballers the

opportunity to publicly come out whilst still playing without fear of ridicule or ostracism. It is perhaps this fear which attributes to what Cashmore and Cleland (2011, p. 420) describe as a 'culture of secrecy', but the last five years has seen an increasing number of active, elite athletes publicly come out in masculine sports: Michael Sam (American football), Steven Davies (cricket), Gareth Thomas (rugby union), Orlando Cruz (boxing), Jason Collins (basketball), Donal Og Cusack (hurling), Rhyian Anderson-Morley (Australian rules football) – all with widespread support. In football, although a handful of low-profile active players have come out in recent years – notably Anton Hysén in 2011 and Robbie Rogers in 2013 – no active professional footballer has come out in the United Kingdom since Justin Fashanu in 1990 (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011).

In this sense, British football has traditionally suffered from what Ogburn (1957) describes as 'cultural lag'. This occurs when:

One of two parts of culture which are correlated, changes before or in greater degree than the other part does, thereby causing less adjustment between the two parts than existed previously (Ogburn, 1957, p. 167).

Despite the persistence of a heterosexist environment (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011), this research does much to challenge much the notion of football as a homophobic environment.

## Chapter 2: The History of Sex and Gender Scholarship

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been characterised by enormous social change in the West. Representing this was the rise of feminism during the 1960s, eventually leading to the introduction of the Divorce Act and amendments to The Sexual Offences Act, The Abortion Act, and The Family Planning Act which led to an increase of women's rights in the United Kingdom (Richardson, 2000). Social change also occurred in the United States of America: the first oral contraceptive for women became more commonly available at the beginning of the decade whilst, in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which included the Title VII prohibition of discrimination based on sex and, later, The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Although the women's liberation movement spread across the Western world with extensive cultural significance (Richardson, 2000), homosexuality remained illegal in England and Wales until 1967 (1980 for Scotland, 1982 for Northern Ireland), when the Sexual Offences Act decriminalised homosexual acts between two men, albeit over the age of 21 (Waites, 2003). Similarly, homosexuality was illegal in all but one American states in 1969 (Carter, 2004). It was towards the end of the 1960s that saw a significant revolution for gay rights – most ubiquitously through the outbreak of the Stonewall Riots in 1969 (Greenberg, 1988).

During the mid-1960s, members of the mafia invested money into the development of same-sex clubs such as the Stonewall Inn and Greenwich Village in New York City as a place for the gay community to meet and socialise (Carter, 2004). The mafia were responsible for the protection of the gay bars, frequently tipping off business owners when police raids were imminent (Duberman, 1993). During these raids, arrests of those who were dressed in full drag or failing to show their identification cards was common (Duberman, 1993). In June 1969, however, the outbreak of riots – later termed as the 'Stonewall Riots' – erupted after one of these police raids turned violent. For the first time, gay men and drag queens fought back and rebelled against police brutality and victimisation (Kimmel, 2000). These continued sporadically for approximately a week (Carter, 2004; Duberman, 1993), giving birth to the gay liberation movement (Anderson, 2014; Greenberg, 1988; Kimmel, 2000; Miller, 1995). McCormack (2012a, p. 58) writes that the event, 'galvanised the LGBT community into political action'.

Although gay movements had existed prior to the Stonewall Riots, Carter (2004) suggests that these events resulted in radical forms of activism through new gay organisations. Notable examples include the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), which developed in the United States as a direct consequence of the Stonewall Riots, and later diversified into the United Kingdom in 1970; the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) in New York in late 1969; and the Committee (later Campaign) for Homosexual Equality (CHE) in the United Kingdom in 1969. These movements resulted in thousands of gay men and women across America and the United Kingdom – and indeed the rest of the world (Adam, Duyvendak and Krouwel, 1999; Greenberg, 1990) – to join the gay civil rights movement.

1970 saw the first organised gay and lesbian pride march take place in New York, commemorating the previous year's riots. The Gay Liberation Front also held marches and demonstrations in Central London in order to celebrate coming out, and highlight the persistence of homophobic oppression (McCormack, 2012a). Accordingly, Greenberg (1988, p. 458) writes that:

Gay activists displayed an assertiveness and self-confidence...Gay protests, demonstrations, and parades now confronted the public with and determined homosexual men and women who came out of their closets and boldly flaunted traditional stereotypes of demonstrated their falsity.

Shortly after this, homosexuality was removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) following a vote by the American Psychiatric Association Board of Directors in 1973 (Herek, 2004). Despite its presence in the list of disorders since its first publication in 1952, same-sex orientation was no longer interpreted as and associated with psychopathy (Bayer, 1987). Accordingly, Herek (2004, p. 6) argues that:

The 1973 vote, its ratification by the Association's members in 1974, and its strong endorsement by other professional groups such as the American Psychological Association...signalled a dramatic shift in how medicine, the mental health profession, and the behavioural sciences regarded homosexuality.

A combination of these events – combined with the success and influence of feminism – resulted in the academic focus of sexuality migrating from the periphery of historical and scientific studies to the heart of understanding contemporary society (Richardson, 2000; Weeks, Holland and Waites, 2003).

This has influenced a growing body of research conducted worldwide into sociological enquiries of sexuality (Weeks, Holland and Waites, 2003). In addition, Hearn (2004) highlights how these socio-political critiques also led to increased focus on men and masculinity (Connell, 1998; Whitehead and Barrett, 2001) – termed as Critical Studies on Men (CSM). This scholarship differed from earlier feminist concerns with men as it held them to the principal focus of analysis. Critical Studies on Men refers to a range of studies which critically addresses men in the context of gendered power relations (Hearn, 2004), understanding that a plurality of masculinities exists which vary within and between various cultures (Connell, 2005; Kimmel and Messner, 2007). This masculinity scholarship examines the nature of male power, highlighting male privilege at the expense of subordinated groups of men, and women (Connell, 1987; David and Brannon, 1976; Pleck, 1981).

Having first examined the birth and history of the gay rights movement, this chapter now focuses on the pioneering scholarship in the field of gender and sexuality studies. Significantly, this chapter provides an etymological overview of the term ‘homophobia’, discussing the historical and contemporary development. Finally, a discussion of the aetiology of male sexual orientation is provided, as it has proved a controversial and widely debated topic in recent years (Engle *et al.*, 2006). This includes a summary of essentialist and constructionist debates, including the influential work of Sigmund Freud.

### **Understanding and Defining Homophobia**

Since it was first employed, the meaning of the term ‘homophobia’ has evolved considerably. The term was first used in the late 1960s to understand the prejudice against sexual minorities and has become a significant and powerful sociological concept (McCormack and Anderson, 2014b). In his revolutionary monograph *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*, George Weinberg (1972, p. 4) introduced the term which was new to most of his readers, defining it as, ‘the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals – and in the case of homosexuals themselves, self-loathing’. Herek (2004, p. 8) argues that the introduction of the term represented a genuine milestone, writing:

It crystallized the experiences of rejection, hostility, and invisibility that homosexual men and women in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century North America had experienced throughout their lives. The term stood a central assumption



of heterosexual society by locating the 'problem' of homosexuality not in homosexual people, but in heterosexuals who were intolerant of gay men and lesbians.

In other words, the concept 'homophobia' enabled a shift away from viewing homosexuals as deviant, and onto heterosexual prejudice. It now represents a problematic concept, as it has evolved from Weinberg's original definition to include broader meanings (Plummer, 1999).

Haaga (1991, p. 171), for example, highlights how contemporary usage covers, 'a wide range of negative emotions, attitudes and behaviours towards homosexual people'. Fyfe (1983, p. 549) refers to homophobia as an umbrella term which refers to a, 'cultural phenomenon, an attitudinal set, and a personality dimension'. Despite this ambiguity, Plummer (1999) notes that 'homophobia' accounts for both attitudes *and* behaviours. Indeed, the literal definition of homophobia is not consistent with the contemporary utility of the concept. The word 'phobia' – derived via Latin from the Greek word *phobos* (describing fear) – is defined as irrational fear of a specific object, activity or situation. Combined with 'homo' to create 'homophobia' would suggest that it should be defined as someone who has a fear of homosexuality.

Plummer (1999) highlights five essential differences that distinguish homophobia from a 'true phobia'. Firstly, as previously noted, normal understandings of 'phobia' embody fear, whereas homophobia is better characterised as hatred or anger. Secondly, a 'phobia' generally involves recognition that a fear is unreasonable. Conversely, homophobic attitudes are often considered to be understandable and justifiable (Plummer, 1999; Wachs and Dworkin, 1997). Next, Plummer (1999) writes that to have a fear of something would typically result in avoidance; homophobia, however, oftentimes manifests itself as hostility and/or aggression. Plummer's (1999) fourth proposition is that a phobia is rarely connected with a political agenda. Disproving this, homophobia has political dimensions including prejudice and discrimination – the ongoing political concern with same-sex marriage (Pettinicchio, 2012) is an example of this. Finally, those who suffer from a phobia often recognise the need to change, unlike homophobia (Plummer, 1999; see also Keleher and Smith, 2012).

Plummer (1999) also notes the inconsistency of definitions of homophobia in varying English dictionaries. Oftentimes, discrepancies between definitions of 'homophobia' and a 'homophobe' have emerged, again highlighting

a challenging issue. A number of alternative terminologies have been proposed, yet these also maintain definitional problems (McCormack and Anderson, 2014b). 'Anti-gay' can be deemed to exclude other sexual minorities such as bisexuality (McCormack and Anderson, 2014b). Haaga (1991) suggests that 'homophobia' should be restricted to the literal meaning, and that 'anti-homosexual bias' (see Fyfe, 1983) should be deployed, though this relies on the medicalised term 'homosexual' (Plummer, 1999). Other concepts – notably 'prejudice', 'stigma' and 'anti-homosexual' – also have significant definitional limitations or uncertainties (McCormack and Anderson, 2014b).

Although I recognise the merits of these alternative concepts, none of these embrace the *assumed* definition of 'homophobia'. Accordingly, though I recognise limitations attached to the concept, I believe it to be the most effective concept at explaining prejudice suffered by sexual minorities. Throughout this thesis, I conform to Anderson's (2014, p. 41) summary:

The word [homophobia] instead refers to an attitudinal disposition ranging from mild dislike to abhorrence of people who are sexually or romantically attracted to individuals of the same sex. Homophobia is a culturally conditioned response to homosexuality, and as such, attitudes towards homosexuals vary widely across cultures and over time.

I also utilise Anderson's (2009) concept of homophobia – discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 – in order to capture the complexities of contemporary sexuality and masculinity (Anderson, 2014) which homophobia fails to account for.

### **The Origins of Sexuality**

Since the period of Western Enlightenment, numerous scholars have written that sexuality is the most natural aspect of human beings (Weeks, Holland and Waites, 2003). Pioneering sexologists Kraft-Ebing, Hirschfeld, Ulrichs and Ellis – described by Weeks, Holland and Waites (2003) as the first wave of sexologists – are among those who offered the first sustained attempt to understand sexuality from a scientific perspective, paying particular attention to the nature and causes of homosexuality (LeVay, 1996). Their work can be viewed as the preliminary steps around forming political action around homosexuality as a static sexual orientation. Accordingly, Weeks, Holland and Waites (2003, p. 2) wrote:

Many of the sexological pioneers, in tandem with pioneering sociologists, saw themselves as the heirs of Enlightenment thought, bringing to bear scientific knowledge to understand human behaviour.

Austro-German sexologist Kraft-Ebing was among the first to theorise that homosexuality was a sexual inversion caused by an inborn reversal of gender traits (Spencer, 1995), caused by the weakening of the genetic stock through disease and alcoholism (LeVay, 1996). His initial work in the field of sexuality concerned understanding deviant and unorthodox sexual behaviour of disturbed patients he was treating. He originally assumed his patients had some breakdown in their physical make-up, but gradually came to witness the importance of psychological factors – subsequently giving birth to the psychology of sexuality (Weeks, Holland and Waites, 2003).

Yet it was the work of Alfred Kinsey – the pioneer of the second generation of sexologists (Weeks, Holland and Waites, 2003) – which was most influential in this discipline. Though previous scientists had undertaken sex research, none approached the magnitude or visibility of Kinsey's research (Irvine, 2005). Founder of the Institute for Sex Research (later renamed the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction) at Indiana University, Kinsey provoked controversy in the United States of America during the 1940s and 1950s for his series of work on sexual behaviour. Here, he reported high levels of infidelity and masturbation among American males (Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948). Most significantly, in the publication of *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948, p. 610), he controversially wrote:

A considerable portion of the population, perhaps the major portion of the male population, has at least some homosexual experience between adolescence and old age. In addition, about 60% of the pre-adolescent boys engage in homosexual activities, and there is an additional group of adult males who avoid overt contacts but who are quite aware of their potentialities for reacting to other males.

Further, he reported that approximately 10% of the American population was either homosexual or had homosexual tendencies (Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948). While this was likely influenced by the aggressive interview approach adopted – we now know that the figure is closer to 2.8% (Laumann *et al.*, 1994) – with it came an elevated awareness of homosexuality. Thus, Anderson (2011c) argues that Kinsey's work was essential for the emergence of homophobia in American culture.

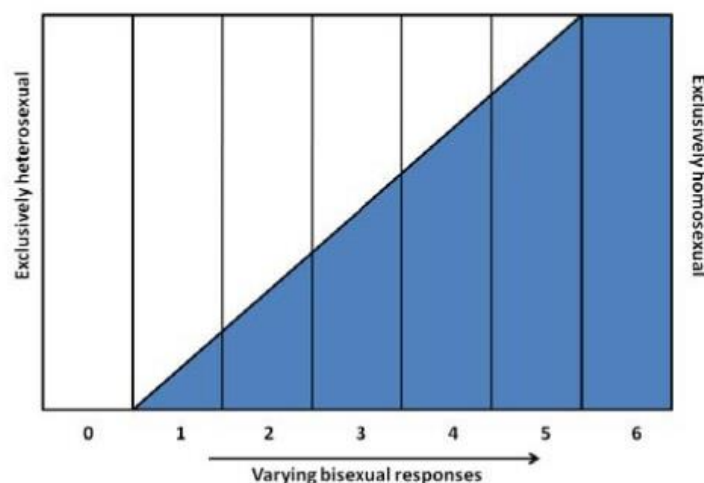
Another of Kinsey's controversial conclusions was that sexual orientation could not be represented by two distinct populations – one heterosexual, and the other homosexual (Hegna and Larsen, 2007). Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin (1948, p. 639) write that, 'Males do not represent two discrete populations...The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects'. Consequently, Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin (1948) developed the *Kinsey Scale* or the *Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale*, allowing men identify along a sexual continuum as:

- 0 – Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual;
- 1 – Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual;
- 2 – Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual;
- 3 – Equally heterosexual and homosexual;
- 4 – Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual;
- 5 – Predominantly homosexual, but only incidentally heterosexual;
- 6 – Exclusively homosexual.

Such is the influence of Kinsey's work that this sexual continuum is still widely employed (Savin-Williams and Vrangalova, 2013): this is graphically represented in Figure 1.

It is clear, then, that Kinsey was one of the most influential scholars in discussing sexual behaviours for both men *and* women. He is also credited as having liberated the female sexuality (Irvine, 2005), as he also undertook sex research with women, with the publication of *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953).

**Figure 1: The Kinsey Scale**



Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948, p. 651.

### **Opinion on Causes of Homosexuality**

A consistent and controversial debate exists concerning the aetiology of homosexuality. In one regard, this seems as if it should be unimportant. However, ascertaining the origin of sexuality has political significance: attitudes towards gay men and women improve when people believe it is biological, in comparison to socially constructed (Hegarty and Pratto, 2001). Discussing the determination of sexual orientation, LeVay (2011) argues that many people, 'frame their ideas in terms of what went wrong in the lives of gay people' (p. 27), and that 'scientific research can help dispel some of the myths about homosexuality that in the past have clouded the images of lesbians and gay men' (LeVay, 1996, p. 49). In support of this, Green (1994) argues that if 'scientists can find a specific part of the brain is primarily responsible for sexual orientation, then the stigmatisation and the legal discrimination against gays and lesbians...should fall' (Green, quoted in Halley, 1994, p. 504). This is underpinned by attribution theory which claims minority groups, or stigmatised people, are judged less harshly if their trait is perceived to be beyond personal control (Hegarty and Pratto, 2001; see also Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008).

In order to ascertain academic opinion as to the aetiology of homosexuality, Engle *et al.* (2006) surveyed a large number of American sociologists, with 59% understanding homosexuality from an essentialist model, in comparison to only 34% who attribute homosexuality to the constructionist model (7% failed to select either model). In a similar study, Gallagher, McFalls and Vreeland (1993) conducted a similar survey with 500 randomly selected American psychiatrists. Those sampled were requested to apply a five-point scale to each causal theory of homosexuality. Results showed that psychiatrists favour a variety of biological, rather than constructionist, theories of homosexuality.

More contemporarily, in an American Broadcasting Company (ABC) poll in America, the percentage of those who believed homosexuality is socially constructed has decreased from 40% to 20% from the last two decades, with those believing it to be biological doubling to 62% in same period (Langer, 2013). This is down from approximately a third of people believing homosexuality to be a lifestyle choice in a 2004 poll in the *Los Angeles Times* (Mehren, 2004). Similar trends are emergent in the United Kingdom: using a range of social attitude data,

Clements and Field (2014) show a decrease in the number of people believing that homosexuality is environmentally conditioned or merely a choice, instead believing it to be genetically conditioned. It is clear, then, that the belief that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice is rapidly dissipating (Kian *et al.*, 2013).

### **Origins of Homosexuality I: Essentialist Debates**

This chapter now analyses the competing debates surrounding the aetiology of homosexuality. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the origin of homosexuality became the subject of many disciplines (Gottschalk, 2003), particularly in the social sciences. The emergence of this focus has seen a number of public arguments about whether a person's sexuality is a fixed, biological perspective, or whether it is shaped by history and culture (see Byne and Parsons, 1993; LeVay, 1991; LeVay and Hamer, 1994). Thus, two general models concerning the aetiology of homosexuality have been proposed: the essentialist model and the constructionist model.

Essentialist debates of the aetiology of homosexuality focus on sexual orientation as a non-changeable and static essence within an individual (Hegna and Larsen, 2007). The essentialist model of causation proposes that an immutable core sexual self exists for each individual, categorised into either heterosexual or homosexual (Rita *et al.*, 1993). Those employing this model argue that sexual orientation is based on biological predisposition or as a consequence or early childhood experience (Rita *et al.*, 1993). With the majority of essentialist research undertaken in recent years focusing on the role of biology, Engle *et al.* (2006) group essentialist research into three subcategories: genetic inheritance, prenatal hormonal development, and hypothalamic structural differences and brain organisation. Previous research has also highlighted early childhood theories as a potential rationale for the origin of sexual orientation, though Rita *et al.* (1993, p. 30) theorise the 'weak and problematic' accuracy for this. It is therefore omitted from this discussion.

#### ***Genetic Inheritance***

Genetic inheritance refers to the contention that a specific gene(s) establishes the pathway to *male* homosexuality (see Bailey and Pillard, 1991). Risan and Schwartz (1988) propose prenatal hormonal imbalances and adult

hormonal imbalances as two distinct essentialist theories of causation. Conclusive genetic linkage provides the strongest argument for the biological explanation of sexual orientation. One of the drawbacks concerns the fact that homosexual orientation usually thwarts the mechanism of reproduction (Zietsch *et al.*, 2008). Thus, Rita *et al.* (1993, p. 31) argue that:

It is logical to conclude that in the process of natural selection such a trait would be selected out and homosexuality itself would occur only randomly as a deviant on 'normal' heterosexual relations.

However, the frequency of homosexuality cross-culturally implies a genetic link (Anderson, 2009; Rita *et al.*, 1993).

Supporting the hypothesis of genetic inheritance, it is important to acknowledge the influential scholarship of J. Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard. Bailey and Pillard (1991) published a number of studies of twins, of which there are two forms – monozygotic (identical) where one egg splits, and twins receive identical genetic material; and dizygotic (fraternal) from two different eggs, when twins are as genetically similar as any other sibling. Bailey and Pillard (1991) found that gay men were four to five times more likely to have gay siblings in comparison to heterosexuals. Moreover, 51% of identical (monozygotic) twins of gay men were likewise gay, 22% of fraternal (dizygotic) twins were likewise gay, and that 11% of adoptive brothers of gay men were likewise gay.

While potential methodological flaws exist – Bailey and Pillard have been criticised for the self-selection of subjects – these findings show some evidence of genetic linkage in homosexuality (Hamer and Copeland, 1994). The extent of these twin studies has motivated attempts to find specific genes that might predispose homosexuality in men or women, simply referred to as gay genes (LeVay, 2011). Despite this search, a definitive gay gene is as elusive as the search for a straight gene is (Wilson and Rahman, 2005). Moreover, the search for a gay gene has greatly reduced as opinion in favour of sexuality as essentialist increasingly carries weight. Though some evidence of genetic linkage in sexual orientation exists (Hamer and Copeland, 1994), some have argued that it is likely environmental experiences are also influential. Theorising this, Zietsch *et al.* (2008) argue that in twin studies, a gay twin could create social pressure on the other twin to act in a particular manner.

### ***Prenatal Hormonal Development***

Prenatal hormonal development refers to an unusual mix of hormones during gestation which leads to homosexuality (Gallagher, McFalls and Vreeland, 1993). According to LeVay (2011), the hypothesis that prenatal hormonal development influences sexual orientation comes in three main sets of observations. Firstly, experiments conducted on nonhuman subjects suggest that testosterone levels are responsible for an animal's sexual preference. According to many, it is reasonable to suggest that similar development is replicated in humans, although this would likely occur before birth; humans are born at a later stage of brain maturation than the majority of animals (LeVay, 2011). Supporting this hypothesis, Rita *et al.* (2003) suggest that this would occur between weeks three and 12 of the embryonic period, though it remains unclear how the process of how either testosterone or oestrogen is produced (Kolata, 1986).

The second observation of the influence of prenatal hormonal development of sexual orientation concerns observations that gendered traits other than sexual orientation are influenced by prenatal hormones (LeVay, 2011). LeVay (2011, p. 78) highlights what he calls 'experiments of nature', referring to genetic conditions that affect the hormonal environment during foetal life, such as congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH). This incorporates a genetic mutation which can cause a number of medical symptoms.

Finally, LeVay (2011) proposes that the fact homosexuality is linked to a variety of gendered-atypical traits in childhood and adulthood suggests that homosexuality might be part of a gender 'package' that has some common developmental roots. Therefore, if other gender traits are influenced by prenatal hormones, then it's reasonable that sexual orientation could be too.

According to Risman and Schwartz (1988), prenatal hormonal development has proven to be a fairly weak argument for the aetiology of homosexuality, as limited evidence exists in support of the disparity between heterosexual and homosexual adult hormone levels. LeVay (2011) supports this argument, and suggests that very little research has been conducted since Meyer-Bahlburg's (1984) article, as it has been accepted that there is not consistent difference in testosterone levels between gay and straight men.

### ***Hypothalamus-Structural Difference and Brain Organisation***



The focus on brain structure and organisation is one of the most strongly argued cases for the origins of male homosexuality. The superior size of hypothalamic brain structure of men than women has already been documented by a number of neuroscientists (Allen and Gorski, 1991). Neuroscientist Simon LeVay replicated this research, examining the brains of homosexual and heterosexual men. It is first worth noting that LeVay (1996) showed that 90% of men surveyed believed they were 'born gay' (compared with approximately 50% of lesbians) with only 4% believing it to be a matter of choice. It is also the work of LeVay which provides the most compelling evidence for sexuality being dictated by brain structure.

When examining brain structure, LeVay examined the hypothalamus in autopsy specimens from 19 gay men, all of whom had died of complications of AIDS, and 16 heterosexual men, six of whom had also died of AIDS. The specimens of six women whose sexual orientation was unknown were also examined. He found that the third<sup>1</sup> interstitial nucleus of the anterior hypothalamus (commonly referred to as INAH3) was less than half as large in homosexual men as in their heterosexual counterparts (LeVay, 1991, 1996). In some gay men, the cell group was completely absent (LeVay and Hamer, 1994). This led LeVay (1996) to hypothesise that INAH3 is dimorphic not only with sex, but also the sexual orientation of men. Accordingly, he writes that, 'it is possible that the development of INAH3 (and perhaps other brain regions) represents a 'final common path' in the determination of sexual orientation' (1996, p. 144).

Although LeVay's work offers a convincing to essentialist arguments of the aetiology of homosexuality, some limitations arise. He has been critiqued for his small sample of 41 subjects, in addition to issues arising surrounding their sexual histories (Rita *et al.*, 1993). Also, most of the brains examined by LeVay were those of men who had died of complications with AIDS, potentially causing brain discrepancies. The AIDS virus – as well as other infectious agents – take advantage of a weakened immune system, and can cause serious damage to brain cells.

Acknowledging this potential flaw, LeVay highlights three rationales which suggest otherwise. Firstly, the heterosexual men who died of AIDS had INAH

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<sup>1</sup> Other nearby groups were also examined (INAH1, INAH2 and INAH4), yet it was INAH3 which provided the most noteworthy findings (see LeVay and Hamer, 1994 and LeVay, 1996).

volumes no different from those who died of other causes. Secondly, the AIDS victims with small INAH3s did not have case histories distinct from those with large INAH3s – for instance, they had not been ill longer before they died. Finally, the other three cell groups in the medialpreoptic area (e.g. INAH1, INAH2 and INAH4) were not smaller in the AIDS victims. This leads LeVay (1996, p. 144) to conclude that:

The small size of INAH3 in these men was not an effect of the disease, there is always the possibility that gay men who die of AIDS are not representative of the entire population of gay men.

Though often critical of LeVay's theorising, William Byne and his colleagues (2001) confirmed that INAH3 was sexually dimorphic, and that it did not differ in size between those who died of complications with AIDS and those who died of alternative causes. Nevertheless, Byne *et al.* (2001) *do* critique LeVay as their replicated testing failed to reach statistical significance, concluding that, 'sexual orientation cannot be reliably predicted on the basis of INAH3 volume alone' (p. 91). Furthermore, they recommend caution with future research due to inconsistency with other INAH groups.

### **Origins of Homosexuality II: Constructionist Debates**

Whilst biological research has dominated academic literature on the determinant of sexual orientation, there has yet to be a unanimous agreement. Those who propose the aetiology of homosexuality as constructionist assert that sexual orientation is shaped by the impact of culture, language and institutions (Delamater and Hyde, 1998). Accordingly, Bem (1996) proposes the 'Exotic-Becomes Erotic' theory of sexual orientation, incorporating sociocultural factors to influence a person's sexual orientation. Here, Bem (1996) theorises that rather than biology, childhood experiences and preferences influence sexual orientation. Unique preferences lead children to feel different from their peers, who perceive them as unfamiliar and exotic. This leads to, 'heightened nonspecific autonomic arousal that subsequently gets eroticized...Exotic becomes erotic' (Bem, 1996, p. 320).

Though rejected by many (Peplau *et al.*, 1998), this form of constructionist argument is supported by a number of religious organisations. Christian Rights groups have been critical of essentialist research, erroneously claiming that the

lack of a gay gene provides sufficient evidence for the constructionism of homosexuality. Many point towards passages in the Bible which claim homosexuality – or same-sex activities – as an ‘abomination’. Following the aforementioned declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder, ex-gay ministries were founded in an attempt to ‘heal’ homosexuals through religious conversion programmes (Robinson and Spivey, 2007). This predominantly religious practice, now termed as conversion or reparative therapy, continues in the present day, despite poor ethical practice and lacking empirical evidence for its validity (Schroeder and Shidlo, 2002). According to Robinson and Spivey (2007), nearly every Christian Right organisation supports this perspective by their persistence that homosexuals can change.

Despite the religious influence on Western culture, it is Sigmund Freud – and his work throughout the development of industrialisation – who argued most vehemently in favour of the constructionist debate of sexual orientation. It is also his theorising that provided the most influential early understandings of the aetiology of homosexuality (Anderson, 2009).

### **Sexuality and the Second Industrial Revolution**

From the mid-1800s through the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, British and American societies underwent radical social change, as the second industrial revolution took its hold on Anglo-American culture (Hartmann, 1976). Consequently, this industrialisation resulted in mass migration of people from rural areas into cities (Cancian, 1987), with farmers swapping their time-honoured professions for salaried work (Anderson, 2009). Such was the allure of industry, the rate of people living in cities rose from 25% in 1700 to 75% a century later (Cancian, 1986). It was around this time that the first developments of a separation of gender spheres became apparent (Cancian, 1987). This shift to industry meant there was a gendered division of labour, as men moved heavy items, operated large machinery and used dangerous tools (Anderson, 2009). Conversely, women’s physical labour became hidden and unpaid, standing in stark contrast to rural life, where men and women worked together (Williams, 1993). Appropriately, Cancian (1987) argues that industrialisation was responsible for the divide of what it meant to be a man or a woman. As Anderson (2009, p. 26) writes:

Men learned the way they showed their love was through their labor. Being a breadwinner, regardless of the working conditions upon which one toiled, was a labor of love. Because women were mostly (but not entirely) relegated to a domestic sphere, they were reliant upon their husband's ability to generate income.

Furthermore, Anderson (2009) also argues that the antecedents of men's stoicism and women's expressionism first became apparent during this period.

It was also during the second industrial revolution that cultural understandings of sexuality changed, particularly homosexuality. Agrarian life was lonely for gay men, as finding homosexual sex in vast spaces was difficult (Anderson, 2009). Thus, migration into cities meant that rates of sex between men increased, as it was easier for gay men to meet and form social networks (Spencer, 1995). As a result, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, same-sex sex was commonplace, and gay men frequently visited Molly Houses (Norton, 1992), highlighting the visibility of homosexuality. This coincided with the growth of scholarly work from pioneering sexologists (see Weeks, 1985), seeking to classify same-sex acts as belonging to a certain type of person: a third sex, an invert, or homosexual (Spencer, 1995). Until this point, a man could engage in a particular act which was not tied into his sexual identity (Anderson, 2014). Because of this new theorising, homosexuals were now a species (Foucault, 1984), closely linked to the performance of various acts.

The 1895 trial and conviction of the flamboyant, English playwright and author Oscar Wilde for 'gross indecency' (a term referring to homosexual acts not amounting to buggery) made salient the newly created deviant sexual identity. He was convicted and sentenced to two years hard labour (Sinfield, 1994), while simultaneously breathing public awareness into homosexuality, and 'consequently engendered elevated social homophobia' (Anderson, 2009, p. 28). As the news of Wilde's conviction became public, the conviction sent shockwaves to other gay men, as they fled England in large numbers. Wilde became a symbol of homosexuality, as he personified the popularly held belief of male homosexuality being equated with effeminacy (Pronger, 1990; Sinfield, 1995), establishing what a sodomite/pervert/homosexual 'looked like', something which found intellectual support from the work of psychologist Sigmund Freud.

Freud was one of the most important pioneers who wrote about homosexuality, helping to explain the emergence of this 'immoral' species

(Anderson, 2014). According to Freud (1905), homosexuality was not innate, and existed as a product of a social construction, a childhood gone wrong. Freud came to this disposition by observing that city dwelling resulted in elevated rates of same-sex sexual activity. Rather than attributing this to the increased chances of men with similar desires being able to meet under the cloak of anonymity however (the sociological explanation), he instead attributed the increased visibility of homosexuality to the separation of children from male role models.

Although some have argued that Freud was sympathetic to what we now call gay men – attempting to explain their ‘condition’ – he wanted to figure out how homosexuality was caused so that he could encourage its prevention. He believed that sexual orientation was not innate, but structured by one’s upbringing. Because fathers were forced to work long hours during the rise of industrialisation, boys were forced to spend much of their time in the presence of women. This was thought to deprive them of the masculine vapours allegedly necessary to masculinise them (Anderson, 2014). Accordingly, Rotundo (1994, p. 31) writes that, ‘Motherhood was advancing, fatherhood was in retreat...women were teaching boys how to be men’. It was therefore assumed that this was creating a culture of soft, weak, and feminine boys. This is what Freud termed ‘inversion’ – a form of gendered wrong-doing leading to overly-feminised boys (Anderson, 2009).

In his 1905 book *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud famously wrote that, ‘the presence of both parents plays an important part. The absence of a strong father in childhood not infrequently favours the occurrence of inversion’ (p. 146). Freud’s message was simple: the development of industrialisation in Anglo-American cultures resulted in a social system designed to make boys ‘inverts’, as it pulled fathers away from their families for long periods of time (Anderson, 2009). Accordingly, Filene (1974) describes a ‘crisis of masculinity’, something which lasted until it came to a temporary halt with the outbreak of World War I. Here, young males enthusiastically saw war as the ultimate homosocial institution within which to prove their manhood

While Freud’s theorising have been strongly disproved as the aetiology of same-sex desires (LeVay, 2011), they carried cultural weight at the time, sending a largely homophobic Victorian-thinking British and American populations into moral panic (Anderson, 2009). Freud highlighted a problem – that boys did not

have enough male influence. Thus, sport was the solution: time in the company of a coach, a male role model who could provide the requisite male (and moral) vapours. It was the role of sport, then, to:

Reverse the feminizing and homosexualizing trends of boys growing up without their father figures. Sports, and those who coached them, were charged with shaping boys into heterosexual, masculine men. Accordingly, a rapid rise and expansion of organized sport was utilised as a homosocial institution primarily aimed to counter men's fears of feminism and homosexuality (Anderson, 2014, p. 30).

Regardless of the rectitude of Freud's theorising, his notions of sexuality and gender provided pioneering cultural understandings that femininity in men was indicative of homosexuality. Whilst Freudian notions of sexuality are largely discredited in contemporary gender scholarship, his work left a lasting legacy throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Weeks, Holland and Waites, 2003). His scholarship also influenced the development of the first theoretical perspective about gender sexuality – (sex) role theory, discussed in Chapter 4.

### **Chapter 3: Sport and Masculinity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

This history of sport is characterised by male domination (Holt, 1989; Polley, 1998). Accordingly, it has famously been described by Dunning (1986, p. 79) as a 'male preserve', and by Messner and Sabo (1990) as an institution created by men, for men. Traditionally, it has been through competitive team sports such as football that boys and men have been able to demonstrate an acceptable form of masculinity (Pronger, 1990). As this chapter outlines, this was particularly the case during the 1980s when sport took on renewed cultural significance (Anderson 2009).

Accordingly, Anderson (2014) presents the term Generation X for contextualising the cultural and political events which occurred during this time. Although there are no universal definitions of Generation X, it is generally agreed that this term contextualises the gendered perspectives of those socialised (and damaged) by hyper-religious immorality, politicians and preachers (Anderson, 2014). Thus, in this thesis Generation X refers to those born between 1960 through 1980.

Throughout this chapter, the role modern sport played during its codification is discussed. The abusive and vicious characteristics of sport during Generation X are outlined in detail, and how this led to the production of a dominant form of masculinity.

#### **The Purpose of Sport**

Prior to the second industrial revolution, sport had little importance or cultural value in Anglo-American cultures (Anderson, 2009, 2014). Focusing specifically on the United States, Mrozek (1983, p. xiii) commented that:

To Americans at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was no obvious merit in sport...certainly no clear social value to it and no sense that it contributed to the improvement of the individual's character or the society's moral or even physical health.

In England, similar attitudes were held. Sports like football caused widespread disorder (McLeod, 2013): violence and even death were common (Giulianotti, 1999). In some extreme cases daggers were carried by players in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Birley, 1993). Since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, evidence has shown that numerous laws and regulations were made by monarchs, governments and local authorities, denouncing participation in the various folk games of football (Walvin,

1994). Objections to the game were varied and complex, yet many continued to participate and were frequently punished with financial penalties or prison sentences (Walvin, 1994). Football in England continued to be a major source of controversy – the Puritan movement sought to ban football (and other sports) completely on the basis that they were ‘filthy exercises’, detracting the ability to worship God appropriately (Brailsford, 1991; Guttman, 1988).

However, when it came to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – coinciding with the beginning of the second industrial revolution – football (along with other sports) took on new cultural significance (Anderson, 2009). Accordingly, the antecedents of today’s sporting culture can be traced back to this point (Anderson, 2014). Furthermore, the process of organisation, codification and regulation of dominant sport forms also occurred in England around this time (Guttman, 1978; Polley, 1998; Stokvis, 2012). During this rise of industrialisation, major sport forms were disassociated from links with rough popular games, instead taking on tonic qualities which were philosophically linked to the traditional producer values (Burstyn, 1999). Notably, football’s codification in 1863 was aligned for ‘gentlemen’ – those educated in public or grammar schools (Therberge, 2000) – excluding both women and lower classes, contrary to its working-class roots (Russell, 1997, 1999; Wagg, 1984; Walvin, 1994). In summary, then, it was during the industrial revolution that much of Western culture’s obsession for sport – particularly men’s competitive team sports – began (Anderson, 2010).

Anderson (2009) argues that the value of competitive (particularly combative) team sports was bolstered during this time, largely because of the establishment of the modern male homosexual identity, which was associated with men’s softness/weakness (Hargreaves, 1982; see Chapter 2). Because heterosexuals cannot prove their heterosexuality, men had to socially (re)prove they were not gay by aligning their gendered identities with an extreme (orthodox) form of masculinity, whilst simultaneously denouncing homosexuality (Anderson, 2009). Appropriately, the male sporting body is described by Polley (1998, p. 109) as an, ‘idealised, orthodox, heterosexual sign’. Kimmel (1994) argued that men, desiring to be thought straight, had to (re)prove their heterosexuality through repressing pain, concealing feminine and (homo)sexual desires and behaviours (Anderson, 2009), while simultaneously committing acts of violence against oneself and others (Pronger, 1990). It was therefore through



sport that boys and men could demonstrate what Burstyn (1999, p. 4) terms as 'hypermasculinity'; so much so that masculinity essentially became synonymous with homophobia (Kimmel, 1994).

In a gender-panicked culture, football – along with other competitive contact team sports – was thought to provide a mechanism to reverse the apparent softening of boys' masculinity in Anglo-American cultures (Radar, 2008). Supporting this hypothesis, Carter (2006, p. 5) writes that sports presented a, 'clear hierarchical structure, autocratic tendencies, traditional notions of masculinity and the need for discipline'. During this period, with Western societies shifting from primarily agrarian economies to industrial societies, for the first time in history the majority of the population migrated into cities (see Chapter 2). Cancian (1987) shows that during this epoch, the social structure of work changed significantly, requiring men to sacrifice their physical health in dangerous factories or coal mines for the wellbeing of their families. Sport served as an ideal vessel for the indoctrination of boys into manhood (Raphael, 1988).

This was part of the project of muscular Christianity, which concerned itself with instilling sexual morality, chastity, heterosexuality, religiosity and nationalism in men through competitive and violent sports (Mathisen, 1990; Whitson, 1990). It is therefore unsurprising that participation in early modern sport was made nearly, or fully, compulsory for young boys, and was epitomised by celebrated violence (Dunning, 1999; Elias, 1986). In many educational establishments, the obsession of promoting muscular Christianity often resulted in sport taking precedence over classical studies (Crosset, 1990). Sports like football were culturally valued as this provided sufficient masculinity for the prevention of feminised or homosexual boys (Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Chandler and Nauright, 1996).

There were of course other reasons that team sports were valued for boys. For example, sport helped teach the values of self-sacrifice and obedience to authority needed in both factory work and the military. However, the key factor was that sport accentuated the extreme version of masculinity that Western culture demanded. This is why women were excluded from sport for so long: women who competed equally alongside men would disrupt the myth of men's athleticism and women's frailty (Burton-Nelson, 1994). Indeed, Crosset

(1990) argues that it has played a crucial role in socialising and positioning men as biologically superior to women.

Throughout the early and middle decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, masculinity was associated with heterosexuality, and sport – alongside school-based education (Savage, 2007) – was the primary vessel for masculinising boys. Hence, men who played sport were not thought likely, or even possible, to be gay. Thus, sport has served to privilege not all men, but specifically heterosexual men (Anderson and McCormack, 2010), leading Wellard (2002, p. 237) to describe sport's 'exclusive masculinity'. However, the purpose of sport began to change in the mid-1980s. Here, exclusive masculinity in sport took on renewed importance for boys and men, a means of developing and emphasising of men's masculinity in a culture of extreme homophobia (Anderson, 2009).

### **The Birth of the 'Jock'**

The increased visibility of homosexuality during the 1980s led to a rise in homophobia in Western cultures, hitting an apex in 1988. This was demonstrated by high levels of condemnation of homosexuality in social attitude surveys (Loftus, 2001). With sport rejecting homosexuality and venerating hyper-heterosexuality, this led to the emergence of a masculine hierarchy. Sitting at the top of this hierarchy were the jocks of Generation X (Anderson, 2014). It is important to note here that the education system in the United States varies to that in the United Kingdom – in America high schools and universities are frequently stratified around athletics rather than academics. Nevertheless, the term 'jocks' can still be applied to the similarity in British masculinity during this epoch (Anderson, 2009).

The term jock normally refers to boys who sit at the top of the hierarchy because they score the most touchdowns, goals or baskets (Anderson, 2005a). In other words, jock describes boys and men who compete in contact team sports, particularly those who thrive in such an environment. As Messner (1992, p. 152) argues, 'Every elementary or high school male knows that the more athletic you are, the more popular you are'. Schrack-Walters, O'Donnell and Wardlow (2009) argue that elite athletes selected for competition are titled 'All American' as they are perceived to embody an ideal form of jock masculinity. Similarly, in contemporary culture, characters from motion pictures such as *Back to the Future* and the *American Pie* series provided examples of what jocks looked like. These

movie roles highlighted that being a Generation X jock required embodying certain attributes. Anderson (2014), for example, provides a non-exhaustive list of these traits, including:

- A handsome, muscular, and athletic appearance;
- Rude, arrogant and unintelligent;
- Abusing alcohol and drugs (see Clayton and Humberstone, 2006);
- Being generally popular with girls;
- Engaging in casual sex earlier and frequently;
- Stoic; thus reluctant to show weakness, fear or emotion (see Williams, 1985);
- Restraining from physical intimacy with friends (see Field, 1999).

What is particularly striking, though, is the cultural reverence, and promotion of an idealised version of masculinity associated with Generation X jocks (Anderson, 2014). Indeed, Connell (1987, p. 85) comments that:

In Western countries, images of ideal masculinity are constructed and promoted most systematically through competitive sport...The combination of force and skill that is involved in playing well at games like football...becomes a model of bodily action that has a much wider relevance than the particular game. Prowess of this kind becomes a means of judging one's degree of masculinity.

In other words, sport is the leading definer of a dominant form of masculinity in Western culture through association with maleness, skill and strength.

Frequently, these men live in what Anderson (2005a, p. 66) describes as a 'near-total institution'. Goffman (1961) originally described a 'total institution' – an isolated, enclosed social system designed to control all aspects of a person's life (such as a prison or mental asylum). Anderson (2005a) borrows this to discuss how sport holds almost as much as power, the difference being that athletes have the freedom to quit sport, whereas a prisoner completely lacks agency. In sport, athletes spend large amounts of time with each other: training, attending school or university, socialising together and living together. In football, for example, Parker (1996a) discusses the living arrangements among footballers in his ethnography of football apprenticeships. Here, he documents how the accommodation for apprentice players was referred to as the club 'digs', showing how all the boys' bedrooms and leisure space was in the same place. Interestingly, Parker (1996a) also notes how this was a very 'closed space': visitors were restricted to communal areas only, rather than boys' bedrooms, including

parents. Such an example supports Anderson's (2005a) near-total institution, with the closed-knit group creating a rigid and tightly policed bond with each other.

The closeness created by athletes in such a closed space enabled them to create and exhibit an esteemed form of masculinity. In this context, though few boys were genuine jocks, the near-total institution exacerbated a hierarchy of masculinities. Consequently, rather than banding together to overthrow this dominant group of men, marginalised and subordinated groups desired to be like them (Anderson, 2014). Therefore a continuous process of gender patrolling occurred, boys and men wishing to avoid homosexual stigma would act in non-feminine ways in an attempt to uphold their masculine identity (Anderson, 2014). This would include routinely and regularly chastising those who deviated. Sabo and Runfola's (1980) influential, pro-feminist text *Jock: Sports and Male Identity* – one of the first texts to address issues of masculinity in sport – details the aggressive, misogynistic and abusive nature of the Generation X jock. This king-of-the-hill culture (Anderson, 2005a) is what Miller (2009, p. 72) describes as the 'toxic jock'.

### **Validating the Generation X Jock**

#### ***Sexism and Misogyny***

Male athletic subcultures have served to reinforce an ideology of male superiority, by way of projecting hegemonic ideals (Connell, 1995). Few other institutions in the Western world serve to naturalise the segregation of men and women as perfectly as team sports do (Aitchison, 2007). During this time, women began to move out of the domestic realm and gained access to sport, one of the last masculine-dominated institutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Miracle and Rees, 1994). Here, sport allowed the reproduction of privilege through displays of strength and violence, physically outperforming and symbolically dominating women (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Miracle and Rees, 1994). Accordingly, Connell (1995, p. 54) wrote that, 'Men's greater sporting prowess has become...symbolic proof of superiority and right to rule'.

This masculine domination also extended to elevated sexism. Highlighting this, Harry (1995) shows that male college students presenting a sporting ideology were far more likely to exhibit sexist and misogynistic attitudes. Competitive team sports, such as football, have subsequently been used to prove society's sexual

and gendered values, myths and prejudices about the variation between men and women (Adams and Anderson, 2012; Burstyn, 1999; Burton-Nelson, 1994). Furthermore, it has been used as a vessel to celebrate dominant forms of men, importantly subordinating women (Clayton, 2005; Clayton and Humberstone, 2006; Parker, 2001), relegating them to the domestic realm.

Events such as the Superbowl, labelled 'a male-centred ritual', have existed as a means of demonstrating female passivity (Sabo and Runfol, 1980). Dominant notions of men participate, predominantly spectated and encouraged by other men, whilst women merely act as cheerleaders, or to bring their husbands food in front of the television. Appropriately, Sabo and Runfol (1980, p. 8) summarise:

There is little unity or commonality of experience between the sexes. The social scenario is designed to differentiate and separate men from women. To put it simply, men are 'on the team' and women are not.

Similarly, Giulianotti (1999) discusses association football as an arena constructed aesthetically, structurally and culturally as a prime site for the legitimisation of men's power over women. This has been demonstrated by elevated objectification of women by male team sport athletes (Clayton and Humberstone, 2006; Schacht, 1996).

Connell (2005) notes how women were seen merely as objects of sexual conquest, an important mechanism for bonding and gaining status with fellow male teammates (Clayton and Humberstone, 2006; Pronger, 1990; Sabo and Runfol, 1980). This had a hampering effect on male relationships with females: there exists a fine line between highly sexualised discussion of women and aggression against women (Connell, 2005). Similarly, in his ethnography of locker-room discourse, Curry (1991) also found sexually aggressive talk about women. Importantly, he makes two distinctions over the way men discuss women. Firstly, women as real people – this refers to conversations regarding social relationships established with females which an athlete may have concerns with, requiring discussion with close friends. When these discussions take place, they are normally done so quietly so to avoid being ridiculed by others, who may overhear the conversation. Conversely, Curry (1991) theorises talk about women as objects – this refers to women as sexual conquests. Unsurprisingly, this talk is not hushed; on the contrary, men boast an image of themselves as practicing heterosexuals.

The objectification of women is also exhibited by jocks singing various songs. Giulianotti (1999) highlights how football players and fans frequently engage in graphic sexual metaphors to demonstrate their masculine superiority. White and Vagi (1990, p. 68) highlight similarities in rugby through, 'the singing of songs that reinforce masculinity by objectifying and vilifying women' as commonplace. Sheard and Dunning (1973) note comparable findings, in what Waddington (2000, p. 417) calls 'aggressive masculinity'. Pronger (1990, p. 22) supports this, arguing that, 'combative sports are really a training ground for aggressive violent masculinity'.

According to many, frequently engaging in songs against women facilitates the prevalence of a rape culture (Beneke, 1982; Clayton and Humberstone, 2006; Curry, 1991; Herman, 1984). Accordingly, Pronger (1990, p. 65) suggests that, 'the most masculine thing that a man can do is to fuck a woman violently against her will'. Participation in team sport is at least partially responsible for the promotion of this rape culture (Anderson, 2010). The promotion of a rape culture, however, does not mean that actual rape will always occur. Nevertheless, Neimark (1991) shows how team sport athletes competing in football, basketball, and lacrosse were second behind fraternities in being responsible for gang rape. Likewise, Crosset, Benedict and McDonald (1995) and Crosset *et al.* (1996) show that student athletes were guilty of 19% of sexual assaults reported to the campus Judicial Affairs office, despite only making up only 3.7% of the university demographic. In his later research, he also shows how football, basketball, and hockey players were accountable for 67% of sexual assaults reported by student athletes, despite only making up 30% of the student athlete populace (Crosset, 2000).

Jackson, Veneziano and Rigger (2004), however, reject the hypothesis that aggressive sports training and participation in competitive team sports is a function of sexual deviance (including rape) on college campuses. Rather, they argue, sexual deviance is more likely to occur if one has a history of deviance, claiming that, 'individuals who are associated with sports or fraternities are punished because of something their predecessors may have done' (2004, p. 83). They attribute this to inaccurate stereotypes attached to athletic or fraternity groups, exacerbated by the media (Jackson, Veneziano and Rigger, 2004). Though rape in varying contexts – being against women or others (Anderson, 2010) – may

be an extreme example of jock dominance, sport's role in 'othering' and marginalising women cannot be denied in other forms.

### ***Homophobia***

It was not just women that the Generation X jock attempted to marginalise. Their dominant position was also cemented through the harassment of other subordinate social groups (Connell, 1989): those perceived to be 'uncool', such as nerds or geeks (Hickey, 2008) or goths. Most significantly, though, jocks also engaged in similar behaviour towards gays – or those suspect of being gay – despite them valorising those atop (Anderson, forthcoming). To be gay or thought of as gay during this time was unacceptable, leading Anderson (2005a) to suggest that sport is a good place for a closeted man to hide his sexuality. Evidencing this, Anderson (forthcoming) writes that when kids in a school started a Gay, Straight Alliance in 1993, football players responded by starting a heterosexual club, picketing the gay clubs with signs which read 'No Faggots'. Accordingly, Sabo and Runfola (1980, p. 43) wrote that:

Within the highly masculine social world of sport, the threat of homosexual stigmatization is ever present...It is no mere coincidence, therefore, that the cultural image of the jock is the polar opposite of that of the homosexual.

Oppression faced by sexual minorities during this time led Rich (1980) to theorise the 'compulsory heterosexuality' framework. Originally developed to explain how women are forced to adhere to particular heterosexual and feminine ideals (Sartore and Cunningham, 2008), Connell (1995) extends that this framework is also compulsory for men.

The valuation of heterosexuality means that scholars conducting research around this time (Bryant, 2001; Clarke, 1998; Griffin, 1998; Messner, 1992; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel, Toma and Morphew, 2001) found extreme forms of homophobia directed towards those who were gay or perceived to be gay. Michael Messner (1992), whose single study on straight male athletes' attitudes towards homosexuality, even describes the high levels of homophobia in sport as 'staggering', and argues that sport exacerbates compulsory heterosexuality. Rich (1980, p. 632) argues that any form of non-heterosexuality is perceived 'on a scale ranging from deviant to abhorrent'. Similarly, Hekma (1998, p. 2) argued that:

Gay men who are seen as queer and effeminate are granted no space whatsoever in what is generally considered to be a masculine preserve and macho enterprise.

The culture of hostility created by jocks during this time resulted in heterosexual athletes, 'unwilling to confront and accept homosexuality' (Wolf-Wendel, Toma and Morphew, 2001, p. 47). Homophobia during this time was elevated to the point that Pronger (2000) argued no scholarly research existed which showed mainstream sport to be a welcoming environment for sexual minorities – sport was a hostile place for gays and lesbians.

The most frequent way homophobia was shown was through the use of homophobic discourse or through violence (Gini and Pozzoli, 2006; Pollack, 1998; Slaatten, Anderssen and Hetland, 2014). Although abusive language may not be directed towards anyone in particular, it can still be hurtful to gay men and women (Hekma, 1998), and is pivotal to maintaining a culture of hostility. Homophobic slurs or 'queer-bashing' (Pronger, 1990) have been commonplace in male locker-rooms and sporting settings used by boys and men against those who do not live up to orthodox attributes of masculinity (Anderson, 2002). Research on men and masculinities documents the way boys and men utilise homophobic discourse as a weapon of emasculation (Burn, 2000; Plummer, 1999; Slaaten, Anderssen and Hetland, 2014), particularly epithets such as 'sissies' (Fine, 1987; Giulianotti, 1999; Kimmel, 1994; Messerschmidt, 2000), 'fags' (Pascoe, 2005; Thorne, 1993), 'pansies' (Hickey, 2008; Pronger, 1990) and 'poofs' (Parker, 1996b; Roderick, Waddington and Parker, 2000; Swain, 2000). Widespread use of these labels is a reminder for closeted gay athletes that revealing his sexuality can be outright dangerous (Hekma, 1998).

### ***Gay Athletes***

Pronger (1990) highlights how boys in Western cultures needed to use sport in order to prove their heteromascularity, stigmatising gay athletes as pariahs. In this homophobic environment, Clarke (1998, p. 145) describes gay men 'largely as deviant and dangerous participants on the sporting turf'. Pronger (1990) shows how gay athletes were frequently being the last to be picked for teams, despite boasting fine athletic prowess. One example concerns teams being selected during a physical education class, and one team captain claiming his team only had 'five and a half members' instead of six, as the final team member



was gay. Even if an athlete was not openly gay to his teammates, the permission of a hyper-heterosexual (Hekma, 1998; Wolf-Wendel, Toma and Morpew, 2001) and macho culture created an unwelcoming and hostile environment for gay athletes. Within this environment, Parker (1996b) argues that heterosexuality is taken for granted; alternative forms of masculine representation are stigmatised as deviant.

### ***Violence***

Learning to accept and inflict violence was also a prime characteristic of the Generation X jock. It has been argued that dominant sporting figures should be able to withstand pain (Allan and De Angelis, 2004; Connell, 1995). In the case of the Generation X jock, achieving success by any means was prioritised over illegitimate violence: athletes were encouraged to purposefully foul or injure an opponent to ensure triumph (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010). Accordingly, Pronger (1990, p. 23) writes that, 'boys and men who are willing to put themselves through such violence do so out of an attachment to the meaning of orthodox masculinity'. In his compendium of violence and sport, Smith (1983) classified athlete violence into four basic categories – two legitimate (in the context of sport) and two illegitimate:

- *Brutal body contact* – referring to routine tackles and blocks which regularly occur in contact team sports;
- *Borderline violence* – referring to acts prohibited under the laws of a sport, but which continue to routinely occur;
- *Quasi-criminal violence* – activities which violate the laws of a sport, laws of the land, and informal etiquette between players, usually resulting in institutional financial penalties and/or fines;
- *Criminal violence* – events which are so seriously outside the margins of acceptability that they are handled as criminal from out the outset; examples might include athletes who assault or even murder opponents after matches cease.

Popular opinion would suggest that aggressive team sports are an outlet or a means to cathartically express natural aggressive energies (Pronger, 1990). However, these activities aid the exacerbation of these aggressive and violent behaviours.

Highlighting this, by providing baseball and softball athletes with a variety of fictional scenarios, Shields *et al.* (1995) found that the majority of participants sampled would purposefully injure an opponent in order to increase his team's chances of winning. The acceptance of violence as merely 'part of the game' was particularly noteworthy here. In essence, participants in Shields *et al.*'s. (1995) study justified these aggressive behaviours more than those of non-athletes. Supporting this, Kreager (2007) uses data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to show how men who frequently participate in contact team sports are significantly more likely to engage in violence than either non-contact team sport athletes or individual athletes. He writes that, 'playing hypermasculine contact sports shapes subsequent violence' (2007, p. 719), arguing this is unsurprising given that coaches will select overly aggressive boys to participate to ensure athletic success.

As well as inflicting violence to achieve sporting success, Generation X jocks also maintained their dominant position in a masculine hierarchy by violently assaulting or threatening to violently assault gay athletes – or 'gay bashing' (Anderson, 2014; Pronger, 1990). Demonstrating this in the most drastic form, Anderson (2009) discusses that after he had come out as the first openly gay high school coach (see also Anderson, 2000), one of 'his' athletes was brutally assaulted. Despite being straight, yet assumed guilty by association, an American footballer knocked the runner to the ground, pummelled his face and gouged his eyes whilst shouting, 'It ain't over until the faggot's dead!' (Anderson, 2011d).

In his later research, Anderson (2002) highlights how one of the athletes he interviewed who had been outed was shunned and threatened with physical violence if he returned to the team. He recounts: 'I walked into the school and I started getting shoved around, and pushed around...I was told if I played any sports, that they'd make my life living hell' (Anderson, 2002, p. 869). In addition, athletes drove past his house shouting homophobic and threatening taunts. Herek and Berrill (1992) describe these types of events as hate crimes because they send shockwaves to the gay community that suggests, 'watch out: this can happen to you', terrorising an entire community.

### ***Self-Sacrifice and Injury***

Sport produces one of the biggest paradoxes in Western society. Anderson (2010) writes how it is portrayed as one of the healthiest pastimes in which one can participate. This ideology is one supported by Western governments, who encourage and force youth to play sport in public education (Anderson, 2014). This was particularly the case throughout the 1980s when sport was used as a means to assert and (re)establish hypermasculinity (Burstyn, 1999). Even contemporarily, elite athletes are portrayed as the embodiment of fitness and health, though in reality a high number suffer permanent injuries. The manifestation of head trauma in aggressive team sports such as American football and soccer (Delaney *et al.*, 2008) is often concealed with many erroneously believing that helmets protect athletes from such injury (Viano, Casson and Pellman, 2007).

Yet the Generation X jock was socialised into an environment where sacrificing oneself was seen as normal practice (Anderson, 2010). Inflicting injury and/or being a victim of violence through sport has been legitimated through the acceptance of injury as a necessary variable of competing in sport (Vaz, 1972). Over-adherence to authority figures resulted in coaches exploiting athletes' fear of emasculation by pushing them too far, knowingly allowing their athletes to play through injury (Anderson, 2013a). Messner (1992, p. 72) suggests two reasons why athletes continued to compete in sport despite injury – or 'give up their bodies'. Firstly, he argues, there exist a number of external pressures: the fear of being judged negatively from coaches, teammates, fans and the media. Athletes who fail to refuse to conform to the 'pain principle' are held responsible for the team suffering defeat. Secondly, due to the internal structure of masculine identity, athletes become alienated from their bodies. In other words, athletes struggle to differentiate between being 'hurt' and 'injured'. Their bodies are employed as a machine, with injuries merely ignored until they can be ignored no longer (Messner, 1992).

Of course, there are a number of other factors which can be taken into consideration here. The prevalence of performance-enhancing drugs and painkillers permitting athletes to continue competing whilst disguising their injury is also a ubiquitous way that self-sacrifice is shown. Generation X jocks sacrificed their health for the good of their team (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010), prioritising sporting achievement over safety. This can be linked with sport being

described as a near-total institution (Anderson, 2005a), and the portrayal of jocks as unintelligent and unable to think critically and independently (Anderson 2014).

Footballers are prime examples of athletes playing through pain and injury. English football has become synonymous with the image of the then captain Terry Butcher wearing a white England shirt covered in blood in 1989 after a match leading to England's qualification for the World Cup. Similarly, Paul Ince repeated this feat in exactly the same circumstances in 1997. The ability to continue playing despite serious head wounds gave Butcher and Ince iconic and heroic status in English football. Roderick (2006a, p. 35) summarises: 'Being prepared to play while injured is defined as a central characteristic of a good professional attitude'.

### **Contextualising Homophobia in Football**

Football, in all its worldwide variations (American football, rugby football, Australian rules and association football), is the most popular sport in the world (Burstyn, 1999). In the United Kingdom, football occupies a prominent position in the sporting hierarchy (Goldblatt, 2014; Harris, 2009), and is the most watched sport in the country. Indeed, Roderick (2006a) argues that supporting a team is an extremely important element of people's lives. The game's significance particularly increased during the 1980s, where sport acted as a reflection of dominant cultural norms – in this case football, a highly masculinised sport, matched the homophobic zeitgeist of British culture under the severe economic depravity and AIDS-phobia created by Thatcher's Conservative government (Anderson, 2009; Dunning, 2000; Walvin, 1985).

Although the game was popular among a particular subculture, the image of the game hit an all-time low (Walvin, 2001). It began to serve as a protest forum for white, working-class males (Dunning, Murphy and Williams, 1988) to demonstrate their hypermasculinity – notably through the medium of football hooliganism (Walvin, 1994). Even the game itself was an unattractive spectacle: it can perhaps be hypothesised that the game became a 'blood and thunder' affair with players more noted for the aggressive or 'dirty' style of play rather than guile or grace (Giulianotti, 1999). With their association with hegemonic masculinity (Harris, 2009), however, professional players represented heroic status (Roderick, 2006a).

Man an Ghaill (1994) ideally captures this persistent – albeit slowly – diminishing zeitgeist, writing how young, working-class men performed a symbolic display of masculinity through, ‘the three F’s – fighting, fucking and football’ (p. 56). A symbiotic tautology is at work here with football, and footballers, required to perform a certain type of maleness. Epstein (1998, p. 7) goes as far to say that that football is a, ‘major signifier of successful masculinity’. Parker (2001, p. 59) discusses how English professional football is, ‘a strictly gendered affair...Its relational dynamics, its working practices, its commercial ventures, its promotional interests, are replete with images of maleness’. Comparisons can be drawn with the semi-professional level of the game which is saturated with an idealisation of masculinity (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010). Football, therefore, constructs an orthodox form of masculinity (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Curry, 1991) – dominant forms of men are both celebrated and achieved at all levels of the game.

Accordingly, Clayton and Humberstone (2006, p. 297) write how football, ‘epitomises the notion of sport as a male preserve, and basks in the philosophy of dominant masculinities and male ideology’. In their discussion of American football, Sabo and Panepinto (1990, p. 115) discuss how football’s historical prominence in Western culture has, ‘sustained a hegemonic model of masculinity that prioritises competitiveness, asceticism, success (winning), aggression, violence, superiority to women, and respect for and compliance with male authority’. This argument is one which can easily be applied to association football (Harris, 2009). Discussing the aggressive and competitive nature of football, Roderick (2006a, p. 36) writes that to be successful, ‘You’ve got to become hard bastard. You’ve got to be a hard, tough bastard’. Such arguments explicate football being labelled a homophobic institution; one that is neither compatible, nor accepting, of those from a sexual minority.

### **The Problem of Homophobia in Football**

With respect to the hypermasculinity described by scholars throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (Burstyn, 1999), if one was to search for evidence of the impact of this culture they would expect few gay professional athletes to come out of the closet. If a gay player was to come out, the expectation would be that he would be treated as a pariah – as outlined earlier in this chapter. In

football, this is exactly what happened. The next part of this chapter examines the treatment of gay professional footballers, and also shows how homophobia does not just hurt gay men; it hurts straight men, too (Curry, 1991; Plummer, 2006; Pollack, 1998).

Although a small number of footballers have publicly come out of the closet – notably Anton Hysén, Robbie Rogers and Thomas Hitzlsperger (these are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5) – there has still only ever been one active, openly gay professional footballer in the United Kingdom: Justin Fashanu. Fashanu, the first black player to command a £1m transfer fee, remains arguably the most ubiquitous example of homophobia's presence in football. In 1990, having learnt details about his private life were about to be revealed in a national newspaper, Fashanu became the first gay professional footballer to come out (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011), via *The Sun* under the headline '£1m Football Star: I AM GAY' (Cleland, 2014, p. 3). The result was catastrophic: Fashanu suffered vilification from his manager, fans, fellow players, and even members of his own family.

Both Fashanu and his brother, John, also a professional footballer, were placed into care when their own parents were unable to care for them. When Justin came out, John immediately distanced himself from his brother, lauding him an 'outcast' and claimed that his brother wasn't really gay, he was merely seeking attention. This was a stance John continued, refusing to retract his comments in a 2012 BBC documentary presented by his daughter. Similar rejection was shown by Justin Fashanu's then manager, Brian Clough. Clough goaded him due to his frequenting of gay bars, consistently referring to Fashanu as a 'black poof' (1995, p. 34). In his autobiography, Clough (1995, pp. 232-3) boastfully recounts an infamous conversation with Fashanu:

Where do you go if you want a loaf of bread?' I asked him. 'A baker's, I suppose'. 'Where do you go if you want a leg of lamb?' 'A butcher's'. 'So why do you keep going to that bloody poofs' club...He knew what I meant and it wasn't long before I could stand no more of him.

Such episodes affected Fashanu's performance and he spent the remainder of his playing career in the minor leagues outside England (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011). It is generally accepted that his appalling mistreatment was a contributing factor to his suicide in 1998 (Anderson, 2014). Indeed, the coroner argued that

Fashanu was overwhelmed by the degree of prejudice he had suffered (Ponting, 2012).

It is important to acknowledge the time period when Fashanu came out. As outlined in previous chapters, cultural levels of homophobia in the Western world hit an apex towards the end of the 1980s. In football, similar levels of homophobia were apparent – when Fashanu came out he was in violation of the compulsory heterosexual ‘rule’ in team sport at this time (Almaguer, 1991; Clarke, 1998; Pronger, 1990). Homophobia was also prevalent in football in other ways. Illustrating this, the Football Association – English Football’s governing body – unsuccessfully attempted to ban kissing between players during goal celebrations, claiming that it was necessary to prevent the spread of HIV (Anderson, 2014; Simpson, 1994a). Simpson (1994a, p. 88) therefore accuses footballing authorities suffering from ‘masculine paranoia’. Anderson (2014), though, argues that in this homophobic culture, this ban was likely unnecessary.

As he remains the only openly gay active professional footballer in Britain to have come out, it can be argued that Fashanu was something of a ‘trendsetter’ – symbolic of the fractious relationship between football (and indeed other competitive team sports) and homosexuality. Accordingly, Adams (2011b, p. 26) writes that:

It seems that any time homosexuality and football are mentioned in the same sentence, the example of Justin Fashanu is raised. This is followed by a discussion of his slow demise towards suicide, which serves a stark reminder to all football players of the incompatibility between football and homosexuality.

Drawing on Fashanu’s experience makes it clear for other gay footballers – if you come out in contemporary football, you too will suffer marginalisation, discrimination and ridicule from your teammates, managers and supporters. As with Fashanu, this will result in de-selection from your team, eventually leading to demotion, depression and, eventually, suicide.

Although attitudes towards homosexuality began to progress after 1993 (Loftus, 2001), there exists what Ogburn (1957) (see also McCormack and Anderson 2010) calls cultural lag. This is a concept which can be applied to football culture to conceptualise the experience of Graeme Le Saux. Sport has historically been slower to accept gay men than wider society (Butterworth, 2006). If Justin Fashanu remains a notorious example of a gay footballer suffering

within a homophobic environment, Le Saux is a prime example of homophobia does not just hurt gay men.

Jersey-born Le Saux played elite-level – including international – football over a 15-year period before retiring in 2005. Despite being ostensibly heterosexual, and married, Le Saux was homosexualised by teammates, fans and opponents as he was smartly-dressed, educated and hailed from a middle-class background, greatly diverging from acceptable footballing masculinity. This stands in stark contrast to the working-class nature of most footballers, as Russell (1999, p. 16) argues: 'Football has long drawn the majority of its players [and supporters] from what can be broadly be termed the...working class'.

Throughout his career Le Saux received homophobic chants from supporters and abuse from fellow players. This came to a head in 1999 when, playing against Liverpool for Chelsea, Le Saux was homophobically taunted by Liverpool player Robbie Fowler. When Le Saux was waiting to take a free-kick, Fowler bent over in front of him whilst provocatively pointing at his backside. These events are recalled by Le Saux in his autobiography, *Left Field*. Here, he writes:

Robbie looked down at me. 'Get up, you poof,' he said. I stayed on the turf while the physio' was treating me and then got up...I looked at Robbie. He started bending over and pointing at his backside in my direction. He looked over his shoulder and started yelling at me. He was smirking. 'Come and give me one up the arse,' he said, 'come and give me one up the arse'...The linesman was standing right next to me. He could see what Robbie was doing but he didn't take any action...Everyone knew exactly what Robbie's gesture meant...I wish Paul Durkin [the referee] had found it in him to decide what was going on and then send Robbie off for ungentlemanly conduct. It was a big moment. What Robbie did provided a chance for people to confront a serious issue (2007, pp. 18-9).

The incident did not lead to Robbie Fowler being sent off by the referee.

Interestingly, Fowler recounts the issue differently in his own autobiography.

According to Fowler, Le Saux had committed a dangerous tackle on him which went unpunished by the referee. Initially, he describes how:

I knew I couldn't retaliate physically, so I laid into him verbally...You get it all the time in football, opponents winding each other up, trying to make them lose control by finding a weakness...I knew he could be wound up about all the gibes over his sexuality...so I gave it to him. As far as I was concerned he was fair game, because he'd done me [fouled] twice, and so I was giving him down the banks for being a poof. His lip started going massively, and he was really whining, so that made me lay it on a bit



more...He shouted, 'But I'm married.' And I responded quickly, 'So was Elton John, mate' (2005, p. 256).

Shortly after this exchange between the two players, Le Saux then fouled Fowler for a third time. A culmination of these events led to his taunting of Le Saux:

He did me again for a third time. I thought I'd got him then, and so I started bending over, showing him my arse and asking whether he'd like a bit of it. I've played in England teams with Graeme, and he's a really decent fella. I have never had any problem with him at all, and I knew his wife when we were on internationals. I know that he's not gay, and I'm not bothered in the slightest about his or anybody else's sexuality. It was just a bit of childish winding up because he'd done me so badly. Even the referee Paul Durkin was laughing about it when he booked [a yellow card – a warning, instead of a red card – a sending off] me for 'taunting Le Saux' (Fowler, 2007, pp. 256-7).

It is particularly interesting to interpret the differing opinions of this incident. While Le Saux, understandably affected by the event, discusses the issue as a significant event for homophobia and football, Fowler merely claims that it was a means of exploiting an opponent's weakness in a competitive and masculine environment. Cashmore and Cleland (2011, p. 426) define this as a 'default mechanism'; a taunt to be employed when an alternative cannot be thought of. This is a method often used by players, fans and managers as a sporting technique to ensure success for one's team (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Cashmore and Cleland, 2011; Magrath, under construction). I have previously theorised how it is not only homophobia which is employed to gain an advantage – comments can be made against those who are fat, bald or ginger, all alleged weaknesses. Yet this was an example of homohysteria; Fowler deliberately drew upon the fact Le Saux could've been gay (or was at least perceived gay).

Although Fowler was retrospectively punished for the incident – he was given a two match playing suspension and a financial penalty – the issue was clouded by punishment for another indiscretion by Fowler. Le Saux (who, inexplicably, was also fined by the Football Association) criticised the body for failing to suitably addressing the issue:

I think football had a chance to make a stand there and then against this sort of thing. The game could have made a strong statement that such blatant homophobia would not be tolerated...I believe that maybe it would have taken some of the stigma away for gay footballers who are still petrified of being found out. It could have been a turning point. But football didn't make a stand...No one wanted to deal with it (2007, p. 20).

Holt and Mason (2000) argue that this was a significant moment for the issue of homophobia in football, as it made the issue explicit. Other scholars, however, note that this incident was as much to do with social class as it was homophobia. Boyle and Haynes (2009) for example, note how Le Saux conformed to the development of the marketing industry's middle-class 'new man'. Conversely, Fowler's actions fell into the media-constructed 'new laddism', thus displaying the homosexual fears of traditional male working-class culture. Additionally, Roderick (2006a) theorises that the treatment suffered by Le Saux from Fowler – and football culture on the whole – illustrated working-class concerns surrounding masculinity.

## **Chapter 4: Classical Theories of Masculinity**

The high levels of sexism, violence and homophobia espoused during Generation X led to a particularly abusive and malicious Western culture (Anderson, 2014). Thus, failing to present a heteromasculine image was unacceptable, and led to marginalisation. This chapter outlines the development of appropriate and dominant theoretical frameworks relevant during this time. An overview and evaluation of each of these theories is offered, as well as a discussion of their take-up in academic masculinity literature. A critique of these perspectives is also offered. The work of Sigmund Freud (discussed in Chapter 2) was essential for the development of the first theoretical perspective dedicated to gender and sexuality – sex role theory.

### **Sex Role Theory**

Developed from pioneering Freudian notions of gendered behaviour, the most influential theory within gender scholarship throughout the 1950s and 1960s was that of sex role theory (Messner, 1997). Prior to the 1970s, functionalist work dominated sociological thinking about gender, which argued socialisation was a necessary process people needed to undergo in order to produce a stable society (see Parsons and Bales, 1955). Functionalists talked about sex role differences and argued how they continued to exist because they function to promote social stability (Connell, 1995), as Holmes (2007, p. 4) appropriately summarises: ‘The focus of functionalist work was on understanding the ‘complementary roles’ performed by women and men as they function to keep society running smoothly’. Consequently, in the early 1970s, feminists positioned the female sex roles as oppressive to women, using it as part of an argument for social reform (Messner, 1997; Millett, 1971). Prior to this, sex roles was the, ‘authoritative paradigm through which the correct relations and practices for boys and their transition into men could be explained’ (Howson, 2006, p. 2).

Sex role theory’s basic premise argues that men and women must adhere to a set of behaviours in order to conform to one’s biological sex (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003). Appropriately, Kimmel (2004, p. 95) states that:

Sex role theorists explore the ways in which individuals come to be gendered, and the ways in which they negotiate their ways towards some sense of internal consistency and coherence.

Such behaviour is both encouraged and expected and, according to Chodorow (1978), occurs through a top-down socialisation process. In other words, men and women must perform certain behaviours in order to successfully conform to one's biological sex, fulfilling a number of gender expectancies. Accordingly, Hofstede (1998, p. 78) argues that boys and girls must go through a *rite de passage*, 'toward their rightful roles in society where men fight while playing football and girls stand adoringly and adorably by the sidelines as cheerleaders'.

These gendered expectancies become increasingly rigid as one grows older. When children are a younger age, Brannon (1976, p. 7) argues that they:

Confuse sex roles, and make 'inappropriate' choices. When a little girl announces that she plans to be a fireman, adults merely smile...By the time it matters, she will have learned her sex role so thoroughly that it simply will never occur to her to be a fireman.

In other words, a child will be socialised into a specific gendered environment, in which a number of different factors are gendered, such as employment. Girls are socialised into an environment in which they must play with feminised toys, and must learn to replicate the role of her mother by doing housework: 'No-one ever really tells her to be 'domestic' or '[a]esthetic' or 'maternal' – *but she's learning*' (Brannon, 1976, p. 7). Conversely, boys must demonstrate independent yet active, aggressive and competitive behaviour, whilst playing with masculinised toys such as Action Man (Brannon, 1976) or by playing contact team sports. In other words, boys and girls must learn to *perform* their gender from an early age (Butler 1990). Early social constructionist scholarship on masculinities draws on the male sex role to critically examine masculinities (David and Brannon, 1976).

### **The Male Sex Role**

Robert Brannon's (1976) influential article outlines four requisites which summarised the male sex role in Western cultures. Firstly, he outlines that there must be *No Sissy Stuff*. Importantly, this includes the stigmatising of all feminine characteristics and qualities such as openness and vulnerability. As Kimmel (1994, p. 125) argues, 'Masculinity is the relentless repudiation of the feminine'. Exemplifying this, although men buy cosmetic items, they must be masculinised, thus avoiding any feminine superstition. Aptly-named masculine products such as 'Command, Tackle, and Bullwhip of Hai Karate' are all examples of products

modelling powerful masculine discourses. Such products must also have a clear demonstration that it is a product designed for men. Wearing of feminine items such as moisturiser is prohibited.

*No Sissy Stuff* also extends to hobbies and pastimes; men must participate in 'appropriate' sporting events such as football or rugby, rather than participate in knitting, flower-arranging, or poetry as these are perceived to be less manly. Brannon (1976) uses the example of how an unnamed professional American football player (weighing 230 pounds) was asked if he was afraid of being labelled a 'sissy' when he admitted his hobby was needlepoint. Similarly, activities such as cheerleading have traditionally been culturally ascribed as feminine terrain (Adams and Bettis, 2003; Hanson, 1995).

The avoidance of anything related to femininity also means that men must attempt to present an appropriately masculine image. Women are 'permitted' and 'expected' to openly show exhibitions of emotional vulnerability (Brannon, 1976). Conversely, these attributes are strongly prohibited for men; they must instead reinforce their masculine image showing open displays of anger, contempt and cynicism. In other words, men must 'try like hell' to avoid emotional intimacy with one another. Fasteau (1974) argues that one of the most humiliating actions for a man is to cry, providing the example of a businessman with an exemplary record who lost his job after crying about a failed project. '[H]usky cries of 'Get a grip on yourself,' 'Pull yourself together, man,' or 'Stiff upper lip, old boy'' are commonplace if men deviate from these rigid guidelines (Brannon, 1976, p. 16).

The second of the four dimensions of the male sex role outlined by Brannon is *The Big Wheel*. This refers to power, success, wealth, and status (Kimmel, 1994). Brannon (1976) argues that these things are usually correlated. Men must prove their competence within an occupational position of success, such as a doctor, lawyer, or successful businessman. Status may also be shown in other ways; if men haven't achieved mainstream success they can find 'other battlegrounds to fight on', such as being a champion dart thrower or having an unrivalled drinking record (Brannon, 1976, p. 20). Anything pursued in a serious fashion can become a source of status for men. Another important element of being a *Big Wheel* is to continue providing as the breadwinner role within a family (Brittain, 1989; Connell, 2005) in some capacity. Within a traditional family, the

male is the only paid worker and demonstrates status by providing enough income to support his family.

The third male sex role requires men to be *The Sturdy Oak*. This refers to a man always being independent and thinking for himself, though he does not have to have achieved any particular degree of success. Brannon (1976) highlights that Marlon Brando's portrayal of Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, John Wayne's performance in *True Grit*, or William Holden in *Stalag 17* are examples of men who are widely admired for their masculine identities, yet lack social status. These prove that they can be a *study oak* as they prove mental and physical toughness, whilst rarely showing emotion unless it's to reinforce their stoic masculinity (Brannon, 1976). Again, though, it is imperative that this does not extend to crying; 'boys don't cry' (Kimmel, 1994, p. 125).

The final dimension of the male sex role is to highlight an aura of aggression, violence and daring – or *Give 'em Hell*. The description of a man as aggressive is complimentary. Though to be aggressive is not necessarily to be violent; it can refer to either a form of attack or an energetic and vigorous demeanour. Men, for example, can be an aggressive businessman or aggressive thinker (Brannon, 1976). As with *The Sturdy Oak*, men must be independent and not be afraid to take risks. In order to *Give 'em Hell*, antecedents of violence must reside. Although violence is stigmatised in contemporary and civilised society (Elias, 1982), fathers do not condemn, abhor or discourage violence to their sons, highlighting the socialisation element of sex roles. Sex and rape are often used by men to display and maintain their dominant, aggressive and violent nature (Brannon, 1976).

Anderson (2005a) argues how many of the dimensions outlined by Brannon (1976) are reflected in sporting cultures. Athletes are told not to show fear or weakness towards their opponents, and coaches may frequently employ the *Give 'em Hell* speech prior to a match in order to motivate his players. Indeed, together, these dimensions (or rules) outline the definition of how men in Western – particularly American – cultures are measured (Kimmel, 1994). Transgressions from sex roles are harsh, particularly for men, who face more negativity than women (McCreary, 1994).

Brannon's (1976) theorising was significant as it provided progressive implications that masculinity and femininity were socially constructed behaviours

as opposed to biologically based male and female essences (Messner, 1997). Despite this, the value of the theory is somewhat limited. Though providing a blueprint for how a dominant male figure should conform, it fails to adequately capture the sophistication of gender relations. More importantly, it fails to account for multiple forms of masculinity or intra-masculine domination.

### **A Critique of Sex Role Theory**

Sex role theory was useful in early studies of gender as it focused on socialisation patterns of males and females, and the way in which individuals come to be gendered (Kimmel, 2000). It dominated Western discourses on gender (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985), although Kimmel (2000) argues that it lacked understanding of the complexities of gender as a social institution. Significant problems have indeed been highlighted by sociologists, as sex role theory has come under fierce criticism (Connell, 1987, 1995; Kimmel, 2000; Messner, 1998), including the lack of agency offered by the theory. In *The Gendered Society*, Michael Kimmel (2000) outlines six interrelated major weaknesses of sex roles theory, and how it fails to accurately account for gender relations.

Firstly, is the minimising of the importance of gender. Sex role theory uses drama as a metaphor – our roles are learned through socialisation and then *performed* for others (Butler, 1990). Thus, gender is perceived as being too theatrical. Lopata and Thorne (1978) argue that gender differs from roles such as that of being a teacher, sister, or a friend: it is much less changeable. Appropriately, they write that, ‘to make gender a role like any other is to diminish its power in structuring our lives’ (1978, p. 718).

Secondly, Kimmel (2000, p. 89) argues that sex role theory posits, ‘singular normative definitions of masculinity and femininity’. Both these traits vary across cultures and time, and it cannot be suggested that gender exists as a static, constant, singular essence (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Furthermore, this highlights that sex role theory fails to address to the plurality of inter-masculine domination. Using the example of the male sex role discussed earlier, it is highly debateable and controversial to claim that this represents all men. Interestingly, Connell (2005, p. 26) argues that, ‘discussions of the ‘male sex role’ have mostly ignored gay men and have had little to say about race and ethnicity’. The resistance from these groups is not accounted for by sex role terminology of

‘norm’ and ‘deviance’. Kimmel (2000) has therefore described men of colour and gay men expressing ‘sex role problems’. Kimmel (2000, p. 89) appropriately asks the question: ‘Is there really only *one* male sex role and only one female sex role?’ Connell (1987) also notes this weakness, rejecting the notion of a conceptual singularity of masculinity. It is this which forms the basis of her later theory, *hegemonic masculinity*.

The lack of pluralistic understanding of masculinities and femininities leads to Kimmel’s (2000) third criticism of sex role theory. In addition to existing as plural, gender is also relational. Sex role theory posits masculinity and femininity as two separate spheres. Kimmel uses the example of herding cattle into two appropriate pens for branding to represent the lack of relation between masculinity and femininity. Appropriately, Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985, p. 570) suggest that:

The result of using the role framework is an abstract view of the *differences* between the sexes and their situations, not a concrete one of the *relations* between them.

In other words, sex role theory lacks an account of structural inequalities (Connell, 1995). Exemplifying this critique, it is argued that men do not construct their masculine identity in isolation from femininity.

Next, Kimmel (2000) argues that because gender is relational and plural, it is also situational. What it means to be a man or woman is dependent on specific contexts: ‘Those different institutional contexts demand and produce different forms of masculinity and femininity’ (Kimmel, 2000, p. 90). Thus, gender is something which should be understood not as a property of individuals but as a specific set of behaviours which differ when produced in a variety of social situations. Rhode (1997) highlights this, commenting that boys may demonstrate one master identity, but this will vary in a fraternity party to how it will when attending a job interview with a female manager.

Kimmel (2000) identifies the *depoliticisation* of gender as the most significant problem with sex role theory – making gender a set of individual attributes rather than an aspect of social structure. In other words, the notion of the ‘role’ implies that the female and male role, although different, maintain equal power (Stacey and Thorne, 1985). In her critique, Connell (2005, p. 27) also highlights this as one of the major weaknesses of sex role theory, referencing the:



Fundamental difficulty in grasping issues of power. To explain differences in the situation of men and women by appeal to role differentiation is to play down violence, and suppress the issue of coercion by making a broad assumption of consent.

Similar critiques of sex roles theory are offered by Messner (1998) and West and Zimmerman (1987), who argue that the individualistic level of analysis, as opposed to the analyses of relations between of power between groups is a major drawback of sex role theory. This is an important element of critique for sex role theory because gender cannot be discussed without acknowledging issues of power (Connell, 2000, 2005; Messner, 1998).

Finally, Kimmel (2000) outlines sex role theory's inadequacy in comprehending the dynamics of social change. In sex role theory, influential civil rights movements such as feminism and the gay liberation movement emerged to expand role definitions, and to change role expectations. The goal of these movements was to expand role options for individual men and women whose lives were constrained by stereotypes. However, the static nature of sex role theory renders it incapable of examining and embracing resistance, change and history (Connell, 1983; Lopata and Thorne, 1978; Messner, 1998; Stacey and Thorne, 1985). Accordingly, Connell (1987, p. 13) writes that, 'Sex role theory has no way of grasping change as a dialectic arising within gender relations themselves'. These movements are also concerned with the redistribution of power in society, thus demanding the end of inequality and oppression among social institutions (Kimmel, 2000). Consequently, one of the strongest critiques of sex role theory is the absence of power analyses. Incorporating power relations, the work of Robert (now Raewyn<sup>2</sup>) Connell was therefore essential in recognising a social constructionist approach to gender. Indeed, Kimmel (2000, p. 91) writes that:

A social constructionist approach seeks to be more concrete, specifying tension and conflict not between individuals and expectations, but between and among groups of people within social institutions. Thus social constructionism is inevitably about power.

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<sup>2</sup> Raewyn Connell is a transgender woman, who changed her name from Robert William Connell. Her works have appeared under various names such as Robert Connell, Bob Connell and Raewyn Connell. Throughout this study, I refer to Connell as female, referring to her most recent gender positioning.

Although Brannon's (1976) requisites of sex role theory make up an archetype of masculinity (Anderson, 2005a; see also Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985), Connell's work conceptualised a more complex understanding of the construction of gender; importantly, one that theorised *multiple* forms of masculinity, as well as one that could account for both structure *and* agency.

### **Hegemony Theory**

In order to understand gender from a more dynamic and fluid perspective, issues of power must be addressed. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937) greatly expanded and developed the theory of hegemony to conceptualise the existence of power. It is important to note the history of Gramsci's life, as it was undoubtedly his experiences of poverty, political difficulty and oppression which helped shape his worldview.

Having grown up in considerable poverty, Gramsci witnessed first-hand the fascist propaganda of Mussolini's Italy, and, due to his father's imprisonment, was forced to leave school to work and earn money for his family until his father's release in 1904. In 1911 he was awarded a scholarship to the University of Turin to read literature. In the early 1920s, with the rise of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), fronted by Benito Mussolini, Gramsci became frustrated and disillusioned with the PSI's unwillingness to advocate revolutionary struggle. Therefore, encouraged by Russian communist Vladimir Lenin, Gramsci and Palmiro Togliatti formed the Italian Communist Party in 1921. In 1924, he became the leader of the communists in parliament, and was an outspoken critic of Mussolini's fascist ruling.

In 1926, Gramsci was arrested due to fears that his political theories would challenge Mussolini's fascist rule (Lears, 1985) and provoke civic unrest. Thus, he was imprisoned for five years, with the prosecution stating that, 'for twenty years we must stop this brain from functioning' (Gramsci, 1971, p. lxxxix). Gramsci (1975, p. 121) wrote about his imprisonment that:

It represents one episode in a political battle that was being fought and will continue to be fought, not only in Italy but in the whole world, for who knows how long a time.

When in prison, Gramsci was forced into solitary confinement on a remote island and later sentenced to a further twenty years in prison. His health began to suffer as a result, and he died in 1937.

Despite spending a large part of his life in prison, it is notable that prisons do not feature in Gramsci's theorising. Rather, he focused on the way in which people obey authority when they are culturally compelled to do so. Within insular institutions like prisons and mental asylums, there is no option other than to obey rules under which they are forced to live. Irving Goffman (1961) describes this as a 'total institution' – a setting in which complete power and control is maintained by those in authority, and those beneath such authority are denied agency.

Gramsci instead focused on institutions where people maintained some level of agency – somewhere they were able to challenge and resist dominant norms. He sought to discuss and explain why people conform to particular norms when there is no immediate physical compulsion to do so. His work originally developed into a focused analysis to explain why the alleged 'inevitable' uprising by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie predicted by Marx and Engels (1848) had not yet occurred, despite the unequal distribution of wealth in society at that time. Instead, according to Gramsci, capitalism remained the dominant, entrenched – or *hegemonic* – position within society.

In the influential *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci (1971) famously described hegemony as:

The entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to maintain the active consent of those over whom it rules (Gramsci 1971, p. 244).

More simply, Anderson (2005a, p. 21) defines hegemony as a, 'particular form of dominance in which a ruling class legitimates its position and secures the acceptance – if not outright support – from those classes below them'. To this end, hegemony recognises the need of dominance and subordination (Williams, 1977) and theorises a form of social control; albeit one where force is not seen as central to the continual privileging of the dominant group. Accordingly, Anderson (2005a, p. 21) writes that, although:

There is often the threat of rules or force structuring a belief, the key element to hegemony is that force cannot be the causative factor in order to elicit complicity.

People must believe that their subordinated position in society is deserved and natural. Anderson (2005a) gives the example of how slaves believe their rightful place in society is that of a slave – a racist society; where a woman

believes she should be submissive in relation to a man – a sexist society; or where a poor person may believe they do not merit wealth – a classist society. All are examples which demonstrate how hegemony has been valuable in explaining the normalising of inequality in society. In other words, people buy into their own oppression if the social conditions are right (Anderson, 2012b).

Although Gramsci's theorising has primarily focused on power and class, the strength of his ideas has resulted in its application in a number of societal domains, such as business and industry, political and cultural arenas, and sport (Hargreaves, 1982; Howson, 2006). Based on this application, hegemony becomes a difficult concept to critique, though much remains uncertain in Gramsci's use of the concept (Williams, 1977). Those who contest it are met with social reprisal: it is palpably easier to align to dominant thought than stand against them (Anderson, 2012b). No hegemonic system, though, is faultless: often there are cracks in the system, as well as 'pockets of resistance to any dominating social message' (Anderson, 2012b, p. 94). Writing about Manchester United, Brown (2007) documents resistance against American investment – a pocket of supporters revolting to form a new football club.

In recent times, hegemony has also emerged out of political literature and into various aspects of the social sciences (Anderson, 2012b), and is best recognised by the work of Raewyn Connell. Connell's application and expansion of hegemony to gender and masculinity studies has been one of the most influential approaches to explaining the stratification of men in Western cultures.

### **Hegemonic Masculinity Theory**

The application of hegemony to studies of gender permits gender relations to be understood in a more complex manner than previous perspectives. While this has been seen in studies documenting 'male hegemony' (Cockburn, 1991), and 'hegemonic heterosexual masculinity' (Frank, 1987), it is best known for Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity. First systemised in Carrigan, Connell and Lee's (1985) article calling for a new sociological understanding of masculinity studies, it has since become the most prominent theory for understanding the unequal distribution of male privilege (Anderson 2011a; Christensen and Jensen 2014). As a social constructionist theory of masculinity developed during the 1980s (West and Zimmerman, 1987), hegemonic

masculinity theory dismisses and transcends sex role theory's top-down socialisation process (Chodorow, 1978), articulating two social processes.

Connell (1987) first argues how all men benefit from a patriarchal society, or the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell, 1995, p. 82). Accordingly, Demetriou (2001, p. 343) states that hegemonic masculinity is, 'first and foremost a strategy for the subordination of women', with Connell (2005, p. 77) arguing that hegemonic masculinity explains:

The configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees...the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

However, lacking empirical evidence and underestimating the problem and complexity of patriarchy has resulted in scholars failing to engage with this element of the theory (McCormack and Anderson, under review), instead focusing on Connell's other theoretical contribution (Kian *et al.*, 2013) – that of conceptualising how multiple masculinities are stratified within an intra-masculine hierarchy (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985).

By conceptualising this intra-masculine hierarchy, Connell (1995, p. 77) argues how one archetype of masculinity is, 'culturally exalted above all other', and is the, 'most honoured and desired' (2000, p. 10). She writes that:

It is not the case that different versions of masculinity are equally available or equally respected. Typically, research finds that in any culture or institution there is a particular pattern of masculinity which holds the dominant position (Connell, 2008, p. 133).

This is usually men with, or in, power, and is associated with people who are strong, successful, capable and reliable (Kimmel, 1994). Hearn (2004, p. 51) argues that this power can be, 'structural and interpersonal, public and/or private, accepted and taken-for-granted and/or recognised and resisted, obvious or subtle'. Ascribing to a hegemonic form of masculinity requires men to exhibit a multitude of attributes – some are earned such as attitudinal disposition (including the deployment of homophobia and a competitive spirit), while others concern static traits (such as whiteness and heterosexuality) (Howson, 2006; McCormack and Anderson, under review). Possessing all of these attributes is rarely an achievable feat, and few men embody this (Kimmel, 1994; Peralta, 2007). Indeed, Donaldson (1993, pp. 645-6) writes that, 'while centrally concerned with the institutions of male dominance, not all men practice it, though most men

benefit from it'. Those who do are afforded the most social capital (Anderson, 2005a).

Sustaining this position at the top of a masculine hierarchy requires the policing of other men. In order to maintain their position, hegemonic men must engage in certain behaviours to regulate this – such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia and violence (Anderson, 2014). Connell (1995) argues that material domination and discursive marginalisation are the two key processes that reproduce hegemonic stratifications of masculinity. The power commanded by this hegemonic form of masculinity is such that those marginalised believe in the right of those at the top of the hierarchy to rule, highlighting the process of hegemony. Rather than challenge the hegemonic position, subjugated men look at to the hegemonic men ruling all social spaces (Kian *et al.*, 2013). Connell (1995) describes three forms of masculinity that emerge as a result of the hegemonic process: subordinated, complicit and marginalised.

Complicit masculinities represent the vast majority of men who have little connection with the hegemonic form of masculinity, yet gain from patriarchal dividend of male privilege (Connell, 2004). It is tempting to label these men as slacker versions of hegemonic men (Connell, 2005), but there is a more complex variation. Complicit men refer to those who, 'respect their wives and mother, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the housework, [and] bring home the family wage' (Connell, 2005, p. 79). There is however, some attempt to conform to dominant masculine groups, though an acceptance and concession that they will never be within this dominant sphere (Kahn, 2009). It is likely that complicit men are more homophobic than those at the top of the social stratification because they attempt to make up for in attitude what other hegemonic attributes they may lack (Anderson, 2005a). Football supporters are a prime example of this: while players on the pitch demonstrate hegemonic forms of masculinity, men in the stands are complicit, attempting to benefit from association with it.

It is these complicit men who aid the process of exclusion which subordinate masculinities suffer. Subordinated masculinities include men who actively suffer as a result of the hierarchical stratification of masculinities. Connell (1995, p. 79) identifies gay masculinity as, 'the most conspicuous' form of subordinated masculinity, with the hegemonic conception of heterosexuality

leaving the gay man with a visible form of non-masculinity (Howson, 2006). Accordingly, Connell (2005, p. 78) writes how gay men are, 'subordinated to straight men by an array of quite material practices'. For her, these include 'political and cultural exclusion, cultural abuse..., legal violence..., street violence..., economic discrimination and personal boycotts' (*ibid*). This has been documented in various settings such as sport (Anderson, 2002; see Chapter 3) and education (Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2001). Yet gay men are not alone in their subordination. Men and boys perceived to embody feminine traits are also, 'expelled from the circle of legitimacy' (Connell, 2005, p. 79), as, 'the symbolic blurring with femininity is obvious' (*ibid*).

Finally, Connell presents marginalised masculinities. This describes men who are on the outskirts of dominant masculinity (Kahn, 2009) because of their race or class. By highlighting homosexual oppression as distinct and particularly significant, Connell (1995, p. 80) distinguishes marginalised masculinities from the, 'relations internal to the gender order'. Although she acknowledges that the term *marginalised* is not ideal, Connell (2005, p. 80) claims she, 'cannot improve on 'marginalisation' to refer to the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups'. Specific examples of those who may embody marginalised masculinities come in the form of black athletes. Although black athletes may be perceived as exemplars of hegemonic masculinity, the nature of race relations in Western culture results in their marginalisation (Connell, 2005).

### **Evaluating Hegemonic Masculinity Theory**

Hegemonic masculinity theory has been extremely influential in understanding Western male cultures, examining how male power and privilege is maintained and established within a social hierarchy. In some ways, hegemonic masculinity has maintained almost near-hegemonic rule (Anderson, 2009; Demetriou, 2001), thanks to its wide take up within masculinities literature (Grindstaff and West, 2011). It has been applied in a variety of disciplines, including crime (Messerschmidt, 2000; Newburn and Stanko, 1994); the law (Pierce, 1995; Thornton, 1989); prisons (Britton, 2003); the media (Consalvo, 2003); schools (Connell, 1995; Ferguson, 2001; Pascoe, 2005), and sport (Messner and Sabo, 1990; Pronger, 1990). Others researching the area of masculinities who

did not utilise the theory still cite it (see Epstein, 1997; Pascoe, 2003; Plummer, 1999).

There are many reasons for the popularity of the theory. Moller (2007) and Demetriou (2001) both argue that Connell's theory had immediate impact in helping the conceptualising of masculinity because of the familiar concepts it employed. Furthermore, it offered a more complex theoretical alternative to sex roles. Indeed, Connell (2005) was extremely critical of sex role theory labelling it vague and simplistic. The accuracy of the theory is also significantly important when studying male power in bastions of traditional masculinity such as sport. Men's competitive team sports are described by many as being a site where hegemonic forms of masculinity as produced and reproduced (Anderson, 2005a; Messner and Sabo, 1990; Pronger, 1990). Chapter 3, for example, outlines how sport has been seen as sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, and violent.

But perhaps most importantly, hegemonic masculinity theory adequately captured the homophobic zeitgeist when it was devised (Anderson, 2009). When it was formulated and produced during the 1980s, two socio-political events raised the general public's exposure to homosexuality in Western society (Peterson and Anderson, 2009) – elevating cultural homophobia. This caused a change to both gay masculinities (Levine, 1998) and men's gendered understanding (Anderson, 2014).

Firstly, increasing noisy fundamentalist religiosity brought a religious backlash from the Christian church, which stirred up hatred against the homosexual community in an attempt to both 'cleanse' the nation and also increase financial revenue through greater donations. This fundamentalism was tangled (particularly in America) with conservative politics: President Ronald Reagan was not just an ex movie-star cowboy, but he represented the party of God (Peterson, 2011). Appropriately, Loftus (2001, p. 765) describes how:

From the 1970s through the mid-1980s, Americans held increasingly traditional religious beliefs, with more people supporting prayer in school, and believing the Bible was the literal word of God.

While the United Kingdom is not built upon religious teachings to the extent of the United States, similar trends persisted with Margaret Thatcher (Anderson, 2009).

Also, homosexuality was made culturally salient through the HIV/AIDS crisis, which ripped through the gay community killing tens of thousands of men



(Anderson, McCormack and Ripley, forthcoming). It was during this time that gay men were stigmatised as 'viral assassins' (McCormack and Anderson, under review, p. 10) to heterosexuality and the nuclear family (Peterson, 2011). Wachs and Dworkin (1997) therefore suggest that HIV-AIDS was viewed as punishment for being gay. It is perhaps unsurprising that these events led to, 'international moral panic' about AIDS (Connell, 1987, p. 37), and high levels of homophobia. This is evidenced by British and American social attitude surveys from the 1980s, which show homophobia reached an apex in 1988 (Anderson, 2009; Clements and Field, 2014).

With this, men began to adapt their image and heteromascularity (Pronger, 1990), going to great lengths to avoid being homosexualised (Peterson and Anderson, 2011). Heterosexual gender roles were being re-imaged, which resulted in restrictive gendered behaviour for those born during Generation X. Here, the distance between men increased from a lack of closeness (Komarovskiy, 1974) to complete social detachment. Pleck (1981), for example, shows the lack of intimacy between friends; 58% of males had not even told their closest male friend that they *liked* him. Rigid tactility also intensified during this epoch, as men attempted to avoid feminine stigma (Pollack, 1998) – the word 'like' became a euphemism for love, leading men to erase the term from their friendship vocabulary (Williams, 1985).

Acceptable images of masculinity were now coming in the form of muscular, macho man like Rambo and Arnold Schwarzenegger (Anderson, 2009). Appropriately, an increase in steroids for both straight and gay men as body enhancers (Halkitis, Green and Wilson, 2004) was apparent during this era. Likewise, new workouts for gay and straight men were employed in order to ensure a more muscular physique (Pope, Phillips and Olivardia, 2000). This is what Halkitis (2000, p. 134) terms as the 'buff agenda'.

Conceptualising these factors was particularly difficult. Due to the high levels of homophobia, Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity made sense during this time (Anderson, 2009). At a time when proving one's heterosexuality was essential, her claim that gay men sit at the bottom of a masculine hierarchy was extremely accurate. However, Connell's theorising has received severe criticism in recent years.

## Critiquing Hegemonic Masculinity

Following the publication of *Masculinities* (1995), hegemonic masculinity theory soon became the primary way of conceptualising masculinity stratifications (see Anderson, 2002; Barrett, 1996; Benjamin, 2001; Brown, 1999; Lee, 2000; Light and Kirk, 2000; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Parker, 1996b). However, the theory has recently been critiqued from numerous perspectives including poststructuralist and psychological (Howson, 2006; Moller, 2007; Pringle and Markula, 2005; see also Beasley, 2008; Demetriou, 2001; Hearn, 2004). It has already been acknowledged how Connell has failed in her attempt for hegemonic masculinity to explain how all men benefit from a patriarchal society, citing a lack of empirical research to support this claim (Anderson, 2009; see also Christensen and Jensen, 2014). Thus, this section focuses on critiques of hegemonic masculinity as a process of intra-masculine stratification.

Having developed into the most dominant paradigm in masculinity studies, Moller (2007) argues that the wide take up hegemonic masculinity has frequently led academics to interpret patterns of hegemonic masculinity too easily, when more complex social dynamics were potentially occurring. Rather than explaining masculinity patterns, hegemonic masculinity theory actually obscures them (McCormack and Anderson, under review). This over-reliance has potentially diminished lines of enquiry (Sparkes, 1992). Documenting this over-emphasis, Moller (2007, p. 275) summarises that:

The concepts of hegemonic and hierarchical masculinities do little to help researchers understand diversity and complexity. Indeed, I think they *reduce* our capacity to understand the ways in which the performance of masculinity may be productive of new socio-cultural practices, meanings, alliances and feelings.

In other words, the hegemony of hegemonic masculinity has resulted in scholars rarely interpreting social phenomena in isolation from Connell's theory.

Another of the continuing issues surrounding the theory concerns the lack of definitional clarity provided by Connell. Hearn (2004, p. 58) highlights uncertainties surrounding what is actually to count as the hegemonic form, asking:

Is it a cultural ideal, cultural images, even fantasy? Is it summed up in the stuff of heroes? Is it toughness, aggressiveness, violence? Or is it corporate respectability? Is it simply heterosexist homophobia? Is it the rather general persistence of patriarchal gender arrangements?

Similar issues arise with other types of masculinity in Connell's hierarchy. When defining complicit, marginalised and subordinated masculinities Connell merely provides examples; the lack of concise definitions has resulted in obvious confusion (McCormack, 2012a). This confusion also extends to whether the hegemonic form of masculinity is something to be exhibited or merely something that must be aspired to.

Linked to this is the lack of clarity around what the dominant form of masculinity is. Connell (1995) writes that hegemonic masculinity is a process yet also refers to it as an *archetype* (McCormack and Anderson, under review). Doing so has caused confusion in both Connell's work, and the work of others, who confuse and conflate the archetypal and social process of hegemonic masculinity.

Confusion also surrounds Connell's understanding of *hegemony*. Howson (2006, p. 4) describes hegemony as the 'foundational concept' of hegemonic masculinity. Connell's lack of theoretical engagement is therefore surprising. In her early work, she defines hegemony as a, 'social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organisation of private life and cultural processes' (1987, p. 184). Later, in *Masculinities* – where Gramsci's scholarship is not even cited – she refers to it as, 'the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life' (2005, p. 77). This has led to a number of scholars accusing Connell of employing a restricted or modified version of hegemony (Beasley, 2008; Hearn, 2004; Howson, 2006). Howson (2006, p. 5), for example, writes that Connell's theory is, 'an attempt to synthesise some of the fundamental ideas from Gramsci's theory of hegemony'.

Howson (2006) also notes how the definition of hegemony subtly changes throughout Connell's scholarship. This is problematic as Adamson (1980) argues there are two related definitions of hegemony in Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Furthermore, Femia (1981) outlines three levels of hegemony emanating from Gramsci's work, presenting problems over how Connell (1995) interprets the term when applying it to masculinity stratification. Howson (2006) provides the most substantial and thorough critique of Connell's application of hegemony, dedicating an entire monograph to explaining the complexities of hegemony as explained by Gramsci (1957, 1971, 1975, 1985), and others (Femia, 1981; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Howson's (2006) major contention is that

Connell's application of hegemony is unclear, often changing throughout her work. He therefore presents what he describes as a 'tripartite model of hegemony' (2006, pp. 26-33) made up of 'detached', 'dominative', and 'aspirational' hegemony.

### ***Detached Hegemony***

Firstly, Howson presents 'detached' hegemony. This refers to when the ruling group has become distant from those under its control, resulting in a lack of ability to challenge the ruling elite. This form of hegemony emerges from a, 'period of revolution/restoration where revolution is marked by passivity of the masses' (Howson, 2006, p. 29). This was described by Gramsci as a passive revolution. Howson argues this is best exemplified by the political and social movements in Italy – known as the *Risorgimento* – in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In summary, detached hegemony refers to a 'bastardised' form of hegemony where, 'organic critique is impossible because there is a failure within the collective will to produce a self-conscious and organised people' (Howson, 2006, p. 29).

### ***Dominative Hegemony***

'Dominative' hegemony refers to social settings where there is an active movement campaigning against the ruling class. Dominative hegemony therefore differs from detached hegemony as the powerless group actively campaign against the ruling class, although, 'have little recourse to express and agitate for their interests to be heard and respected' (Howson, 2006, p. 30). As a result, they must accept the ruling groups – or hegemonic principles – as good and right. This is best exemplified by, 'the crisis of authority that befell Italian-liberal capitalism in the immediate post-1917 period' (*ibid*) in which progressive actions against the ruling class were encouraged yet not heeded. Dominative hegemony is also the most traditional form of hegemony, and the one that Connell (1995) employs in her utility of hegemony, as demonstrated by Howson's (2006, p. 59) masculinities schema.

### ***Aspirational Hegemony***

Finally, Howson presents 'aspirational' hegemony which refers to a benevolent form of hegemony where the ruling group works harmoniously with

the challenges to its authority, thus leading to positive social change. Aspirational hegemony, then, is represented by progressive organic action, and as a polar opposite to dominative hegemony which is characterised by regression. Howson (2006, p. 31) therefore describes aspirational hegemony as a, 'programme of profound and continual critique, education and action'.

### ***A Tripartite Model of Hegemony***

Howson (2006) uses the tripartite model of hegemony to highlight the restricted utility of hegemony that Connell uses. In doing so, Howson (2006) writes how Connell describes hegemony variously as a situation or moment in history, and in her later work to an emphasis on control. Howson (2006, p. 42) writes, 'Notwithstanding the various descriptive shifts, the theme that persists and is, in effect, threaded through the understanding of the theory [hegemonic masculinity] of practice is *domination*'. Other scholars have also focused with the fact that hegemonic masculinity is only concerned with a dominating form of social stratification (Beasley, 2008; Demetriou, 2001).

The uncertain utility of hegemony in Connell's work is one of a number of critiques of hegemonic masculinity in recent times. These critiques of hegemonic masculinity have not been ignored; in 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledged a number of these critiques in their reformulation of the theory.

### **Reformulating Hegemonic Masculinity**

In the second edition of *Masculinities*, Connell (2005, p. xviii) acknowledges the contestation of her theory:

[I]t has now come under challenge from several directions...It is timely to reconsider the concept, since...much richer empirical material on men and masculinities is now available. But whether to discard the concept of hegemonic masculinity, reconstruct it, or reaffirm it, is still sharply debated. In my view we still require a way of theorising gendered power relations among men.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argued that five key criticisms emanated from the substantial critiques of the theory. Within their reformulation, some were included while some were rejected. They outline five principal criticisms of the theory as:

- The underlying concept of masculinity – this had been argued by some as either blurred or flawed;

- Ambiguity or overlap – referring to inconsistency and/or lack of clarity over what represents particular forms of masculinity;
- The problem of reification – particularly concerning Connell's utility of the term patriarchy;
- The masculine subject – concerning the unsatisfactory theory of the subject;
- The pattern of gender relations – referring to a simplification of the utility of hegemony.

The acknowledgement of these criticisms partially formed the basis for a revised version of the theory.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 846) argue that the fundamental feature of the theory – namely the, 'combination of the plurality of masculinities and the hierarchy of masculinities' – should remain, because it has stood up well in 20 years of research experience. Further, they also argue – without citation – how a multitude of academic studies have documented multiple patterns of masculinity, and how the, 'subordination of nonhegemonic masculinities' (*ibid*) has been documented in a number of international cultural settings. However, they reject the singular model of power and the global dominance of men over women, rendering it too simplistic.

In response to the critiques of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) attempt to reformulate the theory focusing on four main areas. The first of these concerns the gender hierarchy which focuses on greater agency for those that Connell (1995) previously theorised as subordinated or marginalised – including women. Indeed, women can be responsible for the construction of some masculinities (see Messerschmidt, 2004). They also argue that with the influence of LGBT rights (Weeks 2007) gay men do not *necessarily* sit at the bottom of a masculine hierarchy and can be both tolerated *and* oppressed at the same time.

The next area of the reformulation focuses on the geography of masculinities. In her previous research, Connell (2005) has claimed that hegemonic masculinity aids the conceptualisation of global, as well as local masculinities. Based on the critiques of Beasley (2008) and Demetriou (2001), as well as the increasing focus on globalisation, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) propose hegemonic masculinities can be analysed at three levels:

- Local – ‘constructed in the arenas of face-to-face interaction of families, organisations, and immediate communities’ (2005, p. 849);
- Regional – ‘constructed at the level of the culture of the nation-state’ (*ibid*);
- Global – ‘constructed in transnational arenas such as world politics and transnational business and media’ (*ibid*).

These are significant as links between these levels exist, and are important in gender politics.

Next, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) focus on social embodiment. Addressing Hearn’s (2004) concern regarding the definition of a hegemonic man, this clarifies the way in which hegemonic masculinity is embodied, and the way this is exhibited. They still, however, claim that, sport is essential in linking masculinity and heterosexuality. Moreover, they maintain that privilege is afforded to those in heterosexual relationships (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), though a plethora of research points towards the contrary. Bodily practices remain crucial to the construction of a masculine identity, with risk-taking when playing sport an example of this.

In their final dimension of reformulating hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) focus on the dynamics of masculinities. Simply, this refers to internal complexity of masculinity as a developing research issue. Accordingly, they address the, ‘layering, the potential internal contradiction, within all practices that construct masculinity. Such practices cannot be read simply as expressing a unitary masculinity’ (2005, p. 852). Further, they address that masculinities change over time, and that one area this may represent is the position of Western fathers. The ‘long-hours culture’ in professions and management may be consistent with conventional hegemonic masculinity but may not necessarily translate into ‘a satisfying experience of life’ (*ibid*). As gender relations grow stronger, this has a positive influence on relationships between men and women as well as men and other men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

While addressing some of the critiques in a ‘renovated analysis’ of hegemonic masculinity was essential (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 854), there remain a number of issues. McCormack and Anderson (under review) highlight a number of unanswered critiques. For example, as previously noted,

there is a continued absence of concise definitions of the different forms of masculinity outlined by Connell, resulting in continued confusion. According to Connell (1995), the majority of men (including gay men) benefit from existence of patriarchy. Presumably, then, most men can be classed as exhibiting complicit masculinities, though Connell maintains that these classes are intended to be discrete and separate from each other. In other words, gay men continue to exhibit subordinated rather than complicit masculinities (McCormack and Anderson, under review). This leads McCormack and Anderson (under review, p. 13) to suggest that this continued uncertainty, 'enables broad claims about masculinities perpetuating patriarchy to be made without providing precise explanations as to how or why this occurs'. In a similar concern, the maintenance of a hierarchy of masculinities also overlooks the rise of LGBT rights in contemporary Western societies (Weeks, 2007).

In the reformulation of the theory, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) also fail to address the uncertainty around what the dominant form of masculinity is. She continues to refer to hegemonic masculinity as both a *process* and an *archetype*. Highlighting this, in the reformulation of the theory, they write:

Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue. Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities...only a minority of men might enact it...it embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it (2005, p. 832).

Given the substantial critiques hegemonic masculinity has suffered, the conflation of both the process *and* the archetype renders the theory ineffective (McCormack and Anderson, under review).

Lack of clarity also concerns the final, damaging unanswered critique of hegemonic masculinity. Despite a number of scholars (Beasley, 2008; Demetriou, 2001; Hearn, 2001; Howson, 2006) calling for a more nuanced understanding of hegemony to be employed in Connell's theorising, there is little engagement with this in the revised version (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Despite these unanswered critiques, it is important to recognise that hegemonic masculinity should not be completely erased from masculinity literature. It was extremely effective theoretical apparatus during the 1980s and 1990s (Anderson, 2012a). However, the decrease of AIDS-hysteria and



conservative Christianity has had a knock-on effect for contemporary masculinity (Anderson, 2014), as the next chapter of this review now examines.

## **Chapter 5: Sport and Masculinity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sport served as an arena for the development and emphasising of men's masculinity, where a dominant form of masculinity had been celebrated. This was particularly true during times of high cultural homophobia (Anderson 2009). However, since the turn of the Millennium, cultural homophobia in the Western world began to decrease (Loftus, 2001), and has continued ever since (Keleher and Smith, 2012). Anderson (2014) refers to the increased acceptance of homosexuality as a culture of inclusivity.

This also began to replicate in sport. In 2002, Eric Anderson conducted the first research on openly gay athletes and found that many of his sample received positive coming out experiences, many regretting not coming out sooner. Since this pioneering study of gay male athletes on ostensibly heterosexual team sports, there has been a growing body of research documenting the acceptance of openly gay male athletes (Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2005a, 2008c, 2009, 2011a; Bush, Anderson and Carr, 2012; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; Southall *et al.*, 2009; Southall *et al.*, 2011).

Moreover, a body of research has also emerged showing the increasing number of gendered behaviours available to men without the fear of being culturally homosexualised (Adams, 2011a; Anderson, 2014; McCormack, 2012a; McCormack and Anderson, 2010, 2014a). This research predominantly focuses on contemporary male youth under the age of 25 – what Anderson (2014) refers to as iGeneration. This chapter proposes three rationales as to why homophobia has continued to decrease in Western culture, followed by an overview of the various gendered behaviours increasingly adopted by iGeneration male, before discussing the influence this had had on contemporary football.

### **Explaining Decreasing Homophobia**

Prejudice towards homosexuality is one of the most persistent and tenacious forms of prejudice in attitudinal-based research (Hooghe and Meeusen, 2013). Many American-conservative politicians have even attempted to use anti-gay rhetoric as part of their election manifesto (Anderson, 2014; Keleher and Smith, 2012). Despite this, American polling data has highlighted that public acceptance of gay and lesbian relationships has risen dramatically (Fiorona, Abrams and Pope, 2006; Hooghe and Meeusen, 2013). Similarly, Clements and

Field (2014) document similar acceptant trends in the United Kingdom following the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967.

Anderson (2009) highlights several influences contributing to this acceptance, such as the Internet; the media; decreasing cultural religiosity; the success of feminism; the success of gay and lesbian politics and subsequent increased number of gays and lesbians coming out of the closet (Anderson, 2011a). However, as Keleher and Smith (2012, p. 1309) argue, 'observing opinion trends is one thing; explaining them is another'. The same authors' study using social attitude data draws on three potential explanations for the growing tolerance of the community in American culture, which can also be applied to British culture.

### ***The Lifecycle Explanation***

Firstly, the lifecycle explanation refers to when attitudes shift between a cohort over time, and that ageing causes people's opinions to change, and become more conservative in their views. Social scientists during the 1950s and 1960s considered this to be a genuine possibility as they lacked attitudinal data to test the model (Keleher and Smith, 2012), although the General Social Survey (GSS) have been asking questions about homosexuality since 1973.

There is, however, limited evidence supporting this idea. Schumun, Steeh and Bobo (1985), for example, found that the attitudes of children and teenagers brought up believing in racial equality did not lose their tolerance as they got older, rejecting the lifecycle explanation. Furthermore, Mayer (1992) used data affecting a number of different topics whilst examining the lifecycle effect. He argued that any lifecycle effects must have two characteristics – correlated with age, and the opinions of the youngest generation must move consistently in the direction of the older generation. Mayer (1992) found only three sets of questions with lifecycle effects – attitudes towards income tax, welfare and premarital sex.

These, he argues, are understandable as they are issues which generally differ between the old and the young. For example, both income and taxes tend to rise over people's lives until retirement, when they fall, meaning that opposition to taxes would follow the same path. Similarly, young and old people will tend to receive more welfare than the middle-aged, meaning they are more likely to have a higher opinion of welfare. Attitudes towards premarital sex are

potentially explained by younger people likely being more enthusiastic about it than older people with teenage children. Mayer (1992) concludes that the lifecycle explanation holds some value when making sense of issues which have a direct connection and impact on people's lives.

Keleher and Smith (2012) analyse opinion data conducted every ten years and prove the lifecycle model does not explain the increasing acceptance towards homosexuality. They do find, though, that social events – such as George W. Bush's re-election campaign in 2004, during which he promised a constitutional ban on gay marriage – elevated public intolerance to homosexuality (Nylund, 2014), particularly for older cohorts. Overall, however, public attitudes towards homosexuality have proven to be increasingly tolerant – not something explained by the lifecycle effects model. Keleher and Smith (2012) also state that this *does* appear to explain what is known as folk wisdom – 'a myth that persists despite scientific findings because it fills a social need' (p. 1313).

### ***The Generational-Replacement Explanation***

An alternative rationale which potentially explains the shift towards acceptance is the generational-replacement explanation. In contrast to the lifecycle explanation, this rests on the assumption that people's opinions generally do not change over time. Rather, generational-replacement refers to older cohorts dying off and younger cohorts entering the adult population (Keleher and Smith, 2012). They use the increase in education to demonstrate this. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, few people progressed further than high school. However, an increase from World War II through until the Vietnam War saw the number of well-educated Americans replacing poorly-educated older people, therefore causing the average level of education to rise.

Keleher and Smith (2012) apply this model to explaining attitudes towards gays and lesbians, examining if they follow the same direction as education. They find that generational-replacement has *some* impact – 21%-40% – which accounts for a substantial, yet not complete, explanation. While this represents a reasonable sum, generational change is a fairly slow process (Keleher and Smith, 2012), and could not solely account for the rapid decrease in cultural homophobia in Western cultures since around 2000 (Loftus, 2001). Nevertheless, this would support many scholars who argue that decreasing homophobia is a strong trend

among iGeneration males, but is also prevalent among other age cohorts (Anderson, 2009; Kozloski, 2010; McCormack, 2012a). Baurach (2012), for example, shows how generational replacement contributes to increasing social acceptance of same-sex marriage in the United States. In Britain, those born in the 1980s account for the lowest number of people arguing homosexuality is always wrong.

### ***The Period-Effects Explanation***

Explaining shifts in public opinion related to age is normally explained by three causes – lifecycle changes, generational effects and period effects. Whilst shown by Mayer (1992) that lifecycle effects have a fairly limited impact, and generational effects a substantial impact, period effects concern anything left over, relating to causes of public opinion which affects all cohorts at the same time, producing a general shift in public opinion in the same direction (Keleher and Smith, 2012). In addition to varying age cohorts, other demographics also proved pivotal when explaining the increased acceptance of gays and lesbians. Indeed, changes are often dependent on varying demographics (see Froyum, 2007; Pompper, 2010; Hicks and Lee, 2006).

Keleher and Smith (2012) identify nine essential variables within social attitude data – political party, ideology, religion, region of the country, region where a person grew up, gender, race, ethnicity and education. Although statistics do not always follow particular trends, and can be largely inconsistent, Keleher and Smith (2012) found that tolerance of gays and lesbians increased among *all* of these variables. Notably, the smallest increase came among blacks, of which there was a 14% increase of people who stated they felt ‘sexual relations between two adults of the same sex’ are ‘not a problem at all’. This is perhaps unsurprising as many previous studies have shown whites to be more tolerant of gays and lesbians than blacks (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Loftus, 2001). Conversely, the largest change was a 38% increase among liberals. This is perhaps unsurprising given that liberals have shown to be more tolerant than conservatives (Anderson and Fetner, 2008; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Loftus, 2001; Mehren, 2004).

Keleher and Smith’s (2012) extensive examination of American society’s more tolerant attitude towards homosexuality provides three useful rationales as to why this increased tolerance has occurred. During times of high homophobia,

boys and men attempt to exhibit restrictive forms of gendered expression (Pollack, 1998). The decrease of cultural homophobia, however, permits a greater number of gendered behaviours, which this chapter now addresses.

### **Metrosexuality**

First introduced by journalist Mark Simpson (1994a), the term 'metrosexual' referenced male narcissism – heterosexual city men who wore high-end, designer clothing (Adams, 2011a; Anderson, 2009; Coad, 2008). In his initial discussions on the subject, Simpson (1994b, n.p.) described the metrosexual as:

A young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis – because that's where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are. He might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love subject.

The term has developed into a way of explaining modern men who invest time and money improving their personal appearance and style through the purchasing of a number of consumer goods and cosmetics (Flocker, 2003; Hall, Gough and Seymour-Smith, 2012). Accordingly, Clayton and Harris (2009, p. 134) explain that metrosexual men, 'indulge in daily routines that might previously have been labelled effeminate, such as grooming and dressing for style'. Coad (2008) documents how the media has become supportive of this process, arguing that there exists less cultural coercion for men to conform to one archetype of masculinity.

Supporting this, Anderson (2014, p. 51) uses data from a large advertising agency to show how men are, 'rapidly losing orthodox notions of masculinity'. This is shown by 75% agreeing with the statement, 'Men and women don't need to conform to traditional roles and behaviours anymore'. Furthermore, 72% agreed that it was acceptable for boys to wear pink (see Paoletti, 1987) and for girls to play with trucks, while 78% thought there was as much pressure on men to take care of their bodies as much as women (JWT, 2013 cited in Anderson, 2014).

This also extends to men wearing makeup and cosmetics as a means of improving their image (Harrison, 2008). Alongside other previously feminine activities, the table below shows how men from various ages are becoming increasingly acceptant:

	<b><u>18-34</u></b>	<b><u>48-67</u></b>
Approval of using skin care products:	60%	50%
Approval of body hair removal:	45%	22%
Wearing foundation:	18%	4%
Wearing pink:	39%	26%
Wearing a “man bag”:	51%	28%

(JWT, 2013 cited in Anderson, 2014, p. 51).

In addition, Hall, Gough and Seymour-Smith (2012) argue that men are now dedicating 83 minutes per day to their personal grooming. Coad (2005) also argues that in addition to the fashion concerns of metrosexuality, it also challenges and problematises our binary divisions on gender (only girls wear nail varnish and earrings and carry handbags). Appropriately, Anderson (2009) refers to this blurring of traditionally rigid roles among men as heterofemininity.

Football arguably provides the biggest hotbed for sporting metrosexuality, as Coad (2005, p. 126) comments: ‘Fashionable footballers and the ensuing discussions about gender and sexual identity are in fact the most visible manifestations of the metrosexual movement’. While footballers such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Freddie Ljungberg provide high-profile examples (Coad, 2008; Hall and Gough, 2011), it is David Beckham who represents a true “poster-boy” for metrosexuality’ (Clayton and Harris, 2009, p. 135). Cashmore and Parker (2003, p. 224) argue that Beckham epitomises the sporting metrosexual because his, ‘complex and contradictory identity suggests that there is more room for more than one version of masculine construction’. Clayton and Harris (2009, p. 135) add: ‘his ever-changing hairstyle and his courageous fashion choices...such advancements have now developed into a full-blown metrosexual tornado’.

The changing nature of masculinity in Britain is highlighted by the acceptance of metrosexual behaviours. In 1998, David Beckham was photographed and pilloried in tabloid newspapers for wearing a sarong (Adams, 2011a; Harris and Clayton, 2007), as Western traditions dictate that undivided below-waist clothes are associated with femininity (Cashmore, 2004). The attempted emasculation was unsuccessful, and Harris and Clayton (2007) suggest

this began the dawn of a transformation of male footballing identity in the United Kingdom. Beckham's performance of this metrosexual masculinity challenged the strong sense of working-class masculinity associated with football (Parker, 2001; Russell, 1997, 1999; Walvin, 1994).

After the earlier efforts of the media to subvert Beckham's presentation of a divergent, metrosexual form of masculinity, and to re(emphasise) hegemonic forms of masculinity (Adams, 2011b) – described as Clayton and Harris (2009, p. 136) as 'retrosexuality' – they changed tack. This was best exemplified in 2003 when *The Sun* described Beckham as, 'the perfect role model for every generation...a glamorous, handsome fashion icon', in stark contrast to previous representations.

However, whilst metrosexuality adequately frames the shift of masculinity in Britain, for some it is mythical. Whilst Edwards (2006) accepts this shift, he argues metrosexuality is merely a media invention – one linked to patterns of consumption rather than gendered change. To illustrate his point, he points to the Beckham *brand* (Cashmore, 2004) styling a number of high-profile items such as Dolce and Gabbana and Gillette. He further argues that:

Masculinities now are not so much something possessed as an identity as something marketed, bought – and sold – in men's lifestyle magazines, style programmes...and across the world of visual media culture more generally (2006, p. 43).

Anderson (2009) also recognises the limitations, and although inclusive masculinity theory builds upon the commoditised foundations of metrosexuality, one does not need to exhibit style and fashion in order demonstrate their inclusivity.

### **Physical Tactility**

While the development of metrosexuality was perhaps the first indicator of a culture of inclusivity – with footballers such as Beckham the most ubiquitous example of a high-profile metrosexual – this later increased with a growing body of research showing acceptance of openly gay teammates (Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2011a; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013). However, a culture of support of overt support from heterosexual teammates does not mean that the presence of a gay male on the team might not disrupt the normal, homosocial operation of an otherwise homogenous team. Masculinity studies have long-



determined that heterosexual masculinity is a front which is essentially granted by other men (Kimmel, 1994). Here, males seek the approval of other males, both identifying with and competing against them in order to raise their heteromale capital (Anderson, 2005a).

Using images from Ibson's (2002) *Picturing Men*, Anderson (2009) demonstrates the changing nature of physical intimacy, and the gradual awareness of homosexuality as a static sexual identity which led to elevated forms of cultural homophobia. Anderson (2009) comments that Ibson's work details images of a range of men – including athletes, schoolboys and brothers – demonstrating their affection for one another by holding hands, cuddling and sitting on each other's laps. The images presented by Ibson (2002) highlight an increasing rigidity over time, with later pictures showing limited physical contact between boys and men. Indeed, during periods of high homophobia, demonstrations of physical intimacy, such as handholding, hugging, non-sexual kissing and caressing, is results in homosexualisation.

Anderson (2009), however, shows how that in a culture of inclusivity, heterosexual men are less restricted and are permitted more homosocial tactility, contrasting what older literature says about heterosexual men (Plummer, 1999; Field, 1999; Floyd, 2000). McCormack and Anderson (2010) show that for some young men, this is normal operation within heterosexual friendships (see also McCormack, 2012a). Heterosexual affection also comes in the form of same-sex kissing which no longer occurs merely on the sporting pitch. There are no longer rigid boundaries which mean it is only acceptable for women or gay men to kiss for affection (Fox, 2008). Exemplifying this, Anderson, Adams and Rivers (2010) found that 89% of British undergraduate men have kissed another male on the lips. In a replicate Australian study, Drummond *et al.* (2014) show that this figure is only 29%. Although this number is significantly lower than in the United Kingdom, it still potentially highlights a shift in masculinity among young Australian men.

Kissing among contemporary male youth – both athletes and non-athletes – has emerged for various reasons. Specifically, it can be a way of demonstrating love for one's friend. Whereas kissing a male friend on the lips was once coded as a sexual act, Anderson, Adams and Rivers (2010, p. 425) show how this is now, 'a symbol of platonic love' between friends. Alternatively, kissing can also be a way

of building camaraderie among friends. For example, the growth of games such as 'gay chicken' – a game where two males kiss each other on the lips, and the first to pull away loses – highlights how contemporary male youth are no longer culturally homosexualised for once homoerotic behaviours (Anderson, McCormack and Lee, 2012).

This conduct regularly occurs on nights out where alcohol is consumed in vast quantities. This is consistent with Peralta (2007) who shows how men often use alcohol in their homosocial bonding, including same-sex kissing. Anderson (2014) shows a correlation between sixth form students beginning to consume alcohol for the first time and the increase in their kissing. However, it is not the sole cause of same-sex kissing: informants did not regret their actions the following morning when the alcohol had worn off. Nor were they embarrassed about photographic evidence of their kissing being posted on social media such as *Facebook* (Anderson, Adams and Rivers, 2010).

The fear of being culturally homosexualised for kissing another male has also appeared to dissipate in sporting settings. Kissing has long been a way of celebrating a goal with teammates in football at all levels of the game, though this likely decreased during the extreme homophobia of the 1980s (Anderson, 2014). Recently, though, it has become more prevalent; Gary Neville's celebratory kiss on the lips of teammate Paul Scholes in 2010 caused much media attention. *The Guardian* even argued that, 'by kissing Paul Scholes, Gary Neville declared war on homophobia' (MacInnes, 2010, p. 67).

Tactility between men is also commonplace in other levels of football. Adams (2011a) found that men on a university team in America challenge orthodox forms of masculinities, and regularly engage in physical tactility with teammates. This predominantly came in the form of hugging, either as a means of celebration for a goal or – more commonly – to show affection for one another. In recent research, McCormack and Anderson (2014b) show cuddling and spooning is common among student athletes as a symbol of close friendship. Men on the team also regularly fall asleep with heads on each other's shoulders during long coach trips. Anderson (2011b) found similar behaviour occurring on another American university football team. Being physically tactile among one another was seen as a way of showing 'A brother you love him. It's about respect' (Anderson, 2011b, p. 739).

These findings align with a pattern of inclusive masculinity reported in other research settings. Observing multiple cheerleading squads pose for group photographs, Anderson (2009) found that men refused to 'buff up' and 'straighten up' as suggested by the photographer, instead engaging in affectionate poses, often with their arms round each other. Anderson (2009, p. 85) therefore argued that, 'the power of homophobia had lessened in this setting'.

### **Homosociality and Heterosexual Camaraderie**

Physical interactions between friends and fellow teammates have also occurred in alternate ways. Much of this also includes the playful, direct, overt and sometimes ironic establishment of one's heterosexuality through sexualised discourse and banter, which oftentimes includes men feigning gay sex with one another (Diamond, Kimmel and Schroeder, 2000). Anderson (2014) argues that mock gay sex is the predominant way for heterosexual young men to show banter with one another. Here, young heterosexual men – normally in private spaces like parties, hotel rooms and, most frequently, locker rooms – pretend to be sexually attracted to one another. In jest, they complement each other's bodies, or make jokes about being sexually attracted to their teammates. They might, for example, comment that one looks good in that towel, or smack one's arse as a gesture of artificial homosexual attraction. Still, it is highly common for homosocial groups of young straight men to pretend to give each other oral sex, and there is also a great deal of mock anal sex in these interactions (Schroeder, 2002), as well as boys lying atop one another, often wearing nothing but a pair of shorts. Some men also pretend to masturbate together, often under the sheets. All these activities also involve screaming and moaning in imaginary ecstasy (Anderson, 2014).

This type of behaviour is documented in both interview and ethnographic research among adolescent, heterosexual team sport players on sex-segregated teams (Anderson, 2005b, 2009; Anderson and McGuire, 2010; Flood, 2008). Adams and Anderson's (2012) ethnographic research of a university football team showed that before, during and after one of its players had publicly come out, mock gay sex operated between gay and straight men, with the purpose of demonstrating support and inclusion. Exemplifying this, in a forthcoming article, Anderson shows that among a group of 50 adolescent boys he coaches in

California (with three openly gay teammates) straight athletes feign sexual interaction with gay athletes as a symbolic gesture of acceptance.

Interactions of mock gay sex can be interpreted in different ways. One might, for example, view it as a homophobic mocking of gay men, while others might prefer to view it as a method for ironically showing that one is not gay in a culture of homophobia (Anderson, McCormack and Lee, 2012). Anderson (2014) suggests that many argue that the various forms of homosocial love between two straight men is not a genuine act of friendship or love, but merely to mock gay men. Some scholars view it as a mechanism for the degradation of women (Dunning and Sheard, 1979; Sedgwick, 1985), although is perhaps unsurprising given the era in which this previous research was undertaken. Anderson (2014) further states that many of the men he interviewed who regularly engage in homosocial love are insulted when asked if their behaviour is intended to mock gay men. Pretending to fuck a gay male friend is, ironically, a way of saying, 'I'm straight, but I celebrate your difference'. Therefore, perhaps the most apt view can be explained by McCormack's (2012a) discussion of ironic heterosexual recuperation.

### **Emotional Tacitility**

Increased physicality between iGeneration males is paralleled by emotional closeness. In times of high homophobia, men must be emotionally restrictive with one another (Williams, 1985). But, as homophobia continues to decrease, men and boys are more emotionally open with one another, developing what they describe as a 'bromance' – essentially a love affair between close friends but without sex (Anderson, forthcoming). These are borne out of strong and deep emotional relationships as boys bond through activities such as shopping, playing video games, exercising and eating out (Anderson, 2014). Here, they disclose secrets and emotions establishing a closer friendship, allowing stronger forms of emotional support.

Demonstrating this, Adams (2011a) documents how university-based football players openly shared experiences of their platonic love for each other, likening themselves to the same-sex intimacy portrayed in the motion picture *I Love You, Man*. Within another university-based football team, Anderson (2011b) highlights when a member of the team felt abandoned as his best friend had been

spending a lot of time with a new girlfriend, other team members consoled him. Contrary to previous research, which shows how men have been unable to show emotional distress (Pollack, 1998; Williams and Morris, 1996), this team responded by listening intently, continually expressing concern for his emotional state. When asked about his situation, the player discussed having spoken openly with his best friend about the situation, even crying with him (Anderson, 2011b). This highlights how support for friends has also extended to the social acceptance of crying.

Crying was once perceived as a sign of weakness and homosexuality. Literature as recently as 1996 found that men rarely cried in the presence of others regardless of the situation (Williams and Morris, 1996). Contemporarily, boys can cry without fear. Examples include crying when breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend, when friends would cry in the presence of a close friend (Anderson, 2014). This also occurred if friends knew they wouldn't see each other for a long period of time. Anderson (2008b, p. 617) shows how men who do cry with their friends or teammates 'seemed to rejoice in confiding in one another'.

The advent and development of the Internet is also a major influence on the development of increased tactility among contemporary male youth. Through websites such as *Facebook*, boys and men are increasingly showing their love for each other by listing that they are 'in a relationship' with one another. Alternatively, they list close friends as 'brothers', again showing their strong friendship (Anderson, 2014). The expression of love among friends is also demonstrated by public messages of affection on these websites. Anderson (2014) highlights the increased presence of kisses and/or hearts included on these messages to each other. He adds: 'These are just the public proclamations; one wonders what emotional joys would be found in studying the text messages of young men?' (2014, p. 127). Anderson (2012c, p. 161) demonstrates one this through one example of a text message from one best friend to another which read: 'Love you, this week has made me realise how weak I can be without you. And I don't like not being with you :\\ x'.

Way (2011) also found extreme forms of emotional tactility among working-class boys of colour in the United States. These boys describe how they construct 'circles of love' where they 'spill your heart out to somebody' (Way, 2011, p. 91). Similarly, Silva (2012, p. 518) shows how working-class boys rely on

what she described as ‘therapeutic narratives’ to overcome painful situations from their past. Being openly emotional was seen as an important marker of coming of age and self-development. Similar socio-emotional support was common among students: others posted messages of love for each other on their friends’ Facebook profiles. The ability to demonstrate physical tactility and emotional openness without being homosexualised is clearly a product of decreasing cultural homophobia.

### **The Changing Nature of Homosexually-Themed Language**

Decreasing cultural homophobia is also indicated through the changing nature of what McCormack (2011, p. 664) describes as ‘homosexually-themed language’. Understanding meanings and dynamics of language is significant as it represents the primary method through which ideas and social norms are both conveyed and consolidated (Cameron and Kulick, 2003; Kiesling, 2007). Typically, discussions of homosexually-themed language are simplified into being merely homophobic or non-homophobic, often leading to exaggerated perceptions of homophobia because of assumptions that hearing colloquial homosexually-themed language is always interpreted as homophobia. Rather, a complex web of processes are at work. McCormack (2011, p. 664) writes that:

This simplification obscures the complex nature of homosexually-themed language and fails to engage with the range of verbal practices that have some form of homosexual content.

Accordingly, Anderson (2014) argues that one must consider *how* something is said, not just *what* is said. He suggests that there can be ambiguity in how discourse is used, and the intent behind it may vary.

Using homophobic discourse serves two purposes (McCormack, 2010). Hillier and Harrison (2004) suggest that it is the easiest method in which to display intellectualised hostility towards homosexuality, resulting in boys attempting to distance themselves from anything perceived as feminine and/or gay (Plummer, 1999; McGuffey and Rich, 1999). Added to this is the discursive policing of an orthodox form of masculinity which promotes one’s own masculine capital and heteromascularity (Epstein, 1993; Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2002). Curry (1991) also argues that it is not enough for heterosexual men to deny they are gay; they must also display vehement homophobia to refute any homosexual suspicion from others (Plummer, 1999).

In light of overly simplistic understandings – notions that do not account for the influence of cultural lag on language – McCormack's (2011) review of essential discourse literature highlights two requisite features which much be apparent for something to be considered for something to be homophobic.

Firstly, something must be said with 'pernicious intent'. This refers to the use of language which deliberately attempts to degrade or marginalise a person by use of the association with homosexuality. The devaluation and hostility of homosexuality are argued by Armstrong (1997, p. 328) to be, 'implicit in the usage of homophobic terms'. Important to this is the use of what Thurlow (2001) calls 'intensifiers' – words added to a phrase demonstrating a desire to wound a person. According to Thurlow (2001), intensifiers were added to homophobia language more frequently than any other form of insult – 'you *fucking* queer' rather than 'you queer'. Hekma (1998, p. 4), for example, highlights how when a member of a team missed the ball he was immediately labelled as a 'dirty queer'. Use here of the word 'dirty' is clearly used as an intensifier to stigmatise and marginalise alternative sexual identities than heterosexuality.

Pernicious intent is also exemplified by the prominence homophobic discourse has in bullying. Rivers (1996) found that verbal abuse was the most common form of bullying levelled at gay and lesbians in schools. Similarly, both Epstein (1997) and Rivers (1995, 2011) have shown that homophobic discourse has also been deployed in the bullying of heterosexuals students. In sport, Sabo and Runfola (1980) document how the threat of being labelled gay forces men and boys to conform to certain masculine behaviours (such as avoiding participating in culturally-defined 'feminine' activities such as dance) in order to avoid being labelled 'queer', 'sissy' or 'faggot'.

McCormack (2011) highlights bullying and its negative social effect – on both gay and straight men – as the second component of homophobic language (Herek, 1992; Plummer, 1999). LGBT adults have often spoken about the emotional trauma suffered due to the homophobic bullying in their youth (Flowers and Buston, 2001; Plummer, 1999) and the negative social impact it has had on students and athletes. Research has highlighted effects this language has, such as absenteeism, social isolation and higher dropout rates in school (Rivers, 2000; Warwick, Aggleton and Douglas, 2001).

Verbal harassment is also the most common form of discrimination in sport (Hekma, 1998), and has resulted in lower rates of participation, as well as gay athletes being ostracised (Brackenridge *et al.*, 2007; Brackenridge *et al.*, 2008; Pronger, 1990). Use of homophobic language to degrade a behaviour or action still reproduces homophobia because users intend to stigmatise same-sex desire (Hillier and Harrison, 2004). Furthermore, such anti-gay epithets reproduce a hierarchical stratification of masculinities, and can contribute to a hostile sports culture for all male youth (Hekma, 1998).

Whilst pernicious intent and negative social effect are presented as two key factors to determine if language is deemed homophobic, an ongoing debate is the assumption that this homophobic language is said within a homophobic environment – settings where gays and lesbians are closeted and marginalised (McCormack, 2011). Some scholars – including Pronger (1990) – have documented the existence of this homophobic culture. In football, for example, Giulianotti (1999, p. 155) suggests how:

Many [football] supporter cultures celebrate traditional idioms of masculine identity through an uncomplicated public emasculation or feminisation of the 'others' (such as opposing players, supporters [and] match officials). Supporters aim epithets such as 'poofter', 'fanny' and 'nonce' at the allegedly weak masculinity of players and officials.

Here, it can be seen how use of such homophobic pejoratives are congruent with McCormack's (2011) requisite features of homophobic discourse.

By contrast, some scholars have *assumed* the presence of a homophobic environment upon hearing homosexually-themed language (see Jackson and Dempster, 2009; Smith, 2007). Given that much of the research on homophobic language was undertaken when Anglo-American cultures were decidedly homophobic (Loftus, 2001), it is perhaps a reasonable assumption. Contemporarily, however, this has become problematic due a marked decrease in cultural (Anderson, 2009; Clements and Field, 2014; Keleher and Smith, 2012; McCormack, 2012a; Savin-Williams, 2005; Weeks, 2007) and sporting (Adams, 2011a; Anderson, 2011a, 2011b; Anderson and McGuire, 2010; Cashmore and Cleland, 2011) homophobia. Homosexually-themed language has therefore become a more complex terrain.

Thus, McCormack (2011) proposes that a homophobic environment must also be present for something to be considered homophobic. The linking of



environment with effect and intent helps to historically contextualise the conceptualisation of homophobic language which accurately captured the social dynamics of the 1980s and 1990s (Anderson, 2005a; Griffin, 1998). Although this remains a useful conceptualisation, more recent research has uncovered and presented complexities not explained under the requisites of homophobic discourse.

### ***Fag Discourse***

Building on Thorne and Luria's (1986) notion of 'fag talk', 'fag discourse' occurs in settings which are slightly less homohysterical (McCormack, 2014). Pascoe (2005, 2007) introduced fag discourse into discussions of homosexually-themed language following her ethnographic research in a California high school. She used insights from poststructuralist theorists to build upon the work of a number of scholars who document the gendered nature of homophobia (Epstein, 1997; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Pascoe's research was unique, however, in that the word 'fag' was used as a pernicious insult that regulated only gender, not same-sex identities. For example, Pascoe (2005, p. 336) states that, 'some boys took pains to say that 'fag' is not about sexuality', and argued that it has nothing to do with sexual preference at all.

Distinguishing between the word 'fag' and other anti-gay pejoratives is important to this process, as Pascoe (2005) found that the word fag no longer had explicit associations with sexuality for participants in her study. Rather than marginalising same-sex identities, it was used as a, 'generic insult for incompetence, which...is central to a masculine identity' (Pascoe, 2005, p. 336). Accordingly, fag discourse theorised how anti-gay epithets regulate gender nonconformity rather than homosexuality. Pascoe (2005, p. 330) comments:

Fag talk and fag imitations serve as a discourse with which boys discipline themselves and each other through joking relationships. Any boy can temporarily become a fag in a given social space or interaction.

This makes the notion of intent more complex than with homophobic language. McCormack (2011, p. 668) argues that while there is 'always intent with fag discourse to regulate something (be it sexuality or gender, a person or a behaviour), the precise intent varies'. It can be used to wound someone, as well as castigate behaviour or just made as a competitive joke between friends. Use of the word fag among Pascoe's participants appears as habitual aspect of

interactions, a nuance not recognised in the pernicious intent component of homophobic language (McCormack, 2011).

Some scholars, however, fail to incorporate the subtle changes in intent and effect of language, and labelled fag discourse as part of the traditional framework of homophobic language (see Bortolin, 2010; Kimmel, 2008). McCormack (2011) argues this was because pernicious intent was still sometimes present and the social effect was often negative. Consequently, it is easy to read high levels of homophobia in the schools Pascoe studied, and the changes in the use of language were overlooked (McCormack, 2011). High levels of homophobia would have been an appropriate assumption in the 1980s and 1990s, when the word fag was used as a derogatory term of homosexuality in a broader culture of extreme homophobia (Anderson, 2009). It would not, however, be accurate in all cultural contexts.

Pascoe's (2005, 2007) research also showed that there were a number of openly gay students and heterosexual students who espoused pro-gay attitudes. In addition, homophobic and fag discourse was not unanimously employed by students. Accordingly, she wrote, 'I was stunned at the myriad opportunities to levy the epithet and the seeming refusal by these boys, gay and straight, to invoke it' (2007, p. 79). This challenged previous research (Mac an Ghaill, 1994), evidencing a less homophobic environment, and can therefore be conceptualised as divergent from homophobic language (McCormack, 2011). Furthermore, it can perhaps be claimed that Pascoe's research was the first empirical study that showed discourse replicating changing attitudes towards homosexuality.

Since Pascoe's (2005, 2007) study, homophobia has continued to decrease at a rapid rate (Anderson, 2009; Clements and Field, 2014; Keleher and Smith, 2012; McCormack, 2012a; Weeks, 2007). Despite this decrease being acknowledged by others (see Pringle and Markula, 2005; Swain, 2006), only McCormack's research with Anderson (2010) has further examined how homosexually-themed language operated in a pro-gay, inclusive environment.

### ***Gay Discourse***

First introduced into academic literature by McCormack and Anderson (2010), gay discourse explains how homosexually-themed language varies depending on the social context. McCormack and Anderson's (2010) ethnographic

research on a university rugby team showed how players espoused pro-gay attitudes, and had openly gay friends, contrasting with previous rugby research, where homophobia is traditionally commonplace (Dunning and Sheard, 1979; Muir and Seitz, 2004; Schacht, 1996). Players on this team employed phrases such as 'don't be gay' and 'that's so gay' when referring to negative things. McCormack (2012a) also found this among young sixth formers who used similar phrases when forgetting books or being given a great deal of homework. In addition, gay discourse would also be used when players were greeting one another, when phrases such as 'hey, gay boy' were used.

It is important to note that the terms and phrases used within this team were only employed among close friends, with participants arguing it would not be used with someone they were not comfortable with – such as their coach – thus stressing the importance of context (Anderson, 2014). Gay discourse therefore attempts to explain how this language maintains a homosexual theme yet lacked any pernicious intent or negative social effect (McCormack, 2011). Participants asserted a consistent position because 'gay' has two meanings – in some contexts it referred to sexuality and in others it meant 'rubbish', and they argued that the two meanings were wholly independent of each other (McCormack and Anderson, 2010). Indeed, McCormack (2012a) notes how phrases such as 'that's so gay' have been predominantly used as, 'a cathartic expression of dissatisfaction' (p. 116). Whilst there is evidence that homophobia was not intellectualised, gay discourse espouses and exhibits heterosexism.

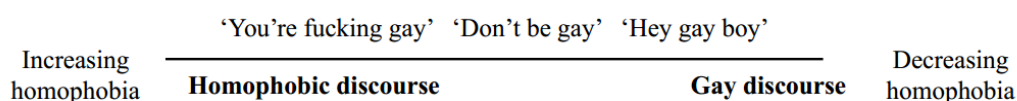
This is consistent with the work of others: Lalor and Rendle-Short (2007), for example, argue that the word 'gay' has multiple meanings: being happy and carefree, a sexual identity, and as something being stupid or lame. They also chart the historical context of the term, arguing that recent developments have disassociated the second and third definitions from each other. This, they suggest, is particularly the case among young men and women (up to the age of 30) of Australia. Rasmussen's (2004) study on Australian and American secondary school settings also shows that there are multiple meanings of the term. She notes the complicated understandings of the phrases, arguing that:

It does not *always* have to be read as homophobic, it can also be ironic, self-referential, habitual, or even deployed without a 'knowing' relation to gayness as sexual signifier (2004, p. 304).

Some scholars, however, still maintain that the phrase ‘that’s so gay’ is homophobic, despite decreasing cultural homophobia. Whilst some have empirically investigated this (see Woodford *et al.*, 2012; Lu, 2012), the majority have failed to critically engage with the attitudes of those using the language (see DePalma and Jennett, 2010; Sanders, 2008).

Figure 2 maps how the meaning attached to discourse changes as cultural homophobia decreases. McCormack and Anderson (2010) therefore use Ogburn’s (1957) lens of cultural lag to contextualise the players’ discourse in a culture of decreasing homophobia. Cultural lag occurs when, ‘two related social variables become disassociated because their meanings change at different rates’ (McCormack, 2011, p. 670). Exemplifying this, McCormack and Anderson’s (2010) study on rugby players shows that the language employed by participants was not representative of their gay-friendliness.

**Figure 2: Mapping Gay Discourse**



McCormack and Anderson, 2010, p. 921.

Although homophobia was not intellectualised among players, the discourse employed by their older coaches – who called players ‘poofs’ and ‘fucking gay’ on a regular basis – can be interpreted as homophobic discourse. McCormack and Anderson (2010), for example, discuss Graham, a rugby player on a team with a homophobic coach. Illustrating this, they write that, ‘homophobia is used maliciously to stigmatise and subordinate Graham’ when he was injured (McCormack and Anderson, 2010, p. 917). Anderson and McGuire (2010) found similar discourse was used by coaches of another university-based rugby team, and that they also tried to force injured players to participate in training or matches.

Investigating a semi-professional British football team, Adams, Anderson and McCormack (2010) highlight the utility of certain forms of discourse by

coaches in order to establish hegemonic dominance among male athletes, and in an attempt to motivate players to be successful on the pitch. They describe this as *masculine establishing discourse*, which demonstrates the set of practices constituting football as a 'man's game', requiring physical and aggressive endeavour. Violent imagery is often used, with men needing to embody a 'warrior-like' attitude, as well as self-sacrifice and the denial of pain (Jansen and Sabo, 1994), perpetuating the orthodox ethos of sport.

This is regulated by what is termed as *masculine challenging discourse* (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010), which calls into the question the heteromascularity of men who stray from the strictures of hypermasculinity. It is employed as a tool to emasculate, characterised through homophobic and misogynistic jibes, linking them to deficiencies in the male body. Phrases such as 'no bollocks' and 'grow some balls' exemplify this (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010).

Whilst these forms of discursive regulation were occasionally employed by members of Adams, Anderson and McCormack's (2010) sample – usually to question other's dedication or effort – it was predominantly used by coaches. Like McCormack and Anderson's (2010) ethnographic rugby research, the players in Adams *et al's*. (2010) study frequently ignored and resisted quips from their coaches, often in the form of jocular banter. On other occasions, players merely complain about their coaches' approach to masculinity-building, claiming that he should be fired as a result of his homophobia.

Anderson and McGuire (2010) also show how use of homophobic, misogynistic and femphobic language is stigmatised. For example, when one of the players on the team referred to a girl as a 'bitch' he was looked at discouragingly by fellow team members. This was a common theme, with such terms receiving, 'no agreement or support from their teammates' (Anderson and McGuire, 2010, p. 254). Although the stigma attached to the use of homophobia cannot be generalised to all sporting teams, it is proving to be consistent trend among men of iGeneration (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2009, 2011b; McCormack, 2012a).

### ***Pro-Gay Language***

Similar to gay discourse, pro-gay language explains how homosexually-themed language was used as a form of social bonding when men greeted each other, using the phrase 'hey, gay boy' (McCormack and Anderson, 2010). McCormack (2011) critiques previous interpretations of gay discourse, arguing that this language, 'could continue to privilege heterosexuality because of the framework of homosexual stigma that used to exist in rugby' (McCormack, 2011, p. 671). McCormack (2011) therefore argues that the authors were falling back on the same assumption of context that they accused others of by labelling 'that's so gay' as homophobic – a position aided the lack of openly gay athletes to judge the use of this language (McCormack, 2011).

McCormack (2012a) explores the social effect of homosexually-themed language between gay and straight students and argues that it has a positive effect as it is used as a means of bonding students together in socio-positive ways. Examples of this include when an openly gay student was working with heterosexual friends, one of whom was doodling in his book. The heterosexual student then looked up and asked, 'Is this pretty gay what I'm doing?' The openly gay student then laughed and agreed, stating, 'Yeah, it's pretty gay'. Similarly, when a gay student was playing catch, one of his heterosexual friends let the ball slip out of his hand, travelling only a short distance. The gay student then shouted, 'You're gayer than me!', jokingly drawing upon stereotypes of gay men being unable to play sport competently (Anderson, 2005a). McCormack (2012a) describes how this was a regular occurrence within established friendship groups, and appeared to both bond the students together and remove any negativity associated with these words.

A second form of pro-gay language is also documented from McCormack's (2012a) research, which occurred where heterosexual male students casually address their close friends as 'lover' or 'boyfriend'. Students enacted this language out of homosocial affection, without any discernible attempt to consolidate their heterosexual standing (McCormack, 2011). Furthermore, it is also interpreted as a way of demonstrating emotional intimacy and tactility. Importantly, students did not think that employing such terms with other males would arouse homosexual suspicion and homosexualise them (McCormack, 2012a).

### ***A Model of Homosexually-Themed Language***

Drawing together various conceptualisations of homosexually-themed language, McCormack (2011) presents an empirically grounded model. It is important to note that the use of language is complex, and no phrase is necessarily part of the same category. Highlighting this, Anderson's (2012c) ethnographic research among physical education students at an English high school shows how the word 'gay' is *not* used in any setting to describe dissatisfaction. McCormack (2011) is therefore keen to point out that there will be overlaps and exceptions to this framework, and that the list of words or phrases is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, the model is the most conclusive conceptualisation of homosexually-themed language, and provides scholars with a framework to judge other forms of language (McCormack, 2011).

One example of this is what McCormack (2012a) refers to as 'heterosexual recuperation'. This is conceptualised as, 'A heuristic tool for understanding the strategies boys use to establish and maintain heterosexual identities without invoking homophobia' (2012a, p. 90). Although there are not exhaustive methods as to how boys can manage their sexual identities, McCormack (2012a) delineates between two common forms of heterosexual recuperation: 'conquestial' and 'ironic'. Both are used by boys when they fear their heterosexuality is threatened.

Firstly, conquestial recuperation incorporates the ways in which boys boast of their heterosexual desires or conquests (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). McCormack (2012a) provides an example of conquestial recuperation when discussing students were discussing a house party which they had recently attended, at which one of them left early to have sex with his girlfriend. When this student was jokingly mocked for leaving, he replied, 'I'm the one who got laid last night'. The other students replied by commenting, 'Fair point. I can't ever imagine turning down sex. I mean, I want it *all* the time' (McCormack, 2012a, p. 91). Another added, 'Seriously, I'm just always horny. When I get a girlfriend, she can have it whenever she likes' (*ibid*). Although heterosexuality was often consolidated through this medium, McCormack (2012a) argues that the attitudes of these boys towards women was improved compared to other literature (see Chambers, Tincknell and Van Loon, 2004; Dunning and Sheard, 1979; Elias and Dunning, 1986; Robinson, 2005).

Supporting this, Giulianotti (1999) highlights how less progressive attitudes towards women are shown by football hooligans who engage in similar discourse. Graphic metaphors of sexual power such as, 'We fucked them' and 'We shagged them' (1999, p. 155), demonstrates the objectification of women while still exhibiting language which can be considered a form of conquestual recuperation.

Secondly, the more frequent method of heterosexual recuperation is described by McCormack (2012a) as 'ironic recuperation'. Here, boys recuperate their heterosexual identities by participating in close physical contact, where men and boys ironically proclaim same-sex desire to consolidate their heteromale standing. Crucially, they argue that this is a way that heterosexual men prove their masculinity *without* being homophobic. They also suggest that this is necessary because, unlike gay men who are socially accepted to be gay upon proclamation, the same does not hold true of heterosexual men (McCormack, 2011).

McCormack (2012a) uses several examples to illustrate this. Notably, he recalls when a heterosexual boy was giving another heterosexual boy a back massage, who exclaimed, 'That's so good'. The boy giving the massage responded, 'I know how to please a man' (2012a, p. 93). What ensued was a jocular exchange in which same-sex sex was ironically mimicked, with both boys consolidating their heterosexual standing. Ironic recuperation also occurs when heterosexual students jokingly address their close friends as 'boyfriends', similar to pro-gay discourse. Although these 'ironic proclamations' are not taken seriously, these actions build emotional intimacy between boys (McCormack, 2012a).

Applying Anderson's (2009) concept of homophobia – the cultural fear of being homosexualised – is useful in understanding the context of all forms of homosexually-themed language. In Figure 3, it can be seen how McCormack (2011) applies homophobia to understanding homosexually-themed language. Homophobia historically situates levels of homophobia, and theorises how varying levels can impact upon the stratification and construction of masculinities. Supporting this changing cultural context, Anderson (2002) determined that half of the athletes he interviewed judged levels of homophobia on their team through the amount of homophobic language their teammates used. This half of the 2002 sample suggested that the term 'that's gay' and the use of the word 'fag' were indicative of homophobic attitudes among those who used them: the other

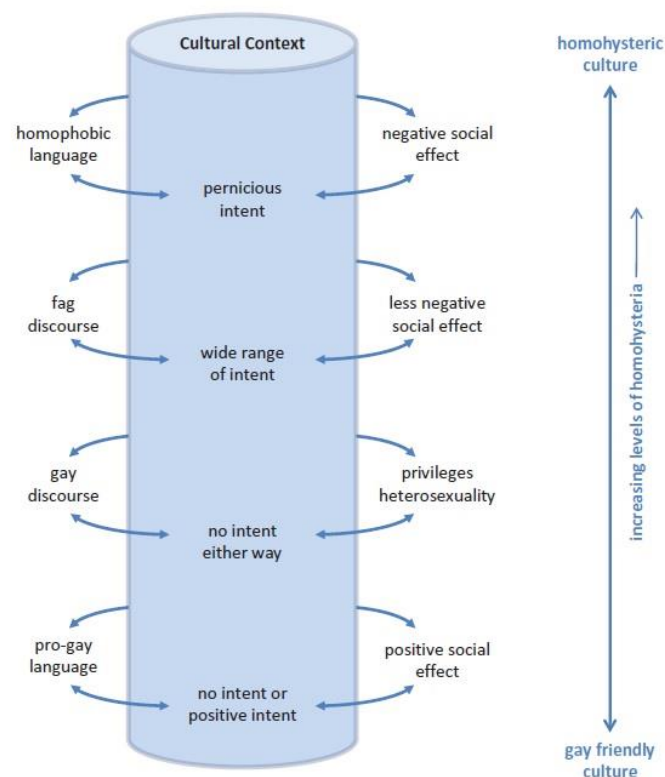


half argued that this was not the case. However, when he replicated this study in 2011, none of the sample judged the level of their teammates' homophobia through use of this homosexually-themed language. One of the participants in the latter study makes salient this contextual shift:

Gay doesn't mean gay anymore. And fag doesn't mean fag. You can't say that because someone says 'that's so gay' or 'he's a fag' that they are homophobic. I guess they could be, but you know when someone is using those words as a homophobic insult and when someone's not (Anderson 2011a, p. 258).

Like Neil, and in contrast to 2002, all the players in the 2011 sample who heard use of the words 'gay' and 'fag' argued that these phrases were not homophobic. Supporting this, Jones and McCarthy (2010, p. 168) argue that this kind of discourse is, 'deemed to be different from 'real' homophobic comments', and that the men they had interviewed from a gay football team had 'come to expect such banter' (*ibid*).

**Figure 3: A Model of Homosexually-Themed Language**



McCormack 2011, p. 674

In a highly homohysterical culture, there is an elevated stigma attached to homosexuality, resulting in boys and men using homophobic language to consolidate their own heterosexual identity and masculine standing (Plummer, 1999). Consequently, when homosexually-themed language – or homonegative discourse (Bullingham, Magrath and Anderson, 2014) – is employed within this setting, it demonstrates homophobia, as it is used with pernicious intent and has a negative social effect. The policing of gender and sexuality through the medium of discourse has been documented by a number of scholars (Hekma, 1998; Messerschmidt, 2000; Messner, 1992; Parker, 1996b; Plummer, 2001; Thurlow, 2001).

Fag discourse occurs when settings are slightly less homohysterical, and although many gay people may have negative experiences, a large number of people will support gay rights. In this stage, though some men who use fag discourse may not use it to stigmatise homosexuality, others will use it with it pernicious intent. Indeed, use of fag discourse can cause negative social effects, including the regulation of acceptable gendered behaviours because the intent of the language is not always clear (Anderson, 2002).

Gay discourse incorporates a setting of low homophobia where young men show no concern for whether they are socially perceived as gay. Whilst phrases such as ‘that’s so gay’ may be used as expressions of dissatisfaction – which in turn may privilege heterosexuality – they are not employed with the intention of marginalising gay people. Despite this, attempts have been made by an increasing number of athletes to eradicate remarks such as ‘that’s so gay’ and ‘you’re gay’, once dismissed as acceptable ‘trash-talk’ (Nylund, 2014). American basketball player Grant Hill’s recent involvement in an NBA campaign to take a stand against homophobia highlights such resistance towards the utility of such phrases (Nylund, 2014).

Building on this, pro-gay language occurs within a near-complete absence (if not, total absence) of homophobia, exposing a gay friendly culture (see McCormack, 2012a). Here, homosexually-themed discourse bonds students by demonstrating emotional intimacy or inclusion of gay students, and the stigmatising of homophobia, thus maintaining the reproduction of a gay friendly

culture. While some of the theorisations of homosexually-themed language here do not specifically refer to sport, they nonetheless remain useful in explaining how language varies in different cultures, different contexts and different epochs. Of course, language remains a complex and multi-faceted issue, perhaps more so in sport – epithets and phrases often differ from a person's attitudes (see for example, Cashmore and Cleland, 2011; Magrath, under construction; McCormack and Anderson, 2010).

### **Elite Football and Homosexuality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Although the last two decades has shown a significant decrease of cultural homophobia, particularly within younger generations of men (McCormack, 2012a), this has not been replicated in all social settings. Sport, for example, has traditionally been slower at replicating societal attitudes (Butterworth, 2006). In football, it is perhaps the negative experiences of openly gay footballers (described in Chapter 3) that results in continued accusations that the game has failed to embrace homosexuality in the same way as wider culture. This is attributable to a complex web of processes.

Europe accounts for the top five professional leagues in world football: The *Premier League*, England; *La Liga*, Spain; *Bundesliga*, Germany; *Serie A*, Italy; and *Ligue 1*, France – often referred to as 'The Big Five' (Elliott and Weedon, 2010). Accordingly, the world's best players migrate to the world's biggest clubs in what Lanfranchi and Taylor (2001) term the core football system. Playing for clubs in this system means playing in financially lucrative (for clubs) competitions such as the UEFA Champions' League<sup>3</sup>, and equally as lucrative pre and post-season tours worldwide (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009). Often, these players travel to countries where homosexuality is illegal, and governed by strict and archaic laws (Anderson, 2014; Frank, Camp and Boucher, 2010), such as Russia and Qatar, the hosts for the next two FIFA World Cups (2018 and 2022). Thus, being an openly gay player who is contractually obliged to travel and compete in these countries is a problematic proposition. It is perhaps for this reason that the lack of openly gay footballers is a continued issue in Europe's top leagues (Anderson, 2014).

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<sup>3</sup> The UEFA Champions' League is a competition organised and governed by the Union of European Football Associations (simply referred to as UEFA). It takes place cross-continently between the top qualifying clubs in Europe.

Because of this there has been assumption by football's governing bodies that football continues to be a homophobic environment (Bury, 2013; Cleland, 2013a), in addition to a culturally-perceived understanding of homophobia among elite-level footballers in Britain (see Caudwell, 2011; Hughson and Free, 2011). A culture of perceived homophobia would suggest that gay men are almost completely absent in football. This has been both challenged and supported by a small number of professional players.

German international Phillip Lahm and English player Darren Purse have both publicly stated that they would advise gay teammates to stay in the closet, claiming they would suffer extensive abuse (Cashmore and Cleland, 2014). Conversely, comments made by another German international, Mario Gomez, as well as former England footballer Gareth Southgate and current Manchester United player Anders Lindegaard have challenged this sentiment. These players have claimed that an openly gay professional footballer would be accepted by fellow professional players (Christenson, 2012). In a blog post drawing upon his personalised liberalism, Lindegaard (2012) wrote how football needed 'a gay hero': somebody to 'stand up and stand by his sexuality<sup>4</sup>.' Similarly, Gomez was quoted as saying that gay players should 'own up to their preference', because they would 'play as if they had been liberated' (Connolly, 2010).

While issues of access have often prevented researchers into the closed community of professional football (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010), these claims are substantiated by Wahl's (2013) extensive preseason MLS (Major League Soccer) player survey. Out of 18 players only one believed an openly gay footballer would not be accepted by other members of the team. Wahl (2013, n.p.) therefore claims that, 'MLS is as ready as any other U.S. men's professional league to have an openly gay player, and this vote supports that notion'. A plethora of recent academic research at varying levels of football also show acceptance and inclusivity towards homosexuality (e.g. Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Anderson, 2011b; Cashmore and Cleland, 2011, 2012; Cleland, 2013a, 2014; Magrath, under construction; Willis, 2014).

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<sup>4</sup> Anders Lindegaard is a Danish professional footballer. His blog was originally written in Danish before being translated into English.

Likewise, Cashmore and Cleland (2011, 2012) have challenged the assumption that homophobia is widespread within football fandom. Using online methods, they found that 93% of 3,500 respondents – including 62 professionals within the game (players, referees, managers and/or coaches) – have no objection to the presence of openly gay players, arguing that homophobia has no place in football. Rather, a footballer's ability was seen to be the only criterion on which he is judged – sexuality deemed unimportant. Nevertheless, these same fans who fiercely deny homophobia any place in football barrack players with homophobic epithets. Cashmore and Cleland (2011, p. 421) describe this as 'counterintuitive and paradoxical'. Fans interpreted this as good-natured banter, claiming exploiting weaknesses in your opponents is necessary (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011). Magrath (under construction) explores the nature of this discursive regulation, finding a lack of intellectualised homophobia: instead, fans' discourse suffered cultural lag. Fans also stigmatised any chants which were perceived as *genuinely* homophobic or abusive; this included premeditated chants making reference to AIDS' link to the LGBT community (Anderson, 2009).

Cleland (2013a) also documents this inclusion of homosexuality among football fandom. He found inclusive attitudes when analysing discussions and narratives of homosexuality on 48 football fan message boards. Interestingly, posts which contained homophobic sentiment were challenged. In replying to a message claiming that gay culture was detrimental to 'cohesive, family-based culture', one fan responded that 'your views belong in a previous era', making reference to when homophobia was seen as accepted and encouraged (Anderson 2009). Similar challenges to homophobic comments were made in Cleland *et al's*. (under review) analysis of football fan responses to Thomas Hitzlsperger's coming out in January 2014. Here, fans were generally supportive towards Hitzlsperger, many also positively observing the cultural shift in attitudes towards homosexuality.

Further evidencing the increasing acceptance of homosexuality, former Leeds United and Stevenage footballer, Robbie Rogers received widespread praise when he publicly revealed he was gay in February 2013. He had originally revealed he was quitting football, stating in his blog that, 'For the past 25 year[s] I have been afraid: afraid to show whom I really was because of fear...Secrets can cause

so much internal damage' (Rogers, 2013, n.p.). However, Rogers' peers took to social networking websites to reveal their support for him.

Compatriot and current player, Stuart Holden, posted on Twitter, 'Much love and respect to my boy...Proud to be your friend bro'. Similarly, another compatriot and retired player, Kasey Keller, also posted on Twitter: 'The bravery of Robbie Rogers is commendable. I hope he realises that he doesn't need to retire. He will be more supported than he knows'. Keller's reference to Rogers quitting the game is particularly interesting, perhaps denoting that he feels football culture would be accepting and tolerant of Rogers' homosexuality – despite Rogers' fear (Rogers, 2014). Indeed, the support Rogers received worldwide resulted in him reversing his decision and signing for the LA Galaxy just four months later, receiving a standing ovation when introduced to the crowd.

Similar inclusivity was shown when Liverpool-born Swedish footballer Anton Hysén publicly revealed he was gay in 2011 (Barkham, 2011). Cleland (2014) shows that in the period immediately after, several media articles were published challenging homophobia, following interviews with Hysén. He was also praised for making a stand as an openly gay footballer. This represents a marked shift from the reaction to the last openly gay professional footballer, Justin Fashanu (see Chapter 3).

What can be deduced from the experience of Rogers in relation to Fashanu is the time period in which his homosexuality was publicly revealed. Fashanu's coming out in 1990 came towards the end of what Anderson (2009) argues was an extremely homohysterical zeitgeist. Conversely, Rogers' and Hysén's coming out came in an era in which there has been a continued increase in tolerance, acceptance and inclusivity of gays and lesbians (Anderson, 2009; Anderson and Bullingham, 2013; Fink *et al.*, 2012; Keleher and Smith, 2012; McCormack, 2012a; Melton and Cunningham, 2012). In sport, inclusivity towards sexual minorities is the norm among heterosexual teammates (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2009, 2011b; Bush, Anderson and Carr, 2012; Dashper, 2012), even if some fear homophobic abuse (Anderson, 2002, 2011a).

The examples of Hysén and Rogers support Anderson's (2005a) contention that professional sport is ready for an active gay athlete to come out. Anderson (2005a) has previously claimed that the world's first openly gay

professional footballer would be shrouded in publicity: that they would be offered book contracts, movie deals, and a plethora of sponsorships from gay friendly companies. Supporting this contention, Robbie Rogers and Gareth Thomas recently published autobiographies (see Rogers, 2014; Thomas, 2014), whilst a motion picture is currently being filmed about Thomas's life, starring Mickey Rourke. Likewise, shirt sales for basket player Jason Collins became the top seller on the National Basketball Association website shortly after signing for the Brooklyn Nets (Keh, 2014), whilst American footballer Michael Sam's were the second most popular after he was drafted for the St. Louis Rams (Atsales, 2014).

This publicity is because a cultural lag between cultural attitudes to homosexuality and sport persists. However, with sport now beginning to mirror society in terms of gay friendliness, the ideal time for a gay athlete to take advantage of coming out as a business proposition was likely a few years ago. Thus, if an active openly gay professional footballer does not come out soon, he may very well find that culture has progressed so far, that there are no sponsorship opportunities available. His coming out will perhaps hit the press initially, but then the world will continue as normal. This is the ultimate sign of progress. Fifteen years ago it was maintained that sport would never tolerate an openly gay athlete (Cleland, 2014; Kian and Anderson, 2009); eight years ago there were discussions about where they all were; today, however, society is less interested in who is or who is not gay.

### **Professional Footballers and Coming Out**

Despite this culture of inclusivity, one of the continuing issues concerns the number of openly gay professional football players in British football. This also appears to be a similar issue in the top four American sport leagues (American football, baseball, basketball, and ice hockey). Anderson (2005a) highlighted multiple rationales for the lack of openly gay athletes in professional sport, of which Ogawa (2014) summarises: (1) Gay men in these leagues remain silent about their sexuality – the 'silence' hypothesis; (2) Gay men choose not to play sports – the 'non-participation' hypothesis; (3) Gay men are less likely than straight men to achieve professional status – the 'selection' hypothesis. He refers to the second and third hypotheses as the 'non-existence' hypothesis as both imply a non-existence of gay male athletes.

Due to a small number of gay athletes coming out previously, the silence hypothesis is often the most assumed explanation for more openly gay athletes not coming out. In football, Cashmore and Cleland (2011, p. 421) describe this as 'a culture of secrecy'. Ogawa (2014, p. 292), however, maintains that the aforementioned silence hypothesis is, 'an untenable way of understanding the silence among *so many* athletes'. British football's worldwide popularity and subsequent media influence (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009; Boyle and Haynes, 2004), results in the behaviour of high-profile Premier League players often dominating both the sporting and mainstream news (Boyle and Haynes, 2004). Hiding their sexuality would prove to be a near-impossible feat, as Ogawa (2014, p. 293) comments:

The public – including high-paying tabloids – already show an interest in the sex lives of men (gay or straight) of such high status. This calls into question the proposition that one of these extremely famous men could keep his sex life private if he happened to be gay. He would have a difficult time suppressing photos and rumours from circulating online.

Whilst this is a titillating proposition, the fact that gay athletes such as Thomas Hitzlsperger have hidden their sexuality until after their retirement shows that it can be hidden from the media.

Ogawa also suggests that gay men might just not be physically demonstrative enough to play sport at the professional level of combative sports. He doesn't discount that some gay men are capable of playing at the elite level, but he suggests that at the tail end of a muscular distribution, a small biological difference can exaggerate the effect. However, the growing number of gay athletes proves that if a biological difference does exist (see Chapter 2), it is not enough to prevent them playing in professional sport. Anderson (2005a) takes a more balanced perspective. He suggests that the absence of the openly gay professional athlete at the professional levels of most team sports exists because of a variety of reasons. Evidencing this, he shows that only about 2.8% of the population identifies as gay in the first place (Laumann *et al.*, 1994), but then his research (2005a) along with that of Hekma (1998) shows that once gay men come out in sport (at younger ages) they tend to drop out. Anderson (2005a) suggests that this is because they find a life of gay friends, clubbing and sex more appealing than sport.



While it is possible that there is 'some' truth to the fact that gay men are morphologically differentiated from straight men (Bailey, 2003), this effect should represent itself mostly in sports like American football, which requires an extreme (in this case strength), but football requires athletes to be physically muddled: they must possess sprinting speed, but also endurance; they must be strong, but not too muscular. It is for this reason that the absence of the gay male athlete in football comes down to (1) Self-de-selection and (2) The silence hypothesis. The fact that only one openly gay professional footballer has come out of the closet in the United Kingdom, despite the fact that Western societies are rapidly moving towards the social acceptance – and even celebration – of homosexuality, suggest that the reasons professional athletes remain in the closet are complex. Anderson (2005a) has suggested that there are multiple reasons for this.

Firstly, athletes predicate their master identities as that of sportsmen. This is accomplished because they play sport in a 'near-total institution' (Anderson, 2005a): academy players live together, go to school together, train, travel and compete together. Coming out to even gay friendly teammates is difficult when one is different than the others. Athletes fear that their difference will interrupt the homosocial camaraderie, that they will be treated differently. Also, athletes know that while their academy friends might be 'true friends' they are also competition for selection to the next level of play in a rapidly decreasing opportunity structure – 65% of footballers are released from professional football club academies at the age of 18 (James, 2010). Athletes therefore perceive any difference, or distraction, as possibly impeding their progress.

Athletes are also afraid to come out of the closet because of the age of the gate-keepers of their sport. Older men, those whose adolescence were in the 1980s, serve as their managers and coaches: when stakes are high, one over-conforms to norms in order to be selected. In other words, one must not only play well, but they must exhibit all of the other emotional and personal characteristics that the coaches desire if they are to be selected for the next level of play. Athletes fear that coming out will result in de-selection.

Finally, gay men *do* come out in football. There have been a reasonable number of professional footballers who have come out of the closet, albeit not at the top level of the game (Willis, 2014), or in the UK. Liam Davis, Anton Hysén, Robbie Rogers, Thomas Hitzlsperger, David Testo, and Olivier Rouyer are all

examples of footballers who have come out in the last two decades. Often these players wait until they have retired to *publicly* come out, or oftentimes are out to their close teammates without choosing to come out to the media (Anderson, 2005a). Just because the media is not aware of one's sexuality, does not mean that one is not gay. Anderson (2014) illustrates this using the example of American footballer Alan Gendreau who came out to his entire team but did not publicly come out in the media until after he had graduated. Similarly, Kwame Harris, another American footballer who plays for the San Francisco 49ers, was recently outed after he was arrested for physically assaulting his boyfriend (Anderson, 2014).

Collectively, however, before we begin to see more athletes coming out of the closet, we need to see a generation of young men who have grown up with an inclusive attitude towards homosexuality take to the seats of power within sport. Exemplifying a generational divide on these issues, following the award of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar, FIFA president Sepp Blatter claimed that due to the illegality of homosexuality in Arabic states, gay athletes and fans should abstain from any sexual activity. His sentiment seems reasonable to him, yet unthinkable to today's emerging iGeneration players.

### **Non-Elite Football and Homosexuality**

Without direct access to elite footballers, it is left merely with speculation concerning the potential experiences of an openly gay Premier League footballer (Magrath and Anderson, 2015). The positive coming out experiences of Anton Hysén and, more recently, Robbie Rogers, suggest that the future of football is one of inclusivity for openly gay players. This has already proven to be case among footballers at non-elite level.

In Adams's (2011a) ethnographic research among a college-based soccer team in Northeast America found inclusive attitudes towards sexual minorities, with no members of the team having an objections to an openly gay teammate. These men espouse support for gay marriage and gay adoption, as well as freely discussing how many of their close friends are gay. Consequently, Adams (2011a) argues that they are far removed from traditional notions of orthodox masculinities present in sports research from Generation X (Pronger, 1990). He also notes that the wearing of pink football boots (cleats) – without homophobic

judgement from teammates – is a symbolic sociological moment, as it reveals a form of inclusive masculinity.

Anderson (2011b) found similar inclusivity among another university-based football team. Some members of the squad admitted to previously having reservations regarding homosexuality, but were embarrassed about their views when asked about them. With the exception of only one member of the squad (who expressed a degree of personal homophobia), Anderson (2011b) found a complete acceptance of homosexuality. Adams and Anderson (2012) also highlight a decrease in heteronormativity and increase in social cohesion after observing the first ever first-hand account of an athlete's coming out process with researchers present. As well as football, similar inclusive settings have also been found in other sports.

Anderson's (2002) pioneering research – the first ever study conducted on openly gay male high school and collegiate athletes – found that the coming out experiences of 26 athletes was much more positive than the athletes themselves were expecting. Gay male athletes were surprised at the inclusivity they experienced from their teammates and almost all regretted not coming out sooner. However, the acceptance faced by these athletes led them to have perhaps overstated their positive coming out experiences – something Anderson (2002) refers to as reverse relative deprivation. He refers to this reverse relative deprivation as being, 'largely experienced by the fact that they were not physically assaulted or verbally harassed – the opposite of what most expected before coming out' (2002, p. 874).

When Anderson (2011a) replicated this study with openly gay athletes – enabling a comparison to be made between temporal epochs – he found that gay athletes had had an even more positive experience than the athletes from the 2002 study. Regardless of the sport played, when athletes came out to their teammates, they were not treated with negative difference. In addition to these studies of gay male athletes on ostensibly heterosexual team sports, there has also been a growing body of research on openly gay male athletes in a variety of other sports, such as rugby (Anderson and McGuire, 2010), male cheerleading (Anderson, 2005b), American football (Anderson, 2008c) and equestrian sports (Dashper, 2012). Whilst these studies have all employed qualitative methods, similar results have been shown with a quantitative approach.

Bush, Anderson and Carr (2012) conducted the first quantitative account of British university athletes' attitudes towards having a gay male teammate. Questionnaires were completed by 216 male athletes from all university sports when they began at the university, and again when they left, and it was found that 97% of heterosexual male athletes would support having an openly gay male teammate and/or coach. Furthermore, Bush, Anderson and Carr (2012) also found that the strength of one's athletic identity is associated with lesser degrees of support for gay team sport athletes upon entering the university, but that this effect does not emerge upon exiting. In America, a poll of 1,401 professional team sports athletes in *Sports Illustrated* (2006) magazine shows how 80% of National Hockey League players would welcome a gay teammate. Similarly, Southall *et al.* (2009) found that homophobia is also decreasing among athletes at a university in the American south – a location renowned for its religious evangelism and conservative politics (Phillips, 2006) – with 72% of athletes acceptant of an openly gay athlete.

These studies have provided a challenge to traditional notions of hierarchically-structured masculinities, instead finding that as homophobia decreases, masculinities soften. As a result, masculinities are seen to exist, 'in a horizontal (not stratified) alignment' (Anderson and McGuire, 2010, p. 251). Accordingly, Anderson and others argue that today's iGeneration males (athletes and non-athletes alike) no longer live in a homohysterical culture. Instead they live in one of social inclusion where sexual orientation is deemed unimportant for sporting selection (Anderson, 2013a).

### **Challenging Homophobia in Football**

Partially responsible for the inclusive environment is the introduction of initiatives to rid football of discrimination, which are becoming entrenched in the modern game. The development of anti-racism programmes, such as *Let's Kick Racism Out of Football*, have aided (at least) the decrease of overt racism in the game (Giulianotti, 1999; see also Cleland and Cashmore, 2013). An extension of these initiatives is also significant for challenging homophobia in football. Of course sexuality, unlike race, is invisible – one can hide their sexual orientation, but not the colour of their skin. Accordingly, challenging homophobia is decidedly more difficult than challenging racism. Though campaigns such as The Justin

Campaign and the Gay Football Supporters Network (GFSN) have been formed (Caudwell, 2011), the Football Association – the governing body for football in England – have been much slower at overtly tackling this issue.

The Justin Campaign was founded in 2008 in an attempt to raise awareness that 10 years after Fashanu's death homophobia continues to be a problem at all levels of the game. It seeks to challenge all forms of homophobia through four avenues: football, the arts, events, and education (Caudwell, 2011). Similarly, the Gay Football Supporters Network, established in 1989, exists as a social network for LGBT football supporters, attempting to tackle homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in football (Jones and McCarthy, 2010). Collectively, alongside gay rights activists such as Peter Tatchell and John Amaechi (Bury, 2013), they have been responsible for encouraging and pressurising the Football Association to develop an official strategy.

In 1999, shortly after the exchange between Le Saux and Fowler (discussed in Chapter 3), the Football Association claimed it would work alongside gay rights groups to attempt to create an atmosphere where gay men can play (and watch) football free of ridicule, abuse and violence (Holt and Mason, 2000). Small but notable steps of progress are apparent: the amendment of football stadia regulations in 2007, resulting in the ejection and possible arrest of those guilty of homophobic abuse, for example.

Since then, this rule has been enforced on a number of occasions. The most notable came in 2008 when, at a Premier League match between Portsmouth and Tottenham Hotspur, a small number of Tottenham supporters engaged in a number of racist and homophobic chants towards Portsmouth player Sol Campbell. Although nobody was ejected from the stadium, two supporters were later arrested and given three-year football banning orders and fines (Brown, 2008). Despite this, authorities have been criticised for the inconsistent enforcement of this rule: in 2014, an undercover Channel Four documentary highlighted how homophobic (and racist) chanting went unpunished despite the close proximity of police officers and stewards.

Aside from amendments to stadia regulations, the Football Association have also been severely criticised for their lack of action to tackle homophobia in football. Some football supporters have even argued the avoidance of an anti-discrimination campaign is what allegedly prevents football from embracing

sexual minorities (Cashmore and Cleland, 2014). The Football Association's ten-point plan, 'Irrespective of Sexual Orientation', was criticised as lip-service. In 2010, the Football Association initiated a campaign to tackle homophobic shouting inside football stadia, without attempting to suitably understand the issue (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011). Despite approaching the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) – the union for footballers in the United Kingdom – to co-produce an anti-homophobia video, the Football Association later withdrew from the project (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011). Several high-profile footballers were condemned for their refusal to take part in the video for fear of ridicule (Cashmore and Cleland, 2014; Herbert, 2010). This led the chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, Gordon Taylor, to suggest that football culture was not ready for this sort of campaign.

Two years on, the Football Association sought help from Football v Homophobia (an initiative devised by The Justin Campaign) and partnered with all the stakeholders in English football (The Professional Game Match Officials – PGMO; The Premier League; The Football League; and the Professional Footballers' Association – PFA) to present an initiative named *Opening Doors and Joining In*. Here, the Football Association acknowledged their lack of understanding of homophobia, suggesting their lack of action has had a negative impact on those who are involved in football. The overall purpose of this initiative focuses on including LGBT people in football as well as tackling homophobia and transphobia (Bury, 2013). This was tackled by introducing a five-match suspension for anybody guilty of on-field discriminatory incidents, in addition to punishment for off-field behaviour such as offensive 'tweets'. A mandatory education programme has also been developed.

Bury (2013) notes the overarching contrast this initiative has in comparison to previous attempts. Specifically, the acknowledgement and case studies of pioneering gay football clubs such as Stonewall FC, Village Manchester FC, and the Gay Football Supporters Network in addition to the Gay National League (GNL) highlights the visibility of gay football. Bury (2013) also notes how the imagery within the Football Association's report does much to challenge and debunk the myths that gay men don't like football and are unable to play it properly.

The campaign has also raised awareness of football's ongoing battle against homophobia. For example, a number of high-profile professional football clubs, such as Manchester United and Chelsea, have enlisted their support for the Football v Homophobia campaign. Overall, out of 92 professional football clubs in England, 28 have currently supported the campaign. This has been made visible with events such as professional players wearing rainbow laces (signifying LGBT colours) for a match during 2013, and again in 2014, and by wearing Football v Homophobia t-shirts during their pre-match warm up.

Through these types of events, the visibility of the LGBT community is arguably growing in football. Likewise, support is also beginning to be shown, but it is worth noting that *less than half* of professional football clubs in England have *publicly* demonstrated their support for this campaign. This currently represents a crucial stage for governing bodies in their quest to significantly challenge homophobic discrimination.

## Chapter 6: Theorising Contemporary Masculinity

Since the turn of the Millennium, cultural homophobia in Anglo-American cultures has rapidly decreased (Keleher and Smith, 2012), thus leading to a restricted number of gendered behaviours available to the men of Generation X (Anderson, 2014). This chapter outlines how Connell's (1995) hegemonic masculinity theory no longer remains appropriate for explaining these behaviours, and how a new theory of masculinity is therefore required. This chapter outlines the emergence of Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory as the only prolific alternative to explaining the nature of contemporary masculinity. A discussion of how it has been applied in various social settings is included, as well as some of the critiques that the theory has received. The chapter begins with one of the most important concepts to the theory – homophobia.

### Homophobia

Despite several critiques, hegemonic masculinity maintained its heuristic utility in understanding men's gendered behaviours in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Highlighting that masculinities are historically situated, Anderson (2009) developed the concept of homophobia to understand the power of homophobia in the regulation of masculinities (McCormack, 2010). Anderson (2011c, p. 83) describes a culture of homophobia as a, 'homosexually-panicked culture in which suspicion [of homosexuality] permeates'. He argues that in order for a culture of homophobia to exist, three social factors must coincide: (1) The mass cultural awareness that homosexuality exists as a static sexual orientation within a significant portion of the population; (2) A cultural zeitgeist of disapproval towards homosexuality; (3) Disapproval of men's femininity or women's masculinity, as they are associated with homosexuality (Anderson, 2009).

Anderson (2011a) describes homophobia as a concept to analyse one's own culture, historically, or for making cross-cultural comparisons. Either way he describes three conditions that a culture (might) move through: homophobia, homophobia, and inclusivity (Anderson and McCormack, forthcoming). Firstly, homophobia refers to a culture which is highly homophobic, but citizens do not readily believe that homosexuality exists as a significant portion of their population. For example, within much of the Islamic and African world, homosexuality is thought to 'only' be a Western phenomenon (Frank, Camp and



Boucher, 2010).

By contrast, a culture of homophobia is aware that homosexuality exists in a significant enough population that anyone can be gay (even if closeted). If this culture also looks poorly upon homosexuality, the stage for homophobia is set. Exemplifying this, Anderson (2009) suggests that homophobia strongly manifested in the United States in the 1980s. This was because of the increased awareness of the growing normalcy and frequency of homosexuality, alongside extreme homophobia. Anderson adds that, in the United States, homophobia was heightened by an increasingly noisy fundamentalist Christian movement that was opposed to and consequently demonised homosexuality (Anderson 2011a), which was made culturally salient through HIV/AIDS and the large percent of even gender-typical men who acquired it through same-sex sex.

In this homophobic culture, boys and young men (particularly those unmarried) needed to establish and re-establish themselves as heterosexual by aligning their gendered behaviours with idealised notions of masculinity. This led Kimmel (1994) to argue that homophobia *is* masculinity. Accordingly, between the years of 1983 to 1993, Anderson argues that boys in Western cultures needed to demonstrate public displays of heteromascularity, predominantly through sport (Pronger, 1990). This is because, Anderson (2009) suggests, homosexuality is not readily visible (like gender or race): ostensibly, anyone can be gay. Therefore, because men's masculinity is/was associated with heterosexuality, boys in a homophobic culture were required to elevate their display of masculinity to prove that they were not gay. Consequently, culturally-endorsed sports were used to distance boys from Anderson (2009, p. 51) calls the 'spectre of the fag':

Men attempt to associate with masculinity and disassociate with femininity. They self-segregate into masculine enclaves within the larger feminised space and perceive that excluding women and gay men from their peer circles raises their masculine capital.

Anderson (2009) suggests further that participation in organised team sports is less important for the construction of heterosexuality in a culture where homosexuality is not believed to exist as a significant demographic of the population – using Iran as an example. While homophobia is intensely high in Iran, in 2007, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed that, 'in Iran we don't have homosexuals like in your country' (cited in Anderson, 2009, p. 86). Anderson suggests that homophobia is so high in Iran that few people come out of the

closet, leaving the perception that homosexuality is too small a proportion of the population to raise suspicion that one's friends or family members could be one of them. Accordingly, boys in Iran will have less need to distance themselves from cultural suspicion of homosexuality. It is this mass denial that homosexuality exists in large numbers which permits Iranian men to walk together in public holding hands.

In a setting where homophobia is decreased yet still present, Anderson (2009) presents two archetypes of masculinity competing for dominance: inclusive and orthodox (hegemonic). Within this culture, orthodox masculinity remains homophobic but does not maintain cultural control over men ascribing to the inclusive, pro-gay form of masculinity (McCormack, 2010). Therefore, neither one of these forms of masculinity holds a hegemonic position.

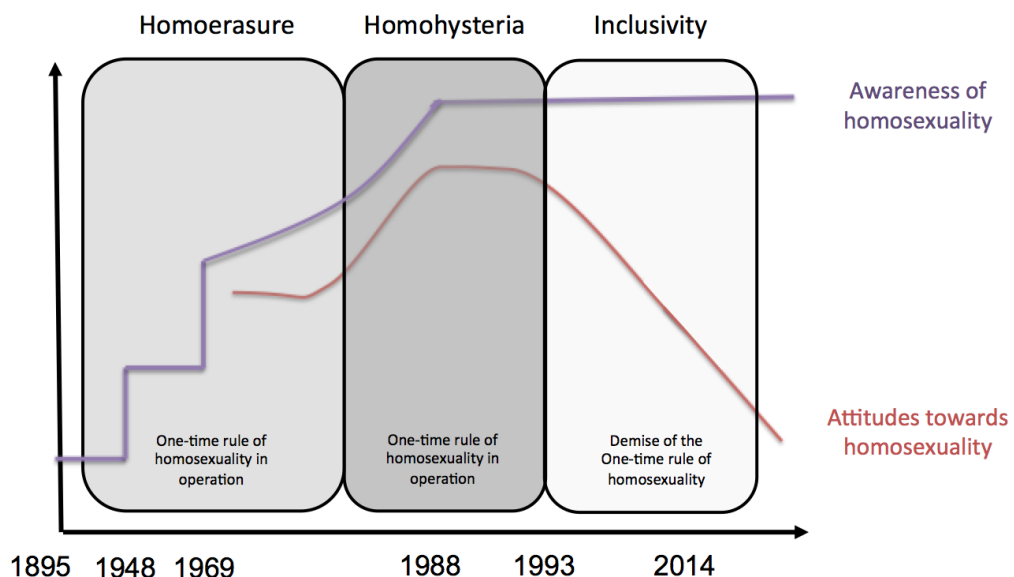
Finally, Anderson (2009) argues that homophobia cannot exist in a culture that is not homophobic. In contemporary Western culture, for example, and particularly for iGeneration males, a large body of research has shown that homophobia has dramatically decreased in Western cultures (Anderson, 2009, 2012a, 2013b; Clements and Field, 2014; Keleher and Smith, 2012; Loftus, 2001). Consequently, the gendered behaviours of boys and men are likely to be radically different, as a result of boys who no longer fear being culturally homosexualised (McCormack, 2012a). This is something that Anderson (2011c) describes as inclusivity.

Evidencing the Western shift into inclusivity he uses sport team initiation rituals in the United Kingdom, where he monitors behaviours over a seven year period (Anderson, McCormack and Lee, 2012). During this time, same-sex hazing activities were phased out in line with the decrease in cultural homophobia. Earlier in the study, male athletes were forced to kiss one another as a form of doing something stigmatised to prove their worth, loyalty, and desire to be on the team. But, by the end of the study, team members willingly engaged in same-sex kissing, not as a form of hazing, but as a mode of homosocial bonding and support (see also Anderson, 2014). The collective body of research into the relationship between masculinity and homophobia leads Anderson to suggest that Britain has moved from a disposition of homoeroticism, homophobia, and then into inclusivity (Anderson and McCormack, forthcoming). Using social attitude data (see

Anderson, 2009; Keleher and Smith, 2012; Loftus, 2001), Figure 4 provides visual representation of the conditions a culture moves through.

Despite the concept of homophobia offering a useful and historically-situated conceptualisation of homophobia, some scholars argue it has shortcomings. Negy (2014, p. 1) questions the wisdom of developing the term homophobia, asking, 'how many terms do we need to refer to prejudice toward sexual minorities?' He also critiques unnecessary application and utility of the term, as well as the lack of empirical evidence for the construct validity of homophobia – notably criticising the lack of quantitative data to support it. This is acknowledged by McCormack and Anderson (2014a), who argue this would strengthen the utility of the concept. Negy (2014, p. 1) also critiques the pervasive conjecturing by those who employ the concept, particularly with regard to, 'making casual statements based on either theorizing or correlational data'. Finally, Negy (2014) also argues that homophobia has limited applicability, as it currently omits the role of women (see also Worthen, 2014), lesbians, bisexuals (see Morris, McCormack and Anderson, 2014), and transgendered individuals from its theorising.

**Figure 4: The Shift from Homoerasure to Inclusivity**



Anderson and McCormack, forthcoming, p. 75

Nevertheless, homophobia remains a useful concept as it conceptualises greater social phenomena that other concepts, such as homophobia (see Chapter 2), heterosexism, and heteronormativity fail to incorporate. Most importantly, it historically-situates the study of masculinity (Anderson, 2009).

### **From Hegemonic to Inclusive Masculinity**

In a culture of inclusivity, hegemonic masculinity theory no longer maintains its heuristic utility as no esteemed form of masculinity exists, greatly diverging from Connell's (1987, 1995) masculinity hierarchy. However, Anderson (2009) does not outright reject the hegemonic model: rather, he maintains that it remains heuristically accurate in explaining the stratification of men during periods of high homophobia. Here, homophobia is employed to marginalise men and boys who stray from the strictures of heteromascularity. Furthermore, boys and men promote exaggerated forms of hypermasculinity in order to avoid being thought of as gay (Burstyn, 1999). As the level of homophobia declines, the mandates of the hegemonic form of masculinity hold less cultural sway.

It is clear in contemporary research that hegemonic masculinity is, 'unable to capture the complexity of what occurs as cultural homophobia diminishes' (Anderson, 2009, p. 7). Anderson originally cited Connell's scholarship in his research, but found her work incapable of explaining the reduction of homophobia, inclusivity of sexual minorities and the changing nature of homophobic discourse found among (particularly young) males today. Inclusive masculinity therefore emerges as a more adaptable heuristic tool in explaining the stratification of men which moves from a vertical one (in Connell's model) to a horizontal (inclusive) one as homophobia and homophobia decrease (Anderson, 2005b, 2011a, 2011d, 2012a). This has been found in both Anderson's and other scholars' utility of the theory (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2009, 2011a, 2011b; Cashmore and Cleland, 2012; Channon and Matthews, 2014; Cleland, 2013a, 2014; Cleland, Magrath and Kian, under review; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; Magrath, under construction; McCormack, 2012a, 2014; Michael, 2013).

Antecedents of Anderson's theory emerged in (2005b) where he examined the rise of a softer, more gay-friendly masculinity to rival the

hegemonic form in American cheerleading. Since Anderson published his theory, much of his (and that of others') research in a variety of sporting settings show masculinities in varying subcultures, 'flourishing without hierarchy or hegemony' (Anderson, 2011b, p. 253). Here, inclusive masculinity supersedes hegemonic masculinity, as Connell's (1987, 1995) work fails to provide an accurate framework which explains diminishing homophobia.

Inclusive masculinity theory also argues that when a culture becomes less homohysteric, there will be a positive impact on young men's gendered expression (Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2012a). The restrictive nature of hegemonic masculinity, such as physical domination and discursive marginalisation (Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), has reduced impact in an inclusive setting. Thus, as homophobia declines, heterosexual men may engage in more tactile and intimate ways – once considered deviant – without the threat of homophobic policing (Anderson, 2009; Pollack, 1998).

It is not only inclusion of openly gay men (and behaviour once associated with homosexuality) which represents inclusive masculinity – the role of women is also something which Anderson (2009) documents. He argues that inclusive forms of masculinity should also have a positive effect on women, something attributed to the increased value of femininity among young men contemporarily. This has been demonstrated in mixed-sex sport teams where sex-segregation is challenged, and men play and work alongside women (Anderson, 2008a). Women also benefit from inclusive masculinity's tenets, in that sexism, femphobic discourse and sexual harassment – key signifiers of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995) – have been shown to be either absent or heavily stigmatised in many settings (Anderson, 2008a; Anderson and McGuire, 2010; McCormack, 2012b).

Although inclusive masculinity is a theory which has conceptualised a number of behaviours predominantly among young men, it does not offer a check-list of cultural attributes which define a culture of inclusivity (Anderson, 2014). Its main tenet is that as homophobia decreases, there will likely be greater prevalence of various practices between men, as outlined by Anderson (forthcoming):

- Same-sex emotional intimacy – described by Anderson (2014) as 'bromances' (see Chapter 5);

- An expansion of acceptable gendered behaviours (men today can sit with their legs crossed);
- Same-sex physical intimacy, such as kissing and cuddling (Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2012a; McCormack and Anderson, 2014a);
- An expansion of desirable male bodies – today, thin and muscular boys are sexualised, standing in stark contrast to the Rambo-Schwarzenegger culturally elevated eras of yesteryear (Anderson, 2009);
- An expansion of gender-acceptable fashion (Coad, 2005), music, sport, gaming, and mass entertainment;
- *Reduced likelihood* of fights and violence – both in sport (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010) and outside of sport (Anderson, 2011b);
- Homophobic intent is removed from homophobic/gay/homosexualised discourse (McCormack, 2011; see also Chapter 11);
- Less sexism (see McCormack, 2012b);
- A reduction of the ‘one-time rule of homosexuality’ permitting gay sexual experiences without being culturally homosexualised (see Anderson, 2009).

While these tenets are not exhaustive, and minor modifications and adaptations have been made, it offers a comprehensive overview of typical behaviours associated with young men. Similar, although perhaps more restrictive behaviours have also been found among older men (see Cashmore and Cleland, 2012; Cavalier, 2011; Dashper, 2012; Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik, 2012).

### **Evidencing Inclusive Masculinity Theory**

Since the late 1980s, when cultural homophobia hit an apex in Western cultures (Anderson, 2009), attitudes towards homosexuality have radically improved. This has been documented in qualitative (Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2012a; Pascoe, 2005) and quantitative studies (Keleher and Smith, 2012; Laumann *et al.*, 1994; Loftus, 2001; Widmer, Treas and Newcomb, 1998; Ohlander, Batalova and Treas, 2005; Yang, 1997). Anderson (2009) uses data from Anglo-American social attitude surveys to highlight this. These are deemed as the most reliable indicators by which to measure cultural attitudes towards homosexuality.

Whilst attitudes towards homosexuality have been consistently better in Britain than America, similar trends emerge in both these nations. In 1987, the

British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS) reported that 63.6% of the population believed homosexuality was 'always wrong', compared to 77.4% in the equivalent survey in the United States. In 2006, however, this figure had dropped to 23.7% in Britain and 49% in the United States. In the 2013 British Social Attitudes Survey, only 22% claimed that homosexuality was 'always wrong' (Clements and Field, 2014). Similarly, in 2003, an American Gallup Poll reported that 88% of respondents should have equal employment opportunity, a 57% increase from 1977 (Hicks and Lee, 2006).

It is significant to note that these social attitude surveys do not account for cohort effect: Keleher and Smith (2012) statistically document that the younger generation are more inclusive towards sexual minorities (see also Mehren, 2004).

### ***Support for Same-Sex Marriage***

At the centre of this culture of inclusivity towards homosexuality in Anglo-American cultures is the hotly contested debate of same-sex marriage (Hooghe and Meeusen, 2013; Moskovitz, Rieger and Roloff, 2010; Pettinicchio, 2012; Sherkat *et al.*, 2011). In Britain, the Civil Partnership Act was passed in 2004, permitting same-sex couples legal equality with heterosexuals. This was upgraded in 2013, when the Conservative-led government passed legislation for equal marriage rights, with the first same-sex weddings taking place on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014. In America, although George W. Bush's re-election campaign in 2004 promised a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage (Anderson, 2014), legislation supporting same-sex marriage has emerged. President Barack Obama has been one of an increasing number of public figures supporting same-sex marriage (Kian *et al.*, 2013; Nylund, 2014). In 2003, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the 13 states with remaining sodomy laws were no longer permitted to enforce them. Ten years on it was determined that the Defence of Marriage Act prohibiting same-sex marriage was unconstitutional (Anderson, 2014). Many other Western countries have also legally adopted same-sex marriage in recent years with little political debate (Eeckhout and Paternotte, 2011).

Cultural attitudes of same-sex marriage are also shown to be improving. In America, broadcaster American Broadcast Company's (ABC) survey shows that

support for same-sex marriage rose from 47% in 2010 to 58% in 2013. Significantly, 81% of adults below the age of 30 supported gay marriage, in comparison to 44% of seniors (cited in Anderson, 2014). This acceptance is also reflected in academic research: Baunach (2011, 2012) shows a substantial decrease in objections to same-sex marriage between 1988 and 2010, perhaps unsurprisingly given the decrease of cultural homophobia (Anderson, 2009). Likewise, Clements and Field (2014) show that opposition to same-sex marriage in the United Kingdom significantly decreased between 1993 and 2012.

Hooghe and Meeusen's (2013) analysis of a number of European states shows that the introduction of same-sex marriage has continued to aid the process of declining cultural homophobia. They conclude that, 'recognition of same-sex marriage is to be understood not just as a consequence of this societal process but also as a part of it' (2013, p. 9). Moskowitz, Rieger and Roloff (2010) also show increased acceptance, yet argue that heterosexual men judge same-sex sex more negatively than women. In their longitudinal research, Wright and Randall (2013) show how increasing consumption of pornography condition American men to be more liberal towards sexual diversity and same-sex marriage.

Opposition to same-sex marriage – and indeed general anti-gay feelings – has been predominantly attributed to people of strong religious faith (Loftus, 2001), notably evangelical Christians (Keleher and Smith, 2012). Those who identify as Christian – regardless of denomination – have been shown to be less tolerant than people who identify as alternative religions (Anderson and Fetner, 2008; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008). This is particularly the case with Protestants, found to be the least tolerant group towards gays and lesbians. Although no data was available on attitudes towards same-sex marriage, Keleher and Smith (2012) found that all religious groups have become more tolerant towards homosexuality. The evidence for increasing acceptance of same-sex marriage supports the main principle of inclusive masculinity theory – that of improved cultural attitudes towards homosexuality (Anderson, 2009).

### **Evaluating Inclusive Masculinity Theory**

As homophobia continues to decrease in Anglo-American cultures, inclusive masculinity theory has recently burgeoned into a social theory which offers a tool for conceptualising contemporary masculinities in the West



(Anderson, 2009). Indeed, a new generation of masculinities scholars are finding that hegemonic masculinity fails to capture the intra-masculine dynamics of men (Anderson, 2012a). McCormack and Anderson (under review) highlight four factors to evidence that inclusive masculinity theory supersedes hegemonic masculinity theory: (1) The organisation of masculinities in cultures of low homophobia; (2) Avoiding implicating masculine organisations with grand narratives of patriarchy; (3) Presenting itself in a conceptually accessible manner; and (4) Differentiating between hegemony as a social process and archetypal form of masculinity.

Accordingly, McCormack and Anderson (under review) argue that masculinity studies are undergoing a paradigmatic shift. Evidencing this, they draw upon the work of Stacey and Thorne (1985, p. 302), who argue that a paradigmatic shift occurs when two factors are adhered to: '1) the transformation of existing conceptual frameworks; and 2) the acceptance of those transformations by others in the field'. McCormack and Anderson (under review) argue that the first of these criteria has been met, with the prevalence of inclusive masculinity theory, and that the second will occur following more widespread utility of inclusive masculinity.

So far, a number of scholars have contributed to the second of these factors, in so much as applying and adapting Anderson's theory – though its take up has been predominantly limited to sport (Adams, 2011a; Cashmore and Cleland, 2012; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; Magrath, under construction; Michael, 2013) and education (McCormack, 2012a, 2012b).

Further, inclusive masculinity theory has so far failed to provide a holistic understanding of how the changing dynamics of men impact differently on different social groups of men (McCormack and Anderson, under review). The majority of research focuses on young, middle-class white men – particularly those with (or working towards) a university education (Adams, 2011a; Anderson, 2011a, 2011b, 2014; McCormack and Anderson, 2010). Although there is a limited (but growing) body of research documenting the contemporary masculinities of older men (Cashmore and Cleland, 2011, 2012; Cavalier, 2011; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013), men of colour (Southall *et al.*, 2011), and working-class men (McCormack, 2014a; Roberts, 2013), decreasing homophobia is an uneven social process (Anderson, 2009).

Decreasing homophobia can vary by race, class and geography, in addition to other variables (see Froyum, 2007; Hicks and Lee, 2006; Pompper, 2010). Collier *et al.* (2013), for example, argue that religiosity, gender and ethnicity represent the most significant demographics with regard to attitudinal homophobia. Additionally, in a number of Islamic countries homosexuality remains punishable by death (Frank, Camp and Boucher, 2010). Likewise, homophobia continues to rise in a number of other non-Western states such as Russia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and many other Middle Eastern, Eastern European, and African countries with those guilty facing draconian laws and unabated violence (Anderson, 2014).

Although recent quantitative research has highlighted how changes are not restricted to white, middle-class university-educated men (Keleher and Smith, 2012), this has not prevented some scholars from accusing Anderson for his 'optimistic analysis' of contemporary masculinities (Vaccaro, 2011, p. 125). Whilst acknowledging the undoubted decrease of cultural homophobia, Cleland (2013b, p. 383) queries Anderson's, 'generalised statements about men and homosexuality in a broad sense that, at this stage, cannot be fully known'. Cleland (2013b) continues, perhaps not unreasonably, to question the limited sample employed by Anderson, questioning how homosexuality influences those from outside his empirical base. Despite these critiques, no empirical research exists which disproves or challenges inclusive masculinity theory – criticisms currently exist merely in observational form.

Another factor important to consider when discussing inclusive masculinity theory is that it only offers an alternative social theory for the social stratification of masculinities – contrasting from hegemonic masculinity. Accordingly, McCormack and Anderson (under review) write that inclusive masculinity theory does not attempt to definitively link the valuing of any one (multiple) masculinity type/s as a necessity for the operation of patriarchy. Within a culture of inclusivity, this does not necessarily mean that patriarchy will completely subside, though it is likely sexism will decrease (see Anderson and McGuire, 2010; McCormack, 2012b), and the value of femininity is likely to impact on attitudes towards women.

Although inclusive masculinity theory has come under some criticism, however, it is significant to note that critiques predominantly focus on alleged

methodological shortcomings. In contrast to hegemonic masculinity – which has been critiqued for its lack of heuristic accuracy – these are insignificant, as a growing body of research continues to highlight diminishing cultural homophobia (Keleher and Smith, 2012), and how this has had a positive effect on the gendered expressions of iGeneration males (McCormack, 2012a; Anderson, 2014).

## Chapter 7: Methodology and Procedure

Over the last few decades the academic discipline known as ‘sports studies’ has evolved into what Silk, Andrews and Mason (2005, p. 1) describe as an, ‘eclectic mix of research ideologies and viewpoints that seek to critically investigate the role, effect and position of sport within broader society’. Exemplifying this, Williams, Hopkins and Long (2001) highlight the ‘astonishing growth’ of academic research interest in professional football alone over the past 25 years. This research at all levels of sport, and specific to this thesis, the game of football, extends over several areas and themes (Roderick, 2006a).

The majority of these critical analyses of football have been concerned with issues of violence and hooliganism (see Armstrong, 1998; Armstrong and Giulianotti, 2001; Bairner, 2006; Dunning, Murphy and Williams, 1988; Murphy, Williams and Dunning, 1990) and racism (see Back, Crabbe and Solomos, 2001; Burdsey, 2006; Garland and Rowe, 1999; Orakwue, 1998). Homophobia has been traditionally excluded from these academic discourses, particularly in football (Caudwell, 2011). Instead, the presence of homophobia in football has merely been assumed by both members of the media (see Jones, 2014) as well as academics (see Caudwell, 2011; Hughson and Free, 2011), with little empirical basis to support these claims. This was a view reinforced by older research on homophobia in other men’s team sports which found an unwelcoming and hostile environment for sexual minorities (Clarke, 1998; Hekma, 1998; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel, Toma and Morpew, 2001).

Since the turn of the Millennium, though, an increasing body of research focusing on gender, sexuality and sport documents the contemporary shift in the acceptance of openly gay athletes (Anderson, 2002, 2011a). This research has predominantly been undertaken with amateur or university-based sports teams in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2005a, 2005b, 2008b, 2008c, 2011a, 2011b, 2012c; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; Jones and McCarthy, 2010).

Whilst these findings have suggested an increasing inclusivity among contemporary male youth from Anglo-American culture, there remains a dearth of research emerging from professional football clubs, particularly within academies. Supporting this, Roderick (2006a, p. 4) writes that, ‘it is hard to think of a professional sporting practice that has been so...little researched by social

scientists'. The current investigation therefore offers data from a unique setting and original insight into the attitudes of who are on the verge of achieving professional status in the United Kingdom. The research examines the construction of masculinities among male footballers aged between 16 and 21 from the academies of two Premier League football clubs and one university-based football team. Specific attention is paid to attitudes towards sexual minorities, the utility of homosexually-themed language, and the nature of homosocial friendships between these men.

In this chapter, I outline the development of the research design used to ensure these outcomes were achieved. The significance of this research is also discussed, including how I ensured the research remained rigorous, and how ethical considerations were maintained. It concludes with some of the limitations of the research.

### **The Nature of Researching Football**

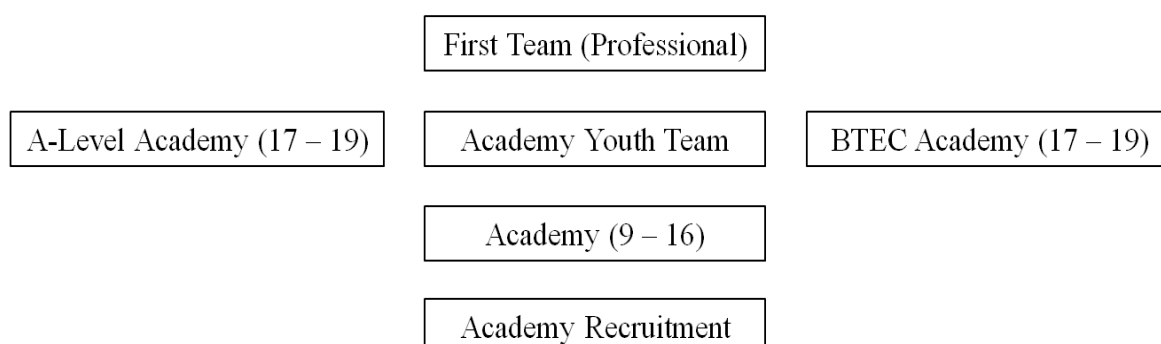
In the United Kingdom, football is entrenched into the sporting hierarchy as the most popular and recognisable sport (Goldblatt, 2014; Harris, 2009; Roderick, 2006a). In order to achieve footballing success, extra emphasis is placed on England's elite clubs to develop the next generation of professional footballers. In 1997, the Football Association published the 'Charter for Equality', the development strategy to professionalise youth football in England (Weedon, 2012). This included the development of, 'world class facilities, staff and training programmes to talented footballers aged between eight and 18 years' (Weedon, 2012, p. 200). This also included the expansion of scouting programmes for Premier League football clubs, scouting talented young footballers worldwide. Consequently, Premier League football club academies are not merely restricted to domestic talent; they also host a high number of foreign players (Elliott and Weedon, 2010).

Whilst players aged between eight and 15 continued to attend training on numerous occasions throughout the week, significant alterations were made to the training offered to players post-16. Following the completion of compulsory mainstream education, players aged between 16 and 18 were introduced to football-specific and academic training components (Weedon, 2012). Supporting the overall process, the Premier League initiated the Elite Player Performance

Plan (EPPP) in 2012. Although the primary aim of this strategy was to create a training environment which aims to produce players for the professional game (Premier League Elite Performance Plan, 2011), an important element includes players studying for a mandatory ‘BTEC’ qualification – the level dependent on GCSE results at 16.

Following completion of this qualification, along with their footballing capabilities, the academy coaches decide whether these players are offered a professional contract, allowing the player potential to compete for the club’s ‘First Team’. The typical structure of a professional football club’s academy is graphically represented in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: The Structure of English Football Academies**



Realistically, only a small number of these boys will matriculate to this level of play. This therefore creates a unique setting for these boys; one which Anderson (2005a) terms as a ‘near-total institution’, where boys train together, live together, travel together, and socialise together. Weedon (2012, p. 207) appropriately describes the academy as an ‘insular host culture’, and Manley, Palmer and Roderick (2012, p. 207) write that, ‘Academies are ‘closed’ environments and contain a very specific population’. Keen to protect future stars from outside influence, academy staff are extremely protective of their players.

Accordingly, issues of access have traditionally made it difficult to infiltrate the closed culture of association football (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010). Research on academy football has predominantly been

restricted to sports science-based projects: sociological research emerging from this setting is limited. Highlighting this, relatively few sociological studies have emerged from professional football clubs (see Cushion and Jones, 2006; Davies, 1996; Parker, 1996a; Roderick, 2006a; Waddington, Roderick and Parker, 1999 for notable exceptions).

The nature of this research also contributes to the difficulty in securing access to professional football clubs to collect data. The unwillingness of clubs perhaps exists due to the frequent perception of sexuality as a sensitive issue (Lee, 1993), controversial among many (McCormack, 2013). The historical stigma attached to homosexuality has traditionally created problems locating people willing to discuss the topic (Gamson, 2000). Because of this, Weston (1998, p. 190) documents how her mentors claimed she was committing 'academic suicide' for deciding to study gays and lesbians. Further, Irvine (2014) presents evidence of how sexuality research has been interpreted by many as 'dirty work'.

Locating professional football clubs to undertake this research was, therefore, a challenging process. The way that the professional clubs included in this research were approached is outlined later in this chapter, but it is important to note the difficulty in locating willing football clubs. A number of academy managers were contacted enquiring the possibility of granting access for research to be undertaken, with the vast majority failing to respond to preliminary enquiry emails. In personal correspondence with Head of Education and Welfare at one particular academy, he refused access to the club's academy players on the basis that he 'felt slightly uneasy about the proposed research project,' despite assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Thus, the three football clubs selected may not represent the attitudes of every academy football club.

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were also prioritised by the clubs who granted access to interview their players. For example, each club stressed the 'powerful' nature of the research area, understandably seeking to protect their players from any untoward exposure of the club which could emerge from the research.

### **Participants and Settings**

Previous research examining the homosocial behaviours and attitudes towards sexual minorities among athletes have overwhelmingly employed

qualitative methodologies (see Adams, 2011a, 2011b; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2002, 2005a, 2011a, 2011b; Dashper, 2012; McCormack and Anderson, 2010b, 2014b; Parker, 1996b; see also Zipp, 2011). Consistent with this, data for this research was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2000) with footballers from three football clubs. Academy 1 and University FC are both located in the same major English city, whilst Academy 2 is located in another major English city approximately 70 miles away. Data collection occurred between November 2012 and April 2014, and access to each football club varied. More information about this in addition to the demographics of each football club is now outlined in more detail.

### Academy 1 FC

Academy 1 represents a homogenous group of 22 male academy-level footballers from a Premier League football club (from a major English city) of high repute. This academy has been credited with developing and producing high quality footballers, some of whom have progressed to international football later in their careers. Many of the athletes have played for this club, and in some cases have transferred from other clubs, from a very young age. After every season, all players undergo a rigorous selection process, with numerous players 'let go' if they are deemed 'not good enough'.

Access to interview these players was granted after approaching the Academy Education Manager. I outlined to him that I was interested in comments made by high-profile figures in the men's game – such as England Under-21 manager Gareth Southgate and Manchester United goalkeeper Anders Lindegaard – about the likelihood of inclusion an openly gay footballer may receive. In order to address this, I explained that I wanted to understand attitudes of young footballers to explore these claims.

After gaining approval, Academy 1 informed me when a limited amount of time became available for research to be undertaken with the players. I would typically be invited into the academy to undertake research the day before time became available, creating a haphazard approach to research. Over a four-month period (between November 2012 and February 2013), and alongside my lead supervisor and another senior academic colleague, all the players were interviewed.



At the time of data collection, all participants were aged between 16 and 18 (although few were 16), and currently play in the National Under-18 Premier League, the top level of football which young men of this age can compete (Weedon, 2012). Since data was collected, five of these athletes began playing for Academy 1's 'First Team' in the English Premier League.

Eighteen of these players were white and four black. Using Likert scales, players were asked to declare their sexual orientation and strength of religious belief. All identified as exclusively heterosexual during interviews, and there was an even balance between religious and non-religious players. Players identified as lower to upper-working class, with parental occupation sought to confirm this.

#### Academy 2 FC

As another Premier League academy football club, Academy 2 is an extremely similar group of players to Academy 1. Although based in a more multicultural city than Academy 1, this group also represents a homogenous group of 18 male academy-level footballers from another Premier League football club. A small number of these footballers have played for this club from a young age, although a large number of players interviewed had recently transferred from other clubs. These players undergo the same rigorous selection process detailed previously.

Access to these footballers was granted after contact was made with the Academy Operations Manager. I outlined to him that I had recently undertaken similar research at another Premier League club's academy, and that I wanted to investigate whether these findings were consistent with other young academy footballers. An initial meeting was arranged with the Academy Operations Manager and the Academy Core Programme Co-Ordinator, both of whom were supportive and co-operative with the aims of the research, and thus keen to have their club involved. Preliminary dates were arranged for me to attend the club and collect data, though I was cautioned that these could change subject to the club's playing schedule.

Following this approval, data collection occurred between March and April 2014. At the time of data collection, participants were aged between 16 and 20, with the majority of players competing in the National Under-18 Premier League, and a small number in the Under-21 Premier League. When data was

being collected, two of these athletes had already been 'loaned'<sup>5</sup> to clubs playing in the Football League, while two had played on loan at other European clubs. Three had also represented their country at Under-21 level. Since data was collected, two of these players began playing for Academy 2's 'First Team' in the English Premier League.

Of the 18 players interviewed, eleven were white (albeit a mix of White British, White Irish, and White European), five black, and two mixed race. All identified as exclusively heterosexual on a sexuality continuum (see Savin-Williams and Vrangalova, 2013; Sell, 2007). A Likert scale was employed to measure the strength of religious belief; with 11 identifying as fundamentally religious, and seven as non-religious. Again, parental occupation was sought to clarify players' social class.

#### University FC

University FC is situated in the same city as Academy 1, and concerns 20 male athletes who compete for the football team of a widening participation university<sup>6</sup>. While players of this football team can typically only play for this team for three years (the normal time it takes to complete an undergraduate degree in the United Kingdom), some had previously had played for academies of football clubs who compete in the Premier League and the Football League. A small number had also played for the 'First Teams' of clubs in the Football Conference, in addition to a small number who had progressed through academy systems similar to Academy 1 and Academy 2.

Although there is not a stringent selection process, competition to be a member of the team is fiercely competitive: the university recruits over a 1,000 sports students each year. Accordingly, up to 40 players are registered at any one time – although only approximately 23 play for the 'First Team' on a regular basis.

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<sup>5</sup> In football, being 'on loan' refers to players being allowed to temporarily play for another club. It is particularly common for academy-level footballers to be loaned to lower-league football clubs in order to aid their footballing development.

<sup>6</sup> While those who attend university have traditionally hailed from wealthier backgrounds, the expansion of higher education in England at the turn of Millennium has resulted in an increase of students from less traditional backgrounds (e.g. lower socio-economic status) attending university (Osborne, 2003).

Access was granted to these footballers due to my close relationship with the university in question, as well as the team's manager. Following an initial conversation in an informal setting, a formal meeting was then arranged where he explained that he frequently receives requests from students to undertake research with his football team. Due to the unique nature of the research I proposed, he agreed to allow me access to interview the players on his team. I also spoke informally with the team captain, who was very supportive of the research. I was welcomed to attend to as many training sessions and social meetings as I wanted, but warned that it was my responsibility to arrange interviews with players. Thus, the onus was placed on me as the researcher to collect data. Thus, I attended numerous training sessions and undertook interviews between November 2013 and March 2014.

At the time, all participants were aged between 18 and 21, and compete at Step 10 of the English Football Pyramid against 'open-age' teams. Of these 20 players, 14 were white (all but two were White British), and six black (a mixture of Black British and Black African). All but one of these men identified as exclusively heterosexual; the exception identified as mostly heterosexual. Three players identified as fundamentally religious, while 17 were non-religious. The vast majority of these men were from a lower to upper-working class background, confirming the university's position in the top cohort for performance in widening participation.

### *Summary*

Football was of utmost importance to each of the men interviewed for this research. Two of these groups are attempting to develop a career in the professional game and, failing that, are able to use the qualifications gained within the academy setting to potentially establish an alternative method of employment within the game. Similarly, although the members of University FC are unlikely to matriculate to the professional level of football, the degree qualifications they are in the process of achieving enhances their opportunity for employment in professional sport upon completion.

It is also important to note that the vast majority of the players interviewed for this research identified as lower to upper working-class. Accordingly, this research differs from contemporary research focusing on

attitudes towards homosexuality and masculinity which has been undertaken with middle-class participants (see Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2011b). Therefore, this research contributes to a growing body of work on working-class men and their inclusion of homosexuality in the United Kingdom (McCormack, 2014b; Roberts, 2013). More detailed demographic information is provided in Appendix 1.

## **Procedures**

Prior to commencing work on this research project, I had had some limited experience of interviewing human subjects for academic purposes. Having further undergoing formal academic training in research methods, I deemed it necessary to shadow my lead supervisor during the preliminary stages of the research process. This permitted the observation of insightful interview practices which allowed a rich set of data to emerge during dialogue with informants.

As previously outlined, however, professional football is a unique social setting; one which is notoriously difficult to gain access to (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010). It was therefore difficult to account for the experience of being within this environment. Upon being granted access, each of the football clubs was extremely welcoming, and all were supportive of my quest to interview as many players as possible. Staff did highlight that the players' training and match schedule understandably took precedence over any data I sought to collect.

Evidencing this, prior to my second visit to Academy 2, I was contacted by the academy operations manager and informed that many of the players would be unavailable because of a rearranged FA Cup match. Accordingly, although he urged me to still visit the club, many of the players interviewed on this day were either injured or not selected. I was fortunate, however, that this was an isolated incident: no other clashes occurred whilst I was collecting data with the three football clubs.

Within each club, the academy manager requested that I introduced myself to the players and some brief information about my research. Here, I explained how I was seeking to understand the way which contemporary footballers socialise and build friendships with one another. I was keen to avoid presenting too much information about the nature of the questions which would

arise during interview with the intention of minimising the risk of the *social desirability effect* (also known as *social desirability bias*). This is defined by Marvasti (2004, p. 19) as the, 'presumed tendency among respondents to distort their 'true' feelings by answering questions in a socially acceptable manner'. Fisher (1993) argues that this is a basic human tendency; the aim of presenting 'oneself in the best possible light can significantly distort the information gained' (p. 303).

I also informed the players that they could opt out of this research if they desired; though a small number of players from University FC were difficult to contact, nobody from each of the teams refused participation. At this point they were also provided with a research brief detailing an overview of the research, as well as my name and contact details should they wish to contact me about anything related to the research (none did).

Because of the nature of professional football club academies as near-total institutions – a closed social setting where players operate under strict confines (Anderson, 2005a) – I, as the researcher, was occasionally left with long periods of time with little to do but observe the players training. This afforded a very brief opportunity to observe the players and coaches in their professional capacity. I was also able to informally chat with the players not involved in training, and with all the players during their lunch break. This afforded the opportunity for me to build rapport with the participants in their natural setting.

### ***Establishing Rapport***

According to Holloway (1997, p. 136), 'the researcher is the main tool in qualitative research', with numerous scholars documenting the impact a researcher can have during the research process (Davies, 1999). Therefore, developing rapport with research participants is a necessary and important component of research involving human subjects (Marvasti, 2004). Notably, establishing strong rapport is one of the strongest methods of ensuring that all data collected is effective (Duncombe and Jessop, 2012; Janesick, 2000; King and Horrocks, 2010). Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2007, p. 331) comment that:

Qualitative researchers must initiate a rapport-building process from their first encounter with a participant in order to build a research relationship that will allow the researcher access to that person's story.

Seidman (2006), however, warns that levels of rapport must be controlled, as too much or too little rapport can potentially distort what information participants disclose.

In this setting, rapport was created through what Cushion and Jones (2006) term as 'shop talk' – a mixture of formal and informal discussions about football. This was not my first experience of an academy football club: my previous experiences of working in football have led me to replicable settings on previous occasions. This enabled me to present a calm and relaxed demeanour. My keen interest, knowledge and experience of the game, coupled with my relatively young age (early-20s during the time of data collection), allowed the flow of discussions on topical issues in the game – such as goal-line technology, a topic of lengthy dialogue in football which was adopted by the Premier League for the first time in the 2013-14 season. Similarly, discussions occurred around other events which had recently occurred: several debates arose concerning controversial high-profile refereeing decisions from elite matches. I contributed to these conversations with my experiences as a regular attendee of football matches, and my insight as a non-active referee (see Chapter 1), permitting players to consider these incidents from an alternative perspective. One particular exchange focused on a recent graduate from Academy 1 who had already played for the First Team at the age of 18. The informant and I were able to bond through discussions about his impressive recent performances and call-up to the England National Team.

Occasionally, conversations deviated from football and on to music, where I shared similar tastes to some of the players. As McCormack (2010, p. 79) acknowledges, 'these similarities enabled me to join in the informal discussions that pervade daily life'. After initially introducing my research to the players upon first arriving in the field, many of the players enquired for more information. In response, I briefly explained the research topic in a little more detail.

Though my heterosexuality was not overtly stated to players, the operation of a heterosexist culture dictated that I was likely understood as such. This was then confirmed to players early in the research process as, during an informal group discussion, I was asked if I was gay – to which I openly responded that I was not. I then found myself in a similar situation to that described by Adams (2011a) in his ethnographic research with a university football team. Here,

he contemplated whether to remain true to his own style of masculinity; one he categorised as inclusive (including acceptance of sexual minorities and physical and emotional tactility). In my limited time with the players, I also decided to remain true with my own style of masculinity (one similar to that adopted by Adams). Whilst this may have positively influenced participants' views of homosexuality and homosociality, the maintenance of anonymity and confidentiality was reiterated on several occasions.

Nevertheless, my outline of these aspects again instigated enthusiastic discussion from the players, allowing for points of discussion in interviews which had not previously been considered. This also led to interest in my position as a sports lecturer, and players enquired into my experiences of working in sport and in a university.

Though my time socialising with players was brief, it undoubtedly had a positive effect on the research. After our informal interactions, some of the players made encouraging comments such as, 'Anything I can help with' and 'I'll try and make sure [player name] talks to you; he'll have a lot to say'. Some also said they would be interested in the findings of the research. However, the most illuminating data was collected during the primary method of data collection – one-to-one, semi-structured interviews with the footballers.

### ***Methods of Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews***

Social research utilises a number of methodological techniques, aiding the exploration of a number of social and political issues (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Methods of qualitative research are many and widely shared across many disciplines (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Interviews represent one of the oldest forms of soliciting information (Platt, 2012). The prevalence of interviews as a mode of communication in contemporary society led Atkinson and Silverman (1997) to propose that we live in an 'interview society'. Here, interviews are central to making sense of life in the, 'public construction of the self' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 15).

In social research, interviews provide the most in-depth opportunity for participants to express themselves and their feelings, and are the most effective way to understand fellow human beings and their experiences (Fontana and Frey, 2000). This method has the purpose of producing knowledge: on occasion, they

can even act as a therapeutic process for instigating change in people's lives (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). They also allow people to describe and articulate explanations for certain actions and attitudes (Kvale, 1996). Accordingly, the interview is the most widely employed method within qualitative research (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Bryman, 2012; Marvasti, 2004).

Simply described, interviews refer to a conversation with a structure and purpose (Holloway, 1997; Kvale, 1996; Marvasti, 2004; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Such a simplification, however, obscures the complex and arduous process of research interviews. Accordingly, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 5) write that the qualitative interview goes beyond the 'spontaneous exchange of views in everyday conversations and in-depth interviews', with Yeo *et al.* (2014, p. 178) noting the:

Obvious differences between normal conversation and in-depth interviews...although a good in-depth interview might look like a conversation, it will not feel like one for the researcher or the participant – both are working hard.

Qualitative interviews occur in a number of formats, and can depend on how narrow or broad the interviewer's questions are (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) – different interview forms serve different purposes. Many scholars propose three main interview forms: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Amis, 2005; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Fontana and Frey, 2000; King, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990; Robson, 2002; Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Sparkes and Smith, 2014). The semi-structured approach is the most prevalent method of interviewing in qualitative research (Robson, 2002; Sparkes and Smith, 2014; Willig, 2008), allowing for flexibility and for the researcher to probe the views and opinions where it is desirable for participants to expand and elaborate on their responses (Gray, 2009; Johnson and Rowlands, 2012; Marvasti, 2004).

Accordingly, consistent with similar research which focuses on attitudes towards sexual minorities and masculinity construction in sport (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2002, 2011b; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; Michael, 2013), I employed semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection.

The use of an interview guide helped ensure consistency among all participants (Amis, 2005). In order to avoid overlooking or omitting significant topics during interview (Patton, 1990), the interview guide for this research was



developed in collaboration with my lead supervisor and another senior academic colleague. Here, we established four main themes to be covered during interviews:

- Masculinity construction (including emotional tactility);
- Coming out;
- Team relationships (including the maintenance of friendships);
- Gay-friendliness.

Highlighting the fluid and flexible nature of my approach to this research, the amount of time allotted to each question varied on the flow of conversation. Similarly, question wording was altered for some of the younger participants, who often provided little other than basic utterances in response to questions.

Across the three football teams, I conducted 60 semi-structured, topically focused in-depth interviews with the footballers. All interviews were conducted in person, and ranged between 20 and 70 minutes; they averaged 30 minutes. Each interview began with broad questions about the players' background with the aim of relaxing the participant (Patton, 1990; Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Willig, 2008). Here, I was able to build rapport with the players with my knowledge and background of football. The interview then progressed to examine each of the four sections of the interview guide. My previous contact with the players also allowed me to pick up emerging themes from their social environment. Given that all the footballers self-identified as heterosexual, hypothetical questions were posed concerning attitudes towards a teammate coming out as gay.

These questions included asking the players about how the outing of a gay teammate would affect locker room situations, homosocial banter, bed-sharing and having a gay friend as a roommate either in the club's accommodation or when travelling for matches. Participants were also asked to imagine that their best friend asked them to give a best man speech at his same-sex wedding, and about attitudes towards same-sex marriage<sup>7</sup>. They were asked hypothetical situations about what action, if anything, they would take if they saw a gay

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<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that same-sex marriage was passed in English law whilst I was collecting data for this research. Same-sex marriage was being debated in parliament at the time data collection commenced, and had been passed by the time I began collecting data at University FC. When I had begun collecting data at Academy 2, the first same-sex marriages had already taken place. A more detailed overview is provided in Chapter 8.

teammate being harassed for being gay by other teammates, coaches or opposition players, and whether this differed if the player was his best friend, or least favourite teammate. Moreover, players were asked about how they would feel if a gay teammate was sexually and romantically attracted to them, and whether they worried others might think they were gay for having a gay friend or teammate.

The significance of media training should also be noted here. The professionalism of youth football in the United Kingdom saw significant changes to the academy system, including the requirement of footballers to undergo media training (Monk and Russell, 2000), in preparation for the increased media attention a footballer receives when reaching the elite level (Roderick, 2006b). For this research, I was aware of fewer than five players who had undergone media training – those who were over the age of 18. This is significant – I argue that it strongly reduces the risk of social desirability effect, as players are not answering questions with a manufactured answer. Rather, they are revealing their own thoughts and feelings.

### **Maintaining Rigour**

All researchers have a responsibility to ensure the credibility and rigour of their research meets certain requirements (Plymire, 2005; Yin, 2014). This has typically been measured by the *reliability* and *validity* of a study, originally developed in the natural sciences (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). As such, there has been debate among many scholars regarding the relevance of these concepts in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012; Golafshani, 2003). Indeed, seeking validity and reliability in qualitative research overlooks its naturalistic and subjective nature (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Accordingly, Healy and Perry (2000) argue that the quality of a study in each paradigm should be judged by its own paradigm's own terms. While terms *validity* and *reliability* are essential criterion for judging quality in quantitative paradigms, terms such as *credibility*, *confirmability*, *consistency* and *applicability* should be the essential criteria for the judgment of quality (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Throughout this research, I exercise caution: Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) suggest that qualitative researchers strive for quality in their research by attempting to achieve by attempting to achieve reliability and validity, though

continue to recognise the complete unobtainability of these concepts. In order to remain consistent with qualitative researchers, I predominantly focus on achieving validity to assess quality (Bryman, 2012), as the following section outlines.

### ***Ensuring Validity***

Validity focuses on ‘whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are’ (Joppe, 2000, p. 1). Judging the validity of interview research, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) propose seven stages: *Thematising, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, validating, and reporting*. This is a particularly useful validation process – one employed throughout this research – as it encourages validity to be maintained throughout the research process.

Validity can be separated into two forms: *internal* and *external*. The focus of *internal validity* concerns whether ‘researchers actually observe or measure that they think they are observing or measuring’ (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p. 43), whereas *external validity* is another term for generalisability, and questions whether the findings from one study can be applied to other groups in different settings. Yin (2014) also notes the significance of *construct validity*: this represents a challenging mechanism for qualitative researchers due to its applicability – it is usually discussed by those employing a quantitative methodology (Wainer and Braun, 1998).

According to Yin (2014), internal validity is afforded the most attention in qualitative research and, as such, is a particular strength of qualitative research (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Several threats to internal validity are apparent in qualitative research (Seale, 1999; Yin, 2014). Documenting issues surrounding reliability and validity in ethnographic research, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) highlight five threats to internal validity: *history and maturation, observer effects, selection and regression, mortality and spurious conclusions*. While some of these render inappropriate for interview research, valuable issues remain apparent.

Highlighting this, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) argue that biases resulting from academic training may occur, potentially distorting data and data analysis. Furthermore, they suggest that disciplinary biases may appear during the analysis of data, something of significance here. Similarly, they warn that researchers,

‘with different theoretical backgrounds may choose to focus on quite different aspects of the data’ (1982, p. 48). As noted earlier in this chapter, my unusual academically-focused football background – and familiarity with this social context – may have resulted in such biases occurring. However, this was partially reduced by engaging in a process of inter-rater verification with my PhD advisor and one other senior masculinity scholar.

Internal validity, then, concerns the extent to which, ‘casual propositions are supported in a study of a particular setting’ (Seale, 1999, p. 38). The focus of external validity, however, concerns the extent to which the findings of a particular setting are also applicable to others. In quantitative research, this can be easier to achieve through the means of generating representative samples (Bryman, 2012). However, this is a more difficult proposition for qualitative researchers studying specific subcultures.

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) argue that the generalisability of research findings is dependent on a study’s *comparability* and *translatability*. Comparability focuses on the description of the various characteristics of the research setting and participants, and translatability as the discussion of research methods, analysis and theoretical overview so that the significance and applicability to other work can be clearly defined. According to LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p. 50), however, ‘the strictures required for statistical generalization may be difficult to apply’.

They propose four factors which may affect the credibility of the comparison of findings beyond the research setting: *selection effects*, *setting effects*, *history effects* and *construct effects*. Thus, findings cannot be generalised across institutions, as well as varying demographics, such as age, social class, race, gender and sexuality. This also extends to different countries and geographical regions, historical periods of time, and those operating within different research paradigms, theoretical disciplines or epistemological frameworks. Accordingly, I do not propose that the findings of this research extend outside of professional football club academies to other levels of football, football in other countries, or indeed other sports.

The validity of the analyses within these results has also been strengthened through the anonymous peer review process that occurred during the publication of sections of this thesis in a number of highly-ranked academic

journals – including the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* and the *British Journal of Sociology*. Similarly, sections of these results have also been presented to a select number of academic peers at a range of national and international conferences.

### **Data Analysis**

Because this research seeks to explain the way future elite-level footballers construct their masculine identities, I approach this research through an inductive framework. This refers to collecting research that, ‘is concerned with producing descriptions and explanations of particular phenomena, or with developing theories rather than testing hypotheses’ (Sparkes and Smith, 2014, p. 25). Data and subsequent categories and themes therefore emerged through a process of ongoing analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Accordingly, I employed a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to aid with the identification, analysis and reporting of emergent patterns within data as this detects the most salient patterns of context in interview (Joffe, 2012).

A thematic analysis is useful here as it permits a flexible approach to research (Bryman, 2012). It is also ontologically neutral, and, ‘is not tied to any particular discipline or set of theoretical constructs’ (Spencer *et al.*, 2014, p. 270). It also helps to highlight similarities and differences across the data set (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Accordingly, it is widely used in a number of disciplines (Joffe, 2012; Spencer *et al.*, 2014). Joffe (2012) notes how there are few published guides on how to carry out thematic analyses, though it is agreed that it consists of six stages: *familiarising with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report*.

Each set of interviews were transcribed following the completion of data collection with each football team. Remaining consistent with the six stages of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), each transcript was read a number of times in order to familiarise myself with the data. The players’ narratives were then initially coded for themes relating to attitudes towards homosexuality, support for social and civil equality, the construction and maintenance of friendships and the utility of homosexually-themed language. Codes were also generated from themes documented in research notes after each interview. Following this initial analysis, themes were then generated and reviewed.

Although these boys operate within a notoriously strong male space (Parker, 1996a), initial codes began to show how boys demonstrated similar inclusivity to boys their age documented in other research (see McCormack, 2012a, 2014b), building friendships in an inclusive manner. Later coding began to show some resistance to homosexuality, and some contestation of the legalisation of same-sex marriage. The rigour of this analysis was achieved through inter-rater reliability. This involved:

- My PhD advisor and another senior masculinity scholar, external from my institution, conducting a small number of interviews at one of the three football clubs;
- The immediate sharing of post-interview notes, where there was little, if any, inconsistency among researchers;
- My PhD advisor independently coding some of the interview transcripts from the other two football clubs.

The role of my advisor is particularly important here. Being an openly gay academic (see Anderson, 2000) perhaps affords him a stronger position to judge intellectualised forms of homophobia. Nevertheless, there was little disparity between initial coding and his interpretation of data.

Finally, I employ what Geertz (1973) terms as ‘thick descriptions’ in my results’ chapters, giving rich accounts of the details of this particular culture. This is useful twofold: firstly, it enhances the process of thematic analysis, subsequently strengthening the reliability and credibility of the results (Joffe, 2012); secondly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that providing thick descriptions provides others with what they describe as a database for making judgements regarding the transferability of findings to alternative social contexts.

### **Limitations of Research**

The results of this cannot be generalised to all Premier League academy footballers. As shown with the different samples for this research, the demographics of different Premier League academies can vary significantly – notably with varying ethnic backgrounds, nationality and strength of religious belief. Though I see no fundamental reason why young men from other Premier League academies should significantly vary in their attitudes towards gay male

athletes, is it important to note that decreasing cultural homophobia is an uneven social process (Anderson, 2009).

Secondly, the findings of this research are limited to the interviewees' speculation only. Players' accounts of how they perceive they would act towards the outing of a gay teammate are, perhaps, roadmaps towards actual behaviours, and based on a number of hypothetical discussions. Accordingly, there is no guarantee that their desired narratives would be actualised.

It is also significant to note that not all players who graduate through the academy of a Premier League football club will progress to the First Team. James (2010) shows that 65% of academy footballers contracted to Premier League or Football League Clubs are released from their respective clubs at the end of each season. While some will continue to fashion a career in professional football, this may not be in the Premier League: these players are frequently signed by lower league clubs, such as those who compete in the Football League or Football Conference, or foreign clubs. The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) even argue that half of those awarded a professional contract at 18 will not be playing at professional level by 21 (James, 2010).

Though this number is likely to improve in future years with the introduction of the 'homegrown' rule<sup>8</sup>, the sustainability of these players' at the elite level of the professional game remains questionable. The Premier League is the most cosmopolitan league in European football (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009), and represents an extremely broad demographic: hundreds of players from over 100 different countries worldwide have migrated to England to further their career in football – some from countries of high homophobia or religious conservatism. Accordingly, the number of Premier League academy graduates likely to be playing at any one time is limited.

## **Ethics**

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<sup>8</sup> Trialled in 2006, the 'homegrown' rule was introduced by UEFA in 2010 to encourage elite clubs to develop young players. This insists that Premier League managers must select at least eight players who have been trained by their club (or another club in the same country) for at least three years between the ages of 15 and 21 (Elliott and Weedon, 2010).

It is essential for researchers to ensure that their research remains ethical. Diener and Crandall (1978) document the four main areas in which ethical procedures are typically transgressed:

- *Harm to participants;*
- *Lack of informed consent;*
- *Invasions of privacy;*
- *Deception.*

Elmes, Kantowitz and Roediger (1995) support this, also adding that participants' right to withdraw and guarantee of confidentiality are also issues concerning the breach of ethical considerations. Although none of these principles were contravened in the current research, there is always a potential risk that more succinct ethical issues may arise. The central focus of sexuality for this research, for example, may have prompted a closeted player to come out to me, thus requiring the demonstration of empathetic support. Alternatively, this focus may have caused psychological harm to participants.

Accordingly, I sought and gained approval after undergoing rigorous ethical clearance through the University of Winchester, whose guidelines correspond with those published by the British Sociological Association (BSA). Throughout the research process, all ethical procedures recommended by this organisation were followed. Thus, all information collected as part of this research was treated with sensitivity, informed consent provided, and confidentiality and anonymity assured with each the coaches, managers and players of each football club. Pseudonyms have been employed in lieu of player identities (Homan, 1993).

Participants were also made aware of their right to view interview transcripts upon request (none did) and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process (none did). As previously outlined, during my first visit to each academy I outlined basic information about the research to all participants. This was confirmed during interview where players were provided with an information sheet with the investigator's contact information, the aims of the study and indication that there was no penalty for not participating in the research. Players were not influenced by the academy in any capacity that I determined, and access was secured through the educational component of their academy existence in the form of a teacher, not a coach.



During interview, I did not overtly encourage, condone or facilitate any rule-breaking that participants revealed. Notable examples include underage alcohol consumption, intentionally fouling an opponent in a match, or exceeding late-night pre-match curfews. Similarly, I did not report these behaviours to academy staff. As Adams (2011b) observes in his doctoral research, his role was to observe – not influence, condone, or condemn any of the activities players solicited. Accordingly, all interviews were conducted in private, protecting participants from authority figures potentially overhearing any information provided during interviews.

Throughout the entire research process, I complied with the Data Protection Act (1998). The suggestions by Holmes (2004) that personal information be kept off computer hard drives and ensuring that participants were not identifiable by transcripts were adhered to at all times. Finally, transcripts were destroyed after use in accordance with the Act.

## Chapter 8: Decreasing Homophobia

The overall aim of this thesis is to examine the construction of masculinities among footballers aged between 16 and 21 from two Premier League academies and a university football team. Specific attention is paid to attitudes towards homosexuality, the development and construction of friendships between players on each team, and the use of homosexually-themed language. Participants were also provided with a number of hypothetical questions concerning the effect an openly gay athlete within their team.

Older research on competitive team sport athletes has exposed high levels of homophobia, creating a hostile environment for gay and lesbians (Bryant, 2001; Clarke, 1998; Hekma, 1998; Messner, 1992; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel, Toma and Morphew, 2001), which has manifested predominantly through the utility of homophobic language (Burn, 2000) and violence (Anderson, 2002; Connell, 1995). Gay athletes were regularly treated as outsiders, marginalised by jocks attempting to prove their heteromascularity (Kimmel, 1994; Sabo and Runfola, 1980).

More recent research, however, has documented that heterosexual athletes are rapidly losing their homophobia and that gay athletes are being accepted and embraced into sport at all levels (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2005a, 2008c, 2009; 2011a; Bush, Anderson and Carr, 2012; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; Southall *et al.*, 2009; Southall *et al.*, 2011). Significantly, football is also becoming a more inclusive culture, with the number of players positively received after coming out of the closet increasing (Cleland, 2014; Cleland, Magrath and Kian, under review; Magrath and Anderson, 2015; Willis, 2014).

Within this chapter, I highlight how athletes from three football teams are also adopting inclusive attitudes towards homosexuality, including the demonstration of support for social and civil equality – specifically focusing on same-sex marriage, which played a unique role during the research process. These footballers also discussed their ease at having an openly gay teammate within their team, and also provided examples of how and when they would offer their support to a hypothetical gay player.

Sixty footballers – from three separate and unrelated teams – were interviewed for the data collection of this research. Ensuring this research

remained ethical (see Chapter 7), pseudonyms were employed for each of the three teams, and each player. For clarity:

- *Academy 1* refers to 22 participants from the academy of a Premier League football club from a major city in the South of England. The majority of these participants (20) identified as non-religious, and all were aged between 16 and 18.
- *Academy 2* refers to 18 participants from another Premier League football club's academy from a different, more multicultural, city in England. Over half of these participants (11) identified as non-religious, and all were aged between 16 and 20.
- *University FC* refers to 20 participants from the football team of a widening participation university (Osborne, 2003) from the same city as *Academy 1*. Most of these participants (17) identified as non-religious, and all were aged between 18 and 21.

It is important to reiterate that there were no openly gay players in any of these three teams: 59 identified as 'exclusively heterosexual', and one as 'mostly heterosexual' when asked to complete a sexuality continuum (see Savin-Williams and Vrangalova, 2013; Sell, 2007). Accordingly, much of the discussion with these footballers relied predominantly on their speculation of particular themes. A small number of participants also rated themselves as strongly religious, which has some significance for some of the results (see also Appendix 1).

Finally, the results chapters rely on a mixture of data from each of the football clubs; although overall, there was consistency between the interviews conducted with the footballers, some players inevitably focused on particular themes more than others. Interviews were also partially supplemented by limited accounts of participant observation.

### **Supporting Homosexuality**

Although previous research shows that being openly gay athletes in competitive team sports are often victimised and marginalised, evidence from the men on each football team spoke loudly and consistently toward support of homosexuality. It can perhaps be easier for researchers to measure homophobia than to investigate whatever might be the opposite of homophobia. Questions can be asked about why a participant may not like gays, but for the latter there

are limited probing questions. Efforts to acquire rich, descriptive data – the kind that one hopes to provide with qualitative research – oftentimes fails when asked about positives. This was particularly an issue at Academy 1 where the age of the majority of the informants, combined with their simplistic yet positive perspective on homosexuality, oftentimes made obtaining rich and detailed quotes difficult. Within this setting, I was met with a lot of short responses from participants. Nevertheless, this should not deter from the validity of the findings presented throughout these results chapters.

For example, many participants from Academy 1 replied with short, yet positive utterances when discussing homosexuality. Jamie declares that, “I’m fine with it” and Callum says that, “If people are gay it doesn’t bother me”. Likewise, Craig says that he is supportive of homosexuality, adding that, “I think people shouldn’t be treated differently”. Still, these short excerpts typified the overwhelming response of participants from Academy 1 – only two participants failed to show support.

Participants from Academy 2 were more forthcoming in their interviews, frequently elaborating on initial responses. For example, when discussing homosexuality, Steve says that:

It doesn’t bother me, it just doesn’t...There’s a nightclub where I’m from called *Pink* and it’s a gay club. It’s a proper good night out if you go there. A lot of straight people go there too, obviously. I’ve been there a couple of times – you get a lot in there; men dressed up as women in all sorts. It’s alright!

Louis, who hails from a Scandinavian country, mirrors the support of homosexuality outlined by his teammate. He discusses how both his parents are teachers, therefore allowing and encouraging him to develop his own perspectives. He comments:

I have had had a liberal education, and was brought up to think for myself. It’s just equality; sexual orientation is just a part of someone’s personality, so it affects your mind in very strong ways, so obviously that’s important, and equality, and being comfortable with who you are is very important.

Although not all participants from Academy 2 were as detailed in their responses, most still demonstrated their support for homosexuality. Many denoted the fact that a person’s sexuality is merely a part of them and cannot be changed.

Some participants said that homosexuality has no bearing on their lives. Typifying this, Jake, a player from Academy 1, comments that, "I'm not gay, so it makes no difference to me". Players from Academy 2 paralleled this theme: Raheem says that, "I have no problem; you've just got to get on with it, whatever", whilst Steve comments that, "It doesn't bother me; whatever really".

Participants from University FC were similarly inclusive in their attitudes towards sexual minorities. Discussing homosexuality, Tony comments that, "I'm very open – I don't think they should be made conform to the perceived norm of heterosexuality". Roddy says that some of the modules on his degree programme had led him to follow legal issues of sexual equality with keen interest: "I think it's interesting because it's only recently been publicised...I've got no issues with it whatsoever". Frank references his previous employment as a football coach in San Francisco, commenting, "I'm completely fine with it. They say 'San Fran' is the capital of gay people, so I'm fine with it". These views typify the response among these participants: only one declares slight discomfort, claiming that two men kissing is not aesthetically pleasing as two women, but this is a matter of sexual desires, not one's attitude toward the rights of sexual minorities.

Although a number of participants demonstrated support for homosexuality using personal vignettes, attending gay clubs and stigmatising homophobia, there remained an expression of overtly heteronormative standpoints – especially from participants of Academy 2. Many felt uncomfortable visualising or witnessing homosexual affection. Ross admits that if he saw two men kissing in the street he would be shocked, because he is not familiar with seeing it on a regular basis. Despite stating his support for homosexuality, Chris follows it up by saying: "I'll be honest, I'm not really a big fan of seeing men kissing; I don't know why. I suppose it's [because] I don't see it much". Simon admits similar discomfort, saying that, "As long as someone wasn't sitting next to me kissing or whatever...that would make me feel uncomfortable". Approximately a third of participants from Academy 2 express some form of heteronormativity, with many conceding that this is likely due to the fact that they do not witness this on a regular basis.

Countering this, participants from University FC were more accepting of witnessing homosexual affection. Tony, for example, merely comments, "It's their life", and Alfie says, "People get a negative image because people think they

exaggerate too much – but it doesn't bother me; I'm not swayed one way or the other". Russell even praises the bravery of two men or two women holding hands, because, "It's not something you see a lot of".

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most antipathy towards homosexuality from each club was shown by men who identify as strongly religious. Jamal, a player from Academy 1, for example, has been socialised into a religious culture by his parents: "My parents are from Uganda and so I've been taught that homosexuality is wrong". However, Jamal's parents emigrated to England in search of employment shortly before he was born. Therefore, he grew up in England, where he has seen support for homosexuality among his peers. Accordingly, he adopts a more inclusive attitude than his parents, despite feeling uneasy about homosexuality. Richard, the other religious individual from Academy 1, proclaims that, "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve". However, he too, maintains some support for sexual minorities.

Similar attitudes emerged from participants of University FC; only one, Colin, maintained any resistance towards homosexuality. Like Academy 1 player, Jamal, Colin has been socialised into a religious environment; his parents – who attend a large Baptist church in London – both hail from Malawi, where homosexuality remains illegal. Accordingly, he speaks of how his parents have helped shape his religious worldview, meaning his views are less progressive than other participants from University FC. He comments:

I'm not agreeing with the practice of homosexuality but of course society wants everyone to. In my country, it's illegal to be gay. But also, as a Christian, it's not acceptable if you're gay. I wouldn't be dramatic about it, but I have my reasons about why – purely my religious beliefs.

The discussion then progresses, and Colin discusses how he believes a person's sexuality to be a choice, and that he has looked it up on various religious websites. He stopped short, however, of claiming that being gay should be illegal. Approximately a fifth of participants from University FC identify as religious in some way, but Colin is the most uncomfortable with his beliefs regarding homosexuality. Other religious participants were more inclusive: although he has strong religious beliefs, Lawrence comments that, "It's just the same. You can't pick and choose", whilst Gary says, "It makes no difference to me – that's just them".

Religious participants from Academy 2, however, are less progressive with their attitudes toward homosexuality. Mark says that, “I don’t think it’s [homosexuality] right...God made man and woman to mate with each other, not for gay people”. Fred supports his stance: “Men and women are meant to have sex to have kids, so gay sex isn’t right. It shouldn’t be men and men”, and when discussing same-sex sex, Jordan says that, “It’s not nice”.

Given that religious individuals have shown to be less tolerant of homosexuality (Anderson and Fetner, 2008; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Keleher and Smith, 2012; Loftus, 2001), it is perhaps unsurprising that participants’ strength of religious belief affects their level of support for homosexuality. However, these attitudes are more progressive than previous studies. Hillier and Harrison (2004), for example, document how same-sex attracted youth (aged between 14 and 21) were told by chaplains, counsellors and, in some cases, parents, that homosexuality, ‘sat outside all that was right and good’ (Hillier and Harrison, 2004, p. 84), and that, ‘same-sex attraction meant not just a loss of heaven but banishment to hellfire and damnation’ (*ibid*). Despite their discomfort, higher levels of acceptance were shown by participants from Academy 2 – as shown later in this chapter.

Furthermore, consistent with other research on young footballers which shows that homophobia is more stigmatised than homosexuality (see Anderson, 2011b), a small number of participants from each setting discussed how they feel uncomfortable with homophobia. Bryn comments how, “I never thought homophobia made sense”. Martin expresses a similar opinion, saying that, “Just because someone is gay doesn’t mean he should be picked on; that’s just stupid”. Furthermore, Roger argues that the strong team relationship would create an atmosphere where players on the team would stigmatise homophobia, especially if someone came out.

Jason repeats this assertion within Academy 2, describing how he had witnessed gay people being verbally harassed outside the club, and that such behaviour would be unacceptable among teammates: “You can’t be like that nowadays with slagging off gay people”. Doug was stronger when discussing his religious teammates, stigmatising the levels of oppression they demonstrate towards sexual minorities. He comments that, “I just can’t see where they’re coming from. People talk pure shit!” Unprompted, he mocks their disgust of

same-sex sex and rejects their claim that sex is purely for procreation: “Some of my teammates say that gay sex is disgusting...But then I say that straight couples have anal sex, so does that make women dirty? It’s just stupid”.

One particular example of the stigma Academy 2 participants placed on homophobia comes from Louis. He recalls a former teammate’s discomfort with homosexuality, saying that:

There was this one player who was very homophobic and didn’t want to be touched, and would be calling people homophobic names, all that kind of stuff. It was very clear to everyone that he would not accept anyone being gay. He would do anything to be seen not related to anything gay. He made it clear that everyone knew that he was clearly homophobic, and doesn’t really approve it [homosexuality]. There was no argument; it was just way he was.

He goes on to say how a large number of team members covertly mocked this player for a long period of time, and many wondered if his homophobia was due to his closeted homosexuality. This is significant as it represents a powerful example of how generational attitudes towards sexual minorities have occurred: not only have athletes progressed to intellectualise their support for homosexuality, but they also deem homophobia unacceptable (Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2012a).

Participants even make explicit reference to the generational differences they have witnessed between themselves and their teammates and their fathers. Lewis says that, “My dad doesn’t like gay people”, and Doug says that, “My dad always cracks gay jokes and I feel really uncomfortable with it”. Jake comments that, “This generation is getting more acceptable. Nobody has anything against it [homosexuality] that I know”. Likewise, Alfie says that:

If you were to ask my dad, he’d be like, ‘Eww, gays’. I don’t know if my dad is less accepting – he’s a bit old school. He’s not as bad now, but when I was younger he wouldn’t let us wear pink or anything.

These contentions are supported by academic literature: Anderson (2009) comments that men whose adolescence occurred during the 1980s (or Generation X) – around the same age as the fathers of many of these participants – were socialised into a culture of extreme homophobia. Many of these men aligned their attitudes and behaviours accordingly, frequently engaging in what Pronger (1990) describes as ‘queer-bashing’. Men from iGeneration, however, are rejecting these orthodox notions of masculinity adopted by their fathers,



continually demonstrating their support for social and civil equality for sexual minorities.

### **Gay Friends**

The overwhelming level of support demonstrated by the participants across these three football teams was striking. Participants from Premier League academies represent a somewhat unique group of males to study concerning youth perspectives on gay men. Only five men from Academy 1 have ever met, or know of a sexual minority; the vast majority only know of gay personalities from the television. John, a player from Academy 1, typifies the common response on this theme: “No. I’ve never met one in person”. Likewise, Edward says, “I know them from the tele’, but not like in person”. Illustrating the power of contemporary social media, Bryn says that he is connected with a few gay people on Facebook, but has no immediate gay friends. Others knew of gay males through their former schooling or by having a gay relative. However, most had only very loose connections to gay males; they have not had the benefit of social contact, and face-to-face interaction, with a gay male, which research has shown to be the most important socialising agent into a gay-friendly disposition (Herek and Capitanio, 1996).

Players from Academy 2 have had a little more contact with gay men and women, but still, only six (or one third) have gay friends, or people they know whom are gay. Dave, for example, says that, “Most of my friends in football and back home...none of them are gay”. When discussing homosexuality, Max relies on stereotypes and popular culture, commenting that: “I don’t think I’ve ever met a gay person. They’re a bit like Rylan on Big Brother [an openly gay man on a reality television show], a bit camp. I guess they’re showing they’re gay”. Some of the players had a larger number of gay friends. Jason says that he has four or five, and also one close family member. He comments:

They’ve had boyfriends in the past and it hasn’t bothered me...Because we’ve known each other since we were young and we’ve always got on well, so the relationship hasn’t changed.

One player, Doug, consistently refers to his close contact with a gay family member, who came out in his twenties. This, he says, was a particularly controversial issue for his family because of their Irish Catholic denomination. However, when discussing his own disposition, he comments that:

My dad was unimpressed and they didn't talk for ages...It turned out to be a really sad time...I was so happy for him but some people were sad and uncomfortable. He's no different; the relationship [between him and his uncle] hasn't changed – in fact, it's stronger. I felt like he was holding back a bit.

Although Doug's contact with homosexuality demonstrates his own inclusivity, this is an isolated example: no other players from Academy 2 had a comparative experience with a gay family member or friend.

It is hard to determine, empirically, whether these men know fewer gay males than a comparable group of youth their age. Still, it can be hypothesised that due to the confines of life within a professional football academy, these footballers might be disadvantaged with the opportunity to befriend openly gay males personally especially as 16-19 appears to be common coming out age in the United Kingdom (Riley, 2010; see also McCormack, 2012a). Accordingly, by the time most youth are coming out in college or sixth forms, these men have already been sequestered into a closed football environment; one that removes them not only from their schools, but to a large extent their local communities, too. This incorporates what Anderson (2005a) describes as a near-total institution; every element of these boys' lives is shared with other members of their team. This is covered in more depth within Chapter 9.

In contrast, however, many of the players from University FC had attended sixth forms and colleges prior to their admission to university. Prior to this, a small number of these players had previously been part of a football academy, before eventually focusing on their academic studies. Two participants, for example, had played for Premier League academies at a younger age, while several others had played competitive football at semi-professional level. Accordingly, these men highlight the unique nature of this university, one that incorporates students from less-traditional university backgrounds. With the majority of these men having attended college or sixth form prior to attending university – rather than the closed environment of an academy football club – they were more likely to have encountered openly gay men and women (Riley, 2010; Taulke-Johnson, 2008).

This became apparent during interview, where all but four men have gay friends or contact with an openly gay person. Jackson, for example, says that, "I've probably got four or five gay friends; one of them I was best friends with at

secondary school. He came out at our leaving prom". Jackson goes on to say that his friend's sexuality was embraced in the school they attended, and that this has not negatively impacted on their friendship in any way. He also discusses how they remain close friends, and have visited each other at their respective universities. Similarly, Roddy and Nicholas speak of gay friends they had been close to before attending university. Since beginning university, Russell has extended his circle of gay friends as he shares the same halls of residence with two gay men and one bisexual man:

We're all friends with him – some of the guys have been to gay clubs with him, but I haven't had the chance yet because they go on a Friday [the day before a match], but I'm hoping I will.

Even the small number of participants who do not know anyone gay speak of their inclusion. Highlighting this, Roger says that, "I've no gay friends, but I have socialised with gay people in the past and it makes no difference to me". Likewise, Anton says that he is aware of "two or three" gay people being part of his wider social circle, though doesn't consider them friends: "I have a big group of friends...I'm not close to them at all but I'd always talk to them when I saw them". Colin also knows of gay people who were "friends of friends", with whom he has socialised in the past: "No-one I know well...[but] their sexuality has no bearing on what I think of them".

Much of the previous literature examining attitudes towards homosexuality within university settings documents high levels of victimisation, homophobia and harassment (Rivers and Taulke-Johnson, 2002). However, the students on the football team from University FC demonstrate unanimous inclusion of gay men and women – irrespective of how many gay people they know. Instead, these findings are consistent with more contemporary research: Bush, Anderson and Carr (2012), for example, show that other university athletes also exhibited very low levels of homophobia.

Based on the varying settings of the different football clubs, it appears that the unique and closed environment of a Premier League academy restricts the likelihood of players engaging in contact or friendships with openly gay men and women from the wider culture, particularly when compared with a more open environment. Unanimously, though, none of the participants declare that they have distanced themselves or altered their friendships with any of their

friends or family who they know to be gay. Furthermore, these pro-gay perspectives are enhanced when discussing the legalisation of same-sex marriage.

### ***Same-Sex Marriage***

Since the turn of the Millennium, one of the most significant debates surrounding homosexuality concerns legislation supporting same-sex marriage (Hooghe and Meeusen, 2013; Moskowitz, Rieger and Roloff, 2010; Pettinicchio, 2012; Sherkat *et al.*, 2011). In 2013, almost a decade after its introduction, a Conservative-led British government, fronted by Prime Minister David Cameron, upgraded the Civil Partnerships Act allowing same-sex couples equal marriage rights for the first time (Clements and Field, 2014). The first same-sex weddings subsequently took place in March 2014.

Data collection for this doctoral research was unique: when data collection began with the participants of Academy 1 in late-2012, same-sex marriage was being debated in British parliament. Data collection at the other two football clubs also occurred at significant time periods: same-sex marriage had been passed but not yet introduced when I began data collection at University FC in 2013, and the first same-sex weddings had already taken place when data commenced at Academy 2 in March 2014. Accordingly, this ensured that discussions were extremely topical, and perhaps varied among each group of participants. Inevitably, dialogue regarding same-sex marriage often occurred unprompted, as many referred to the intense media focus of the subject.

Participants from Academy 1 were almost unanimous in their support for same-sex marriage. Highlighting this, Peter comments, “If that’s what gay people want, then that’s what they want. Why should we try and stop them?” Danny poses similar sentiment, questioning, “Why can’t they [gay people] be happy? That’s what I’d ask”. Quoting his support, Jake says that, “I think for those it affects, it’s going to make a world of difference for them, and make them feel they fit in society more”.

Similar inclusivity was shown by participants from University FC. Illustrating this support, Frank quotes: “Everyone should be able to do what they want; I can’t see an issue with it – it’s no different to a man and a woman”. Similarly, Roger says, “If two people love each other then I’m in support of it”, before asking: “Why shouldn’t they get married?” Interestingly, Jackson describes

how he likes to think how his gay friends and family members would feel when discussing social and civil equality: "I think everyone deserves to do what they want to do: to prevent them would be bogus". As with Academy 1, these participants are almost unanimous in their support for same-sex marriage, drawing on their personalised liberalism as a rationale.

The least progressive attitudes towards same-sex marriage, however, come from the participants of Academy 2. However, support is still widespread among most. The majority of informants concur with the sentiment of Chris:

If you're gay, you're gay! It's just the same as what straight people do. What's the problem? That's just you – just if you like chocolate; if you like girls or boys, it doesn't really matter. It's all the same; it's all part of life.

Steve says that, "If you want to marry someone, then you marry them; simple as that. Yes [I support it]". For many of these participants, proving your love for someone appears the most important factor in marriage; most are unconcerned whether that is a heterosexual or gay wedding. There are exceptions to the high profile nature of same-sex marriage at this particular time; Max, for example, admits that, "I never even knew they could even get married!" This, however, does not detract from his acceptant attitude: "If that's what they want to do, then that's not a problem for me. I just see it as 'so be it', and go with the flow". In contrast, Doug makes explicit reference to government legislation permitting same-sex marriage, commenting, "The law change is fine, I'm all for equality – of course".

As with general attitudes towards homosexuality, some participants evidenced their neutrality with regard to same-sex marriage. From Academy 1, Jimmy says that, "I don't have a problem...but it's other people's business, really". Likewise, his teammate, Jared, comments that, "I'm not sure about making a big deal about it...I'm not fussed, because I'm not gay, but if people are gay it doesn't bother me". Curtis agrees with this, framing same-sex marriage as something which has no bearing on his life whatsoever: "It's up to them if they want to do that". Similar neutrality was evident among the participants at Academy 2. Dave comments that, "It doesn't affect me at all. People can do as they please. If they're happy doing that, then that's it". Similarly, Ross comments that, "It's nothing to do with me; it doesn't matter how I feel about it...I'm not against it but I wouldn't go and protest for it or against it".

Predictably, it was again those who had strong religious identification who showed the most resistance towards same-sex marriage. One of the most interesting examples concerning this discomfort was provided by Jamal, from Academy 1, who considers himself devoutly religious. Therefore, when asked to imagine he was the deciding vote on gay marriage he initially said no, "Because I wouldn't want everybody to start turning gay". He is then asked how gay marriage would lead to people turning gay and answered, "More people would open up, and when people open up things become normal and when things become normal more people will become it". When asked what he thinks makes people gay he says, "I don't have a clue". It was only after the discussion moved away from gay marriage, and onto gay bullying, that he came back to the gay marriage question (of his own accord). "If it makes them happy, it makes them happy. Let them do what they want to do". "So you are now voting yes?" I ask him. "Yes", he responds, without pressure from me. Jamal was the only participant from Academy 1 whose interview and discussion around same-sex marriage developed in such a way.

Similarities emerged between Jamal, and Lawrence, a participant from University FC. Lawrence's parents are also from Africa, whereas he and his sisters have been brought up in England, where attitudes towards homosexuality are far more liberal (Anderson, 2009). This, he argues, affects his acceptant attitude towards same-sex marriage:

For my parents, the church they went to completely shunned gay marriages, as well as anything to do with homosexuality...[but] I don't see anything wrong with it [same-sex marriage] at all. Even though the Bible says one this, it's not going to change how he feels about another man, regardless of if he's religious or not.

Other religious participants from University FC also comment upon their support of same-sex marriage. Russell, for example, realises that one cannot help same-sex attraction: "You can't help who you are! It would've been silly if that law [same-sex marriage legislation] hadn't been passed". There were some who failed to support same-sex marriage during interview. For example, Colin quotes that, "I wouldn't support gay marriage and if it happens I don't want to be involved with it. God made man and woman to reproduce, otherwise there'd be no life".

Many religious participants from Academy 2 demonstrate similar attitudes than Colin. William, for example, comments that, "I don't support same-

sex marriage because I think man should be with a woman. But it's different because I'm religious". Mark agrees with his teammate's sentiment, admitting that he feels very uncomfortable with same-sex marriage "for the same reason as my Christian beliefs really". He then asks me about my own views regarding same-sex marriage, to which I respond that I am supportive, but that I'm not religious, like he is. He then comments that, "It doesn't really say anything in the Bible. I'll have to ask my mum when I get home and see if I can find it". Mark is a prime example of how indoctrination into a fundamentalist belief system, such as Christianity, necessitates the relinquishment of individual agency, and thus excuses himself from critical thinking of his religious beliefs.

Other religious participants are more flexible with their attitudes. When discussing the legalisation of same-sex marriage, Tom had a dilemma. Initially, he claims that, "It's wrong...it's not in the Bible; there's no same-sex marriage for men or women, so I still hold these views". However, it became clear that he appears to have a somewhat paradoxical relationship with same-sex marriage. After discussing it for some time, he then says:

It's a big dilemma for me. If you love someone no matter what gender or whatever, you have that divine love for them and get butterflies, then go for it!...If you're gay and you with this person and you love them, who am I to stop this love and say that you can't do that?

Similarly, Robert quotes his support for same-sex marriage despite his strong religious beliefs: "If you love each other, then I suppose it shouldn't matter".

Overall, of the 60 men I interviewed for this research, 53 showed their outright support for same-sex marriage, leaving only seven with varying levels of discomfort. All seven identify as strongly religious, illustrating the pervasive power of religion to shape cultures of exclusivity. Nevertheless, the high level of acceptance among these athletes is consistent with social attitude surveys which show younger generations, or iGeneration (Anderson, 2014), to be the most inclusive and supportive of same-sex marriage. For example, in 2012 – a time when the introduction of same-sex marriage was being debated in parliament – a poll by the *Guardian* newspaper reported that 77% of those aged between 18 and 24 supported same-sex marriage, compared to only 37% support by over-65s (Clark and Sparrow, 2012). Progressive results were also shown in a 2014 BBC poll, which showed that 81% of 18-34 year-olds supported the introduction of

legislation permitting marriage equality, compared to almost half that figure for the over-65s cohort (Pigott, 2014).

Of course, without an openly gay player among any of the three teams sampled for his research, it is difficult to speculate whether these inclusive attitudes would be actualised within these environments. Some studies have shown that in the event of a gay player coming out of the closet, homophobia has dissipated among those men exhibiting the most antipathy towards homosexuality (Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson and McGuire, 2010). The responses of the participants outlined in the previous sections of this chapter predominantly point towards both acceptance and inclusion. The next sections of this chapter outline a number of hypothetical discussions, specifically focusing on the response to an openly gay teammate, and the way in which support would be shown.

### **Openly Gay Teammates**

Although decades of previous research on competitive contact team sports describes them as highly homophobic organisations (Bryant, 2001; Clarke, 1998; Griffin, 1998; Hekma, 1998; Messner, 1992; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel, Toma and Morphew, 2001), the findings presented within the next sections contrast this outdated perspective. Rather, these findings align with more contemporary research in this subject area, which show positive and inclusive attitudes towards sexual minorities (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2005a, 2009, 2011a, 2011b; Bush, Anderson and Carr, 2012; Jarvis, 2012; Magrath, under construction), particularly among what Anderson (2014) calls iGeneration males.

Though some of the athletes interviewed in this research have gay friends – particularly University FC – each of the men interviewed for this research were ostensibly heterosexual. Accordingly, these athletes have not been socialised with openly gay boys and men, a factor which indicates it beneficial to acquiring inclusive and pro-gay attitudes (Adams and Anderson, 2012; Smith, Axelson and Saucier, 2009). Because none of these athletes are gay, much of the following sections rely on hypothetical discussion regarding openly gay teammates. Nevertheless, there is no reason that the information solicited during interviews



was unreliable. Despite the lack of frequent contact with gay men and women, support from men from the two academy football teams did not appear to waive.

Among the participants at Academy 1, for example, Callum was asked how he would feel if his best friend came out as gay, to which he responds, "It's whatever", indicating he had no issues with it. When another was asked what issues he would have if his roommate came out as gay, he said, "None". Thus, although it may not be a lengthy justification of one's attitude, there is nonetheless a powerful message to be heard when a 17 year-old footballer is asked what difference it would make if his best friend came out as gay and he simply says, "None". Charles was asked about how he would feel if his best friend were to come out as gay. He replies, "Yeah, that's fine. Not a problem". When asked to imagine his best friend coming out, James says that, "It would make no difference whatsoever. I would be fine with it". This answer was repeated when I asked about whether it would make a difference if his best friend at the academy came out. "No. No difference".

It was this type of interaction that was repeatedly heard among the participants at Academy 1. When asked how he would feel if his best friend came out of the closet as gay, Harry says, "It wouldn't make a difference...I wouldn't mind. I'm too laid-back to care really". When asked if he would change anything if his best friend were to come out, Oliver says, "No. I don't think I would". Edward answers, "No. Not really". When asked the same question Jake answers, "I would support him. I wouldn't have anything against him because he's gay. I've got a gay mate back home. I would definitely support him". And Joe says, "It wouldn't really change anything. Don't know. It's not like it changes him as a person. Being gay doesn't change that. A homophobic [sic] wouldn't like it. But I wouldn't care".

Collectively, none of the men from Academy 1 say that if their best friend on the team, or their best friend back home, were to come out of the closet, it would fundamentally alter their friendship. Not one of the players interviewed said that if their roommate were to come out that they would not want to share a room with them anymore, and not one of the players expressed fears over sharing a bed with their teammate or having others think that they were gay for being their best mate – indicating an organisational culture free of homophobia. Thus, Academy 1 is a group of young men that are either explicitly supportive in their

response, like Jake, or men who didn't feel they need to articulate their support beyond stating that they wouldn't care.

Similar attitudes were evident at Academy 2, where participants are more forthcoming during interview. Evidencing support of a gay teammate, Dave comments that, "My behaviour wouldn't change. Our friendship would be too strong for that to happen. That would just be stupid...I don't see the point in changing anything". Louis almost replicates his teammate's sentiment: "I'd be totally fine with it. We'd still be close friends – it wouldn't interfere with anything; he doesn't change as a person to me in that way". When asked how he would feel about his best friend on the team coming out, Raheem says, "I couldn't care less", before backtracking and saying:

No, I'd be flattered that he came to me to tell me this. Then I would think, 'OK, what can I do about this to support him?' But I'd have no problem at all if one of them said that.

When asked the same question, Steve says:

It wouldn't bother me. He's still the same person, and we'd still be mates. [My] behaviour wouldn't change – I'm not really fussed about that sort of stuff. I'm quite close with him so...it just wouldn't bother me at all, to be honest.

These are typical responses from most of the men on the team: the vast majority of participants quote their support, often followed by the reinforcement of their close friendship with the person in question.

Some participants indicate their surprise if their best friend on the team were to come out. Despite this, all then indicate their support. Mark, for example, says that he would be, "Shocked and surprised. I might be a bit upset that he hasn't told me sooner...but it wouldn't make a great difference to be honest". Similarly, Ross exclaims, "I'd be surprised!" When asked why, he responds: "If you knew the type of character my friend is...I just would be". As the conversation developed, he was then posed with the question as to whether his friend's sexuality would affect their friendship, to which he emphatically responds, "No! Not at all. He's still the same guy I know, I just wouldn't want him to change". Max also indicates his surprise: "I would be shocked, but I know there have been footballers who have come out in the past. If we were close friends before he told me, it wouldn't really make a difference".

Duncan epitomises the relaxed and acceptant attitude of many of the Academy 2 participants. When asked how he would feel about his best friend on the team coming out, he laughs, indicating he believes it's a stupid question: "It's not a big problem [in football] anymore. It's just the way it is, you know? I see him as a friend; it [his sexuality] doesn't matter". He continues by suggesting that some of the players at the club may have an issue with an openly gay teammate, but couldn't follow this up by providing any names. This prediction was shared by Mark who commented, "Some of my teammates might not feel comfortable with gay people", and Louis, who says that, "For some people here it might be a problem". Described as the "third-person effect" (Anderson, 2014), this mirrors Adams and Anderson's (2012) research during which participants claimed a gay athlete would not be accepted by all members of a team, yet could not name any particular player who might feel uncomfortable. In other words, 'everybody on a team is gay friendly but suspects someone else will not be' (Anderson, 2014, p. 68).

Like Adams and Anderson's (2012) research, Duncan's prediction regarding his teammates' dislike of a gay teammate did not come to fruition. Only two participants indicated any resistance with the proposition of having a gay teammate. William comments that: "It would be a bit strange but I don't know...if I would have a problem with it...a little problem because not everyone wants a gay teammate". When responding to a question about his reaction to a gay teammate, Jordan says, "I don't know, it depends. If it was a close friend I'd be a bit wary...I'd be a bit cautious". However, both these participants follow up their initial comments with signals of support, declaring they would defend their gay friend if he was being homophobically victimised. However, both concede that they would be unsure until the situation genuinely arose.

Fred was also unsure of his reaction, commenting that, "It [his friend's sexuality] wouldn't change anything we do, unless he changed and started acting differently...that might piss me off a bit". It transpires, however, that Fred is primarily concerned with losing the close bond with his friend, rather than indicating any discomfort with his friend's sexuality. A number of participants were also concerned that an openly gay player would affect the nature of homosociality among teammates – this is unpacked in Chapter 10.

Overall, only a very small number of men from Academy 2 say that if their best friend came out, it would be potentially problematic. The majority of participants commented on the close friendships with the best friend, citing this as the relegation of the importance of their friend's sexuality. Not one of the players interviewed said that they would interact with their openly gay teammate differently on the pitch, contrasting with that of previous research (see Hekma, 1998). Nor would any of them cease to socialise with an openly gay teammate. Even the men who identified as strongly religious indicated support for an openly gay teammate, should the situation arise. Therefore, like Academy 1, Academy 2 is a group of young men who are overwhelmingly supportive of having a gay teammate.

This inclusivity was mirrored by the participants of University FC. Tony typifies the response among many when questioned about having a gay teammate: "I'd be completely fine with it. I'd support him if he wanted any help". Roger quotes his support: "As a mate I'd be supportive – I don't think it would affect me or our friendship too much", whilst Donald says that, "We've been friends for three years and him being gay wouldn't change that".

Consistent with Adams and Anderson's (2012) research examining the effect an openly gay player might have on team cohesion, these participants report that a teammate coming out would enhance friendships and closeness among their team. Lawrence, for example, suggests that, "Him coming out would make us closer in a way. I'll totally respect what he's done", whilst Nicholas comments, "I'd feel good that he came to me and told me". Such is the closeness among some of these footballers, Alfie says that, "I'd be upset that he hadn't told me before, because if we've got a good relationship I wouldn't want him to think he couldn't talk to me". Donald also speaks of the trust vested in him if his friend were to come out to him. This is a unique finding, limited to participants from University FC, perhaps owing to their increased sociality with openly gay men and women.

The results of this section are significant. Contrasting with traditional research examining attitudes towards homosexuality, athletes have moved beyond stigmatising homosexuality, instead facilitating a more inclusive environment for gay athletes. The level of inclusivity among these men is not

limited to acceptance; they also demonstrate widespread support for their hypothetically gay friend.

### **Proving Support**

In order to more fully interrogate the depth of gay-inclusivity among the players sampled for this research, questions were also posed that were thought might bring a less-inclusive response. These could be classified into two types: one, a set of questions asked about whether their friendship would be negatively altered if the player's hypothetical best gay friend was in love, or was sexually attracted to him, or both; and, secondly, a set of questions related to public proclamations of support, including how intent these players were to stand up for them (i.e. marriage and freedom or support from homophobic bullying).

Participants were posed a number of hypothetical questions regarding their feelings if their gay friend declared that he was in love with him, or had sexual desires. Participants from Academy 1 share a variety of feelings. James, for example, says that:

Of course, I'd find it difficult if he had feelings for me. Not just that he's attracted but that he was in love with me. That would be difficult. But if he's gay and he's got a boyfriend and whatnot I don't see why it would make any difference.

Despite recognising that it would be difficult if his best friend who was, hypothetically, both sexually and romantically attracted to James, he insists the friendship would remain strong. James said that this would be no more difficult than it would be if a 'female mate' said the same thing. When asked how it would change matters specifically, he answers: "I wouldn't be fully comfortable because it might change the way I show support for him, but I don't really know". Even in this discussion, however, James is clear to identify that his actions and the change to his potential behaviours are equally designed to protect his gay best friend's feelings:

I might have to move out of the room depending on how it goes. I wouldn't want to keep him in a place where he is always seeing/wanting me, because I'm straight, and if he's not going to have me that might be hard for him.

James also adds, “But we’d work through it”. James is also keen to point out that gay men are not attracted to *all* men and that chances are his best friend would not be overly attracted to him. Or that, “He would get over it”.

John says, “I would have to tell him that I don't feel the same way, but it wouldn't change anything”. And when asked the same question Oliver responds:

It would be weird. I would take a step back and tell him, ‘No. I’m not gay and that’. I think the friendship would change a bit, if he tells you that he likes you it would be weird a bit. It’s the same with girls, it would change a bit. It doesn’t matter who fancies you, it changes the nature of the relationship a bit.

When asked how he would handle his best mate both physically and romantically fancying him, John says, “I would have to be put into the situation to properly know, but if I think about, I think it would be the same”. He indicates that he would be sure to tell his friend that he’s straight, so as “not to give him the wrong impression”, but that apart from that, it would not alter his living or socialising arrangements.

Similar themes emerge from participants at Academy 2. Many have no objection to a gay friend disclosing their romantic and/or sexual feelings. Dave, for example, comments that, “Nothing would happen or anything...I don’t think anything would change. It wouldn’t affect anything. No, it wouldn’t change the friendship”. When asked the same question, Louis responds, “If he fancied me I’d just have to make it clear that I don’t fancy him! That wouldn’t make any difference”.

As with Academy 1, some admit that it would be a potentially difficult situation. Concerning sexual feelings, Tom comments:

That would be a shock to the system. I wouldn’t break down, I’d just tell him that I don’t go for men, I go for women. It *may* affect our friendship because maybe I’ve led him on...it’s a very hard one.

Similarly, Duncan says that, “It would be a bit weird. I don’t know what I’d say because he’s a really good mate”. Many of the participants from Academy 2 comment on the complexity of this hypothetical situation, such as Jason, who says, “That would be my first experience of that. I wouldn’t know what to do or how to handle it”. Again, some drew comparisons to a heterosexual friendship: Ross says that, “If he blurted out that he fancied me then it might change things. It probably wouldn’t end the friendship. It’s the same as a girl-boy thing: if you said that, it might ruin the friendship”.

Four participants from Academy 2 suggest that if such a situation arose, that they would confront their friend, attempting to put a stop to it. Raheem described that, “I’d sit him down and say, ‘Look, this has to stop’”. Ross says that, “I’d tell him, no...that would be taking it too far...The friendship would change a bit after that”. Doug’s admission was a little more drastic:

If he fancied me, I’d say ‘Mate, I’m not gay’. If he kept it up, I’d have to give him another warning and say ‘What the fuck?’ If he still carried on I’d have to draw a line under that friendship.

Similarly, Jordan comments that, “I would have to tell him to stop, of course”, though this approach is a little different to others from Academy 2 of the same disposition. Instead, this appears to be more of a strategy to prevent hurting his friend. He continues:

I wouldn’t go out just me and him so much, because he might see it as a date. Like, if we went to get food in a restaurant – it might make him like me even more, and make it more difficult.

He ends by stating that he would happily socialise with his gay friend if they were in a group, but would still be wary that his friend might *start* to develop a crush on him.

Participants from University FC predominantly concern themselves with their gay friend’s feelings. Fletcher comments that, “We’d have to have a talk and come to some conclusion – I don’t want to hurt him”. Donald’s response was almost identical: “We’d have to talk and I’d say that if he found it difficult – but still wanted to be my friend – I’d take a step back if he needed”. Alfie admits that, “I would find it uncomfortable”, before stating, “It wouldn’t be a problem. I’d be wary about him more than anything”. This was also the case with the religious participants of the team: Colin says that, “If he genuinely likes me, I’d pull myself away to make it easier for him”.

Some comparison can be drawn between the different sets of participants. A small number from University FC spoke of the potential difficulty it may cause. Highlighting this, Russell says that, “It would be weird. I’d just tell him I was straight – maybe I’d keep a distance”. Similarly, Nicholas comments on the awkwardness of the situation, and Jackson comments that, “I think it would affect me in a way”, before saying, “I would get over it”. None of the concern shown by the participants, though, translates into objection; not one suggested that they would attempt to distance themselves from their gay friend.

### ***Public Proclamations***

Support for gay teammates also came through both the acceptance of gay marriage, and the willingness of these men to give a best-man's speech at a gay wedding. This was even the case among the two players who are personally opposed to homosexuality on religious grounds; they still supported their social and civil equality. All of the men from Academy 1 offered their support when it came to imagining how they would react if their best friend, who came out as gay, wanted to get married in the future when the participant was a 'big-time' Premier League footballer, and thus frequently in the public eye. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that all of the men, but one, instantly responded affirmatively.

This was the case even though they were told that the press would be there to report to the nation about their speech. While most just indicated their support the way Jake did, saying, "I wouldn't have a problem with that", or as Oliver says, "I'd do that, yeah", others gave more excited responses. James says, "That would be lovely". John says, "I'd like to give a little speech". Alex says, with a wide smile, that he'd give the speech, but that, "There would be a lot of gay jokes in it". Harry was the only player to show hesitation to this question. He sat quiet for a moment, before saying, "I don't know". This seemed odd compared to his previous pro-gay responses. It was only after further discussion that it was learned that his hesitation has nothing to do with the fact that it would be a gay wedding; instead, it was everything to do with the fact that he doesn't think he could give a good address. "I don't like public speaking...I get all sweaty and my mouth goes dry in front of loads of people". Still, he says, that he would be 'happy' to clarify to the press that he maintains positive views about homosexuality.

The same positive reactions towards friends' same-sex weddings were also exhibited by participants from University FC. Again, this was even the case with the most religious participants. Lawrence enthusiastically responds, "Oh yeah, 100%! I'd be best man, completely". Likewise, Fletcher says, "Yes, because it's love at the end of the day. I'd be best man; why not?" Colin was the only participant who was unsure if he would attend, based on his religious beliefs but,



at the same time, didn't want to offend his close friend: "I don't want to be disrespectful", he comments.

Donald compares this to a heterosexual wedding: "That'd be no different to a friend marrying a girl. I'd be best man – there's no reason I wouldn't do that". When asked why he would demonstrate such support, Donald says that, "We're still friends and he's trusted me. We'd have gone a long way from him first coming out". Nicholas admits that he had never been to a wedding, excitedly responding: "I'd like that. I'd love that the first wedding I go to would be a gay wedding; that'd be so cool". Alfie speaks of the infrequency of same-sex weddings, initially announcing he would be shocked, before saying that he would attend: "It'd just be initial shock...I'd be best man if he wanted me to be".

The least progressive attitudes towards a friend's same-sex wedding again came from participants from Academy 2. Despite this, many still spoke of their support. Steve, for example, says, "Yeah, definitely; I'd be there at the wedding". He follows this up by proclaiming that he would like to be best man, and wouldn't have a problem with people thinking that he might be gay by association. When asked why, he laughs and responds, "Well, we are mates, aren't we?" Similarly, Ross is supportive, but would spurn the opportunity to be best man because – like Harry from Academy 1 – he too doesn't like giving speeches. Also, as with Alex from Academy 1, Duncan laughs, and says, "Yeah, of course. I think being best man would be funny – I'd use gay jokes. Yeah, I'd love to be best man – you take it as it comes". Responses between Academy 1 and Academy 2 were markedly similar, although there was a little more resistance from the latter participants.

Simon, for example, says he would be "creeped out" by a friend's same-sex wedding, saying that, "I don't know, I suppose it would be different". When asked if he would be best man, he perhaps surprisingly responded, "I'd 100% do it". Similarly, Alex says, "It's a little bit strange but I guess it would be OK". Tom was the most resistant. He claims, "I would support him because I've known him for a very long time. But I feel I wouldn't attend". He then reaffirmed this by also suggesting that he wouldn't be best man for his best friend's wedding, and definitely wouldn't attend. His friendship with his gay teammate was deemed secondary to his religious beliefs, as he progressed: "Even if it jeopardised the friendship, I wouldn't go. My mind is final – if I'm not doing it, I'm not doing it". Tom was the only religious participant, however, who says he would not attend.

Other religious participants admitted to feeling uncomfortable, but would still attend a gay friend's wedding. "I don't see why not", Fred proclaims. After a long pause, Jordan responds, "That's a hard one", before saying, "Most probably [he would attend]. If I've known him for a long time, then yeah".

### ***Support through Defence***

Participants from Academy 2 also discussed their support for a gay teammate in a unique way to the other two football teams. The thought of a gay teammate being homophobically victimised by opposition players led many participants to discuss retribution strategies. Fred, for example, says that he would "go physical" on the instigator, and that, "If it was just name-calling at the start, then it would just be name-calling back. But if not, and I got the chance, I would [seek physical retribution]". Raheem expresses similar support:

I'd just target the other player. I'd ask, 'Why are you picking on him?' Like with Roy Keane and Patrick Vieira when Vieira picked on Gary Neville. I'd go straight to him and try to intimidate him. I'd tell him to shut-up...depending on how he was doing it...I might take it further than talking. I'd foul him, put him on the floor and say, 'Listen, shut-up – don't talk to him.' If he carried on doing it then I'd get involved properly again.

Ross also says that he would lose his temper, and would most likely seek physical revenge: "I'd probably punch the other guy", whilst Doug comments that he would initially warn the offender, before resorting to violence if he deemed necessary.

The defence of a gay teammate in this manner was a fairly common theme among half of these participants, and is noteworthy: it shows how athletes come to the defence of a gay teammate through physical force, whereas once they would frequently engage in violence *against* them (Anderson, 2000; Connell, 1995; Herek and Berrill, 1992). Further, it is significant that teammates would defend and support a gay teammate, and although it is sensible to not condone physical retaliation, it is strikingly progressive for athletes to be showing support for a gay teammate in the most extreme way.

Oftentimes, players discussed the role of the referee – when informed that using homophobic language on a football pitch is a dismissible offence (red card), many were surprised. With that information, many then decided that they would inform the referee and hope he would address it. A small number, however, decided against doing so, because they wouldn't expect any action to be

taken. Raheem also proposes that the referee would be unsure as to the use of what could be considered to be homophobic language on the pitch: "The term 'gay' is used quite a lot on the pitch, but I think that's mainly when things are going wrong". The use of homosexually-themed language is addressed in more detail later in Chapter 11.

Steve speculates that if an openly gay player was deliberately targeted by an opposition player, then support would be shown by the whole team. Some of his teammates, however, referenced the often harsh nature of football culture, claiming that their gay friend would need to be "tough" and "brave" to deal with such abuse. Louis, for example, says that:

Opposition players and fans are going to insult you, that's just the way it is...they are trying to put you off your game, and if you're strong enough to come out of the closet and be publically gay, you should obviously be able to take it [abuse] on the pitch, because many people are not ready for it – and many people would use it against you as a weakness if you're not strong enough.

Simon comments similarly: "Things happen in football – you just have to play on with it really. You get it in most games we've played in, it happens all the time really. You've just got to get over it and forget about it". Dave doubts that such victimisation would affect his gay teammate, claiming that, "I couldn't see them caring too much; they wouldn't take serious offence to it, so they wouldn't be too bothered by it". For that reason, Dave says that he wouldn't take any specific action to defend his teammate.

This, of course, is not because these participants harbour homophobic attitudes: on the contrary, these men outlined their inclusivity of homosexuality and gay teammates. It does, however, illustrate the importance these men place on playing football. Later, I discuss how the competitive nature of football – particularly when young athletes are vying to achieve a professional contract – often restricts the level of emotional support these men afford one another.

## **Chapter 9: The Construction, Development and Maintenance of Friendships**

This chapter examines the way that the young men across the three football teams construct, develop and maintain their friendships with teammates. Previous research has outlined how men from sporting backgrounds have maintained emotional distance from one another (Field, 1999; Komarovsky, 1974), particularly during periods of high homophobia. Pleck (1981), for example, shows how even close male friends avoided emotional intimacy through fear of homosexual suspicion. Accordingly, men erased the word 'like' from their friendship vocabulary as it became a euphemism for 'love' (Williams, 1985). Men, during this homophobic period, were also prohibited from open demonstrations of emotion – such as crying, and showing fear or sadness – thus avoiding ostracism (Brannon, 1976; Williams and Morris, 1996). Illustrating this, Curry (1991, p. 124) shows that male team sport athletes have, 'learned to avoid public expressions of emotional caring or concern for one another...because such remarks as defined as weak or feminine', forcing athletes to maintain a 'safe' distance from one another.

In a culture of inclusivity, however, Anderson (2009) documents how boys and men are able to exhibit much closer emotional relationships with one another without being culturally homosexualised. This frequently occurs from what Anderson (2014) finds young men calling a 'bromance' – an asexual close friendship between two close male friends – something documented in a number of contemporary studies on young men's masculinity (Adams, 2011a; Anderson, 2008b, 2011b; Way, 2011; Silva, 2012).

Throughout this chapter, I show how the decrease in cultural homophobia is replicated within the closed environment of football (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Manley, Palmer and Roderick, 2012). This has afforded boys within these settings greater emotional sentimentality without being culturally homosexualised. However, I also argue that this only occurs to a certain degree: the competitive nature of Premier League academies limits the level of emotionality that some of these participants may enjoy. This becomes particularly salient when drawing comparisons with participants from University FC.

### **Football as a Near-Total Institution**

Originally focusing on isolated and enclosed social systems, Goffman (1961) coined the concept of the 'total institution' in order to conceptualise how a person is denied agency, such as within prisons and mental asylums. Documenting similarities, Anderson (2005a) describes sport as a 'near-total institution' – unlike prisoners, this is only *near*-total because athletes are afforded the agency to quit sport should they desire. Outlining the structure of sport as a near-total institution, Anderson (2005a, p. 67) writes that:

The emergence into the total institution can begin in early childhood. Athletes are indoctrinated into the thinking of team sports at a very young age, influencing their identity to grow and center on their athleticism.

Within this closed environment, athletes play, train, eat, socialise and, frequently, live together, creating an atmosphere much like the military, where athletes are sheltered from cultural norms and ideals (Anderson, 2005a; see also Foucault, 1977).

Within this environment, men have not traditionally been able to show their emotions (Curry, 1991). Thus, as previously mentioned, athletes have traditionally exhibited more restrictive emotional relationships with other men, in addition to more conservative attitudes towards homosexuality (Pronger, 1990). This is something Parker (1996a) found in his ethnographic research within the academy of a professional football club.

Countering this, however, men from these three football teams are not immune to the cultural shift towards inclusivity of homosexuality (Anderson, 2014). Although the near-total institution had some impact on the lives of these young men – for example, only a small number knew of, and were close friends, with a gay man or woman – they maintained support for sexual minorities in a number of ways, including same-sex marriage. This was particularly evident when discussing a potentially openly gay teammate: the overwhelming majority of participants declared this would not alter interactions, nor the strength of friendships. On the contrary, participants outlined support for an openly gay teammate through the acceptance of position of best-man at a same-sex wedding and comfort if a gay teammate was the victim of homophobic bullying. Some even suggested that a player coming out would enhance team cohesion (see Adams and Anderson, 2012).

These findings – detailed throughout Chapter 8 – clearly represent how elements of the near-total institution as a cultural vacuum have failed. Rather, the acceptant and inclusive responses from these participants show how these men have been influenced from the continuing decrease in cultural homophobia (Keleher and Smith, 2012). Nevertheless, remnants of the near-total institution are still apparent. Given that many of these participants from both Academy 1 and Academy 2 have played for their respective clubs from a young age, and over a long period of time, they have been able to grow emotionally close and become increasingly open with each other. A significant finding across these football teams therefore concerns the strong team relationship they collectively enjoyed.

### ***Outlining Friendships***

Highlighting these close friendships within Academy 1, Joe likens the unity of the team to other football teams, commenting that, “We’re like any other football team, I guess...we’re just a group of lads playing football that spend a lot of time together – that makes us close”. Danny mirrors this sentiment, also explaining the familiarity that these players have of one another: “The whole team are there to support you. Remember, too, that we’ve known each other for almost a decade”. Danny follows this up by commenting that this closeness is not restricted to discussing football: “There are other things [aside from football] that are spoken about as well...so that adds unity to the group”. Richard also comments on this closeness by commenting that, “You can talk about almost anything with most people, really...support is shown in loads of ways”.

Athletes among Academy 2 also outlined the closeness of teammates at the football club. Mark, for example, simply comments that, “Almost all of us here – there’s definitely a really, really strong team relationship”. Similarly, Ross says that, “We are all together – you wouldn’t have this group and that group; here we all talk to each other”. Duncan describes the group of players as a “close-knit team”, commenting that, “We all just get along...We’re all footballers so we all do the same thing; we all want to win so we all try our best and work together”. Phil attributes the closeness of the players to the amount of time they spend together: “We literally do everything together: train, shower, eat, drink, play football [and] socialise. The only thing we don’t really do together is sleep”.

Only one, Steve, a member of the club's development squad<sup>9</sup>, said that teammates were not particularly close, commenting, "Even though we are a team, everyone just wants to be in the next [First] team". Steve was the only participant interviewed who had graduated the academy and had progressed to the development squad, thus offering a comparison across two cohorts of academy players. Perhaps consolidating the comments of other Academy 2 participants, he followed up his initial comments by stating that, "When I was still in the academy, I'd say we were all pretty close then".

These findings were not limited to the two academy football teams. Participants from University FC also discussed the strength of friendships across the team. Highlighting this, Alfie says that, "We're a close-knit team. We win together [and] we lose together". Similarly, Russell comments that, "We have quite a strong team relationship although we sometimes have cross words when the team isn't doing so well, but it doesn't last long". Jackson concurs: "We have a very strong team relationship; there are no cliquey groups or anything like that", a point also outlined by Ben: "It's got less cliquey each year. There used to be a divide which wasn't really a problem...but we're closer now". Contrasting this somewhat, Colin suggests, "There's a strong relationship amongst us all although there might be a divide between the year groups – but that doesn't really cause any hostility".

Unlike academy football clubs, this team recruits its members in a different manner, recruiting students shortly after they have begun their degree programmes. Furthermore, although football is of significant importance to these participants, many of whom are enrolled on sports-related degree programmes, their academic attainment is prioritised. Ben argues that these similarities facilitate the strong team ethic described by participants:

Everyone is in the same boat here – the atmosphere of being a student and in a university football team is a very unique environment. It's certainly unique compared with some of the football teams I've been involved in previously. The university background bonds people together in a strong way.

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<sup>9</sup> Introduced into English football in 2012, development squads refer to a group of players – normally those who have graduated through the academy – who haven't yet progressed to the club's First Team. Although a small number of 'over-aged' players are permitted, squads are usually made up by players aged between 18 and 21.

Thus, the need for academic achievement unites participants from University FC, much in the same way that securing a professional contract bonds participants from Academy 1 and Academy 2.

### ***Maintaining Friendships***

Within each of these football teams, the closeness observed and described by participants was maintained through a number of social activities. Within Academy 1, for example, Oliver says that, “A few of us would go into town together and do some shopping”, a point also raised by Alex: “Often we’d go to [local shopping mall] and have a look round, then we might go and get some food together”. Lloyd also says that, “I’ve had poker nights round my house and some of the lads also played FIFA; we were just chilling together and chatting about stuff”. The popularity of FIFA, a computer-based football game, was commonplace, and referenced by a number of participants from Academy 1 *and* Academy 2.

Illustrating this from Academy 2, Duncan comments suggests that: “Sometimes a group of us will get together and have a FIFA night and have a bit of a laugh together”. Given the importance of football within the lives of these participants – and the consistent popularity of the FIFA series as the most popular simulated football game (Crawford and Gosling, 2009) – the common reference to FIFA was perhaps unsurprising, in addition to the numerous social events arranged around it.

Social events were not merely limited to computer games for Academy 2 participants, however. Max highlights that activities include:

Going round the town, we might travel to [name of nearest major city], we often go to Nando’s, or to the cinema. There are loads of things – bowling [and] golf – anything. We’re together pretty much all the time and we’re all quite close. We’re just very comfortable with each other, I suppose.

Mark echoes these events: “We’d go to the movies, bowling, shopping...all things like that. We’ll do anything and everything together”. Some of the older members of the sample frequently arranged events with girlfriends, as Raheem explains: “Sometimes we’ll go out and have double or triple dates when we go to eat or stuff like that”. Although these activities were typically arranged for small groups,



a number of participants stressed that these were not exclusive to any particular group of people: anybody is free to attend.

The participants from University FC also showed their friendships through a variety of social activities. Roger, for example, outlines that, “We go out for lunch or dinner together; I would say we do almost everything together”. Similarly, Roddy comments that, “Sometimes we’ll go into town together and go shopping, or we might go to the gym together if it’s not a training day”. As with participants from Academy 1 and Academy 2, FIFA was also an extremely popular pastime for these young men; again, the majority of participants discussed its prevalence during their social events, frequently hosting “FIFA and pizza nights”. Moreover, Nicholas offers insight into a typical evening with a group of players from the football team: “We might get some food together, have a chat, watch the football on TV if it’s on, play FIFA, and then have a few drinks”.

Although similarities exist between the academy football team and University FC, the latter set of participants differed in two significant ways. Firstly, because they are undergraduate students, they are of legal UK drinking age – 18 – and therefore arrange a weekly social event involving every member of the team. Secondly, these participants differ as they are required to complete university assignments unconnected to their athletic careers.

Consequently, this permits participants from University FC to socialise in greater numbers of ways. Lawrence, for example, comments that, “We’d often go out and have chats at the pub...it could be about anything; normally it’s about [university] work, football or coaching – just general conversation”. Gary echoes this sentiment, commenting that, “There are two or three people on the same [degree] course as me, so we’ll help each other with work, or we might share coaching ideas with each other”.

Overall, antecedents of Anderson’s (2005a) near-total institution emerged from an overwhelming number of participants from the three football teams. Illustrating this, the near-total institution clearly restricts the number of openly gay men and women that these participants befriend, especially those from Academy 1 and Academy 2. Despite this, the majority of these men still maintained their gay-friendly perspectives. Furthermore, the activities and closeness outlined by these men challenges older research describing sport as a location where, ‘men battle...to achieve the most socially valued form of

masculinity' (Anderson, 2014, p. 118). Instead, these boys are showing that they are able to construct and develop friendships through a variety of group activities, a finding consistent with a growing body of research on ostensibly heterosexual men's team sports (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2011b).

However, despite participants outlining strong team relationships, these results also document lower levels of emotional intimacy, albeit predominantly among from Academy 1 and Academy 2, which this chapter now examines.

### **Emotional Intimacy**

During periods of high homophobia, men must 'try like hell' to be emotionally restrictive with one another (Brannon, 1976; Williams, 1985), in order to avoid homosexual suspicion. Conversely, women have maintained strong emotional relationships with one another, including the sharing of secrets (Sprecher and Sedikides, 1993). A culture of inclusivity, however, permits boys and men emotional openness without being culturally homosexualised (Anderson, 2009; Silva, 2012). Instead, they are able to exhibit stronger forms of emotional support to one another (Way, 2011).

Illustrating this culture of inclusivity, participants from University FC were forthcoming with their emotional openness with other men, in addition to their own family members. Nicholas, for example, describes his very close relationship with his father: "I would always talk to him about personal issues because we're very close". He also expresses pride at disclosing his love for his father. Liam is also close to a family member: "My twin brother and I are very close. We text most days and always have contact with each other – he's at another university". Donald describes the friendship he has with a friend from back home: "We've known each other like, forever! We're just very similar and will talk about anything – just like brothers".

These strong and emotionally intimate friendships were no different to those friendships constructed with other members of University FC. Larry, for example, comments on his friendship with his close friend in the team: "We talk about loads of different stuff – not just football. It could be relationships; we might comfort each other if there are problems with that or a family problem". This, he says, is partly influenced because they also study on the same degree programme. Supporting this, Alfie says that, "We'll talk about things like football,

university work, friends, girls [and] problems with things back home – no restrictions, really”. Roddy also discusses his comfort with discussing personal issues with his friend and teammate: “Yes – to be honest, we talk about it quite a lot! We’ve spoken about girls we’ve been seeing and families. Everything really”.

Describing the growing friendship he has enjoyed with another member of the team, Roger says:

We’ve become very close, probably because neither of us are British and so have similar ways of thinking...Over the summer we caught up with each other on the phone a lot; we’d just talk about what’s been going on”.

Other participants also use their similar backgrounds as a means to bond. Colin outlines how he often bonds with his close friend on the team: “Me and Fletcher often talk about why we didn’t make it when at our academy clubs. And we compared them and stuff like that”.

Participants from Academy 1 also talked about ways that clearly demonstrate that they enjoy close emotional relationships with other men. Like Nicholas from University FC, a number of participants were happy to declare love for their parents. In discussing relationships specifically with their best friend, almost all participants suggested they talk about issues they found important, even potentially upsetting, and that this was a reciprocal process; boys from Academy 1 were prepared to listen as well as talk about sources of joy or upset – such as relationship dynamics with romantic interests or with family members.

The majority of participants declared that their best friend was male, but someone outside the football club; someone located back home in their community of origin, for which the importance of trust was very pronounced. Adrian, for instance, discusses that he could share anything, without limits, with his friend, proclaiming that, “If I tell him not to tell anyone he won’t tell anyone – I trust him like that”. John echoes these thoughts, stating that, “I can tell my friend back home absolutely anything”. Lloyd took this one stage further and explained that he is happy to tell his best friend that he loved him, suggesting that, “It’s a bit of a laugh, but I do [love him]. He’s my good mate”. Similarly, Jake declares that he talks to his friends about a number of personal issues, and Harry indicates that, “If he’s your best mate you can talk about anything you want”, before caveating slightly, and commenting, “There might be some things you don’t [share], if it’s really, really personal”.

With respect to teammates at the football club, emotional closeness was evident, though not as clearly, and was a little more restricted. Several of the participants positioned themselves as being good friends in as much as they would expect their best friend on the team to know they would be able to come to talk to them about sensitive issues. This extended to include doubts or a lack of confidence about performance in matches or training, issues to do with their family or romantic relationships with women and even the hypothetical situation of their closest teammate needing to declare that he was gay (see Chapter 8). As a source of emotional support for their friends on the team, these young men were largely unwavering. John, for example, is adamant about his emotional openness, reiterating that, "If there's something to talk about then I encourage people to talk about it". Likewise, Gerald comments that he fails to understand why people aren't open if they have emotional issues.

Participants from Academy 2 also spoke of ways in which they enjoy emotional openness with other men. As with Academy 1, the majority of these participants disclosed that their best friend was someone located outside of the football club, and usually from back home. Within these friendships, heightened levels of trust were particularly apparent. Evidencing this, William comments that, "I will talk to those guys about anything, to do with football or school, and personal things of course". Fred also discusses how he is closer to friends outside of the club, and can tell them "completely anything". Phil even declares his closeness with his best friend from back home as, "Love, for sure. I miss him, and we're 'thick as thieves' when we're together".

Emotional openness was also evident with teammates at the club, more so than participants from Academy 1, although trust, again, was of significant importance. Simon, for example, says that these deep and meaningful conversations occur, "All the time. I was talking yesterday about my girlfriend and whether I still want to be with her. That was quite a deep conversation. We have conversations like that – whenever they're needed – although not a lot". This was also apparent with Max, who commented that open and personal conversations vary: "

Anything and everything! From girls to family problems – anything. Everything we share...Saturday night I slept with someone, and then told him about it and all the details and stuff. That was quite a personal conversation.

Both these participants followed up their initial comments by stating that their friendships with their close friends on the football team do not vary in comparison to friends back home. This was also the case with a number of other participants, too.

Others, for example, Raheem had forged emotionally close friendships with teammates due to their comparative status as a foreign player in an English Premier League academy. Raheem comments that:

Yes, we have deep conversations about girlfriends, contracts [and] money...The thing is here, he can just come up to me and speak to me in German, and no-one else will understand so it doesn't really matter.

This closeness was not universal to each member of Academy 2, however, as some were less open with their friends inside the club. Jordan, for example, comments that, "We have personal conversations about stuff if we need to, but it rarely happens", before admitting that, "I wouldn't tell as much to these guys [in the football team] as I would to friends back home". Robert maintains some degree of closeness with teammates, but that, "It depends who you're talking to...You speak what you feel, but only to those whom you trust". He also comments that, "I don't have to worry about that with other friends". Duncan supports this, stating that, "There's no point in bottling up, but you've got to be careful who you're talking to; you don't want stuff used against you".

Many of the participants sampled for this research documented strong levels of emotional support and closeness with other males. Unlike older research undertaken during periods of high homophobia (Curry, 1991; Pleck, 1981; Williams, 1985), iGeneration males often build friendships with one another without the fear of being labelled gay (Anderson, 2014). A combination of the activities these men enjoy together, as well as their emotional closeness, many similarities can be drawn from what many young men describe as a 'bromance' (Anderson, 2014). Here, one's relationship with his closest friend supersedes that of a girlfriend or lover. Despite this closeness being evident among many, some participants – particularly those from Academy 1 and Academy 2 – were restricted in their level of emotional closeness.

### ***Restricted Emotionality***

Although some level of emotional intimacy is apparent among these participants, there was a clear reluctance to share personal and private information with teammates in the ways the boys suggested they would do with their friends outside the football club. This was limited, however, to participants from the two Premier League academies.

From Academy 1, Richard explains that his relationship with his teammates was different, resembling a professional working relationship more than a friendship. Similarly, Lloyd simply suggests that he will talk about certain things with friends on the team but much more so with friends back home. This mirrored the response given by John, who, despite his previous assertion that team members should be open whenever they needed, still proposes that there are some things he will not discuss with his friends on the team. Rather, he would talk to his close friends from back home. Bryn concurs with this sentiment, suggesting that, "I have other friends I talk to about everything, so it's less so with my best friend on the team. It's different".

The men from Academy 2 offered similar admissions of restricted openness with their teammates. Comparing his friendships, Doug comments that, "I would normally talk to my family about stuff if there's anything wrong or maybe my agent". He continues by suggesting that he is more open with his friends back home, than the boys he plays football with. Similarly, Fred declares that, "I won't tell them really personal stuff; I'd probably mention it but not explain it that much". Instead, he says that he prefers to talk to friends outside the club: "I've known them all my life and they are my good mates". William mirrors his teammates, suggesting that he is closer to his friends back home.

Players from both academies rationalised this in a very particular way. As well as being a workplace, an arena where many people develop many different types of relationships (including friendships) in the wider economic structure, the competitive nature of academy level football – where these men are effectively competing against one another to secure a professional contract in the game (see James, 2010) – meant that these young men viewed each other as rivals in some respects, as well as colleagues. While holding dear the need for a strong sense of camaraderie and team spirit, this was in tension with the ambitions of an individual to earn a professional contract, something each of the young men aspired to achieve.

This is evident in comments made by participants from each of the academy teams, who point to the nature of competition as being instrumental in the more guarded attitude. From Academy 1, for example, Adrian comments that:

If I were to say something to my best mate on the team and it slipped out and got around, then that might hurt me here. [I'd] rather just get on with what I do by myself rather than tell somebody and have them talk about me and what I'm doing.

Harry concurs with this sentiment, commenting that, "Here, I'm in competition with my friends, so you have to be a bit selfish". He follows this up with: "You maybe don't get as close as you do to friends from back home".

These comments were duplicated among participants from Academy 2. Summarising this, Steve suggests that open and frank conversations with teammates are oftentimes rare:

People are afraid that things might be used against them. In the Under-21 and Under-18 teams, even though you are a team, you are still competing for the same salary that is budgeted for young players, so not everyone is going to make it into the First Team...So everyone is competing against each other, regardless of the position you are in".

Interestingly, though, Steve says that he has never been aware of a situation when emotional openness has been used against someone. However, this perception causes a level of fear, which restricts the disclosing of personal information. Jason echoes this sentiment by saying that, "I don't want to mix the two [personal life and football] because I would be thinking, 'I've told this person this; I wonder how he's going to perceive me'. That's why I wouldn't [disclose personal information]". Ultimately, participants are primarily concerned that disclosure of personal and private issues could, in turn, negatively affect their football careers.

However, a degree of closeness among teammates is still valued, even if for the purposes of team spirit and achieving team goals. For example, Jake, from Academy 1, draws attention to the importance of banter over explicit emotional openness with best friends on the team:

You know a lot more about your best mate than others. So like with banter, you know what your best mate on the team can take and may not know about others, so that helps.

Knowing someone well enough to understand when to draw the line with banter (see Chapter 10) is a more subtle dimension of emotional closeness but does point to an important amount of awareness.



## Chapter 10: Homosociality and Banter

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the way young men from these three football teams construct and regulate their homosocial bonding. Research undertaken during periods of high homophobia has documented that men's gendered terrains are severely limited (Field, 1999; Floyd, 2000; Plummer, 1999). Using Ibsen's (2002) collection of 5,000 images of men between the 1880s to the 1980s, Anderson (2009, p. 82) writes that, 'as American culture grew increasingly aware of homosexuality, men began to pry intimacy away from fraternal bonding'. Accordingly, boys and men have traditionally been discouraged from physical intimacy, such as holding hands, softly hugging or kissing, through fear of emasculation and homophobia (Connell, 2000).

In contrast, a culture of inclusivity allows men greater numbers of gendered behaviours without being homosexualised (McCormack, 2012a). Highlighting this, contemporary research has shown that heterosexual male athletes frequently engage in mock homosexual acts for the purpose of homosocial bonding (Anderson, 2014). Although such acts may contribute to a culture of heteronormativity in that they are ironic proclamations of heteromascularity (McCormack, 2012a), iGeneration participants stress that these acts are not designed as a form of homophobia.

Instead, these ostensibly heterosexual men indulge in these homoerotic acts as a sense of camaraderie, and, importantly, to celebrate the strength of friendship. Accordingly, Anderson (2014, p. 144) writes that:

Heterosexual men who engage in prolonged kissing can be viewed in terms of a juxtaposition of a semi-public performance with a semi-private meaning...it is symbolized by homosocial joking and repartee.

This degree of camaraderie – commonly referred to by some as 'banter' (Baxter, 2004; Hein and O'Donohue, 2013) – also provides men with a sense of entertainment, particularly within an often impenetrable environment like sport (Anderson, 2005a; Parker, 1996a; see also Chapter 9).

Throughout this chapter, I show how the young men across the three football teams define the complex concept of 'banter', and ways in which they construct it with their teammates. Accordingly, I outline two, non-exhaustive forms of banter based on responses offered by participants. Not content with the way they construct banter, I also discuss ways which these men interpret this humour and how it may alter in the presence of an openly gay player.

### **The Construction of 'Banter'**

Understanding various forms of 'banter' has formed the basis for a number of sociological analyses (Hein and O'Donohue, 2013). For Baxter (2004), men engaging and sharing jokes allows the construction of relationships with one another, whilst it can also contain, 'the playful exchange of teasing remarks' (Hein and O'Donohue, 2013, p. 6). The construction of banter in a strong male space, such as competitive team sport, can take many forms, with previous research documenting sexism, misogyny and objectification (Renold, 2004). Other forms also include humour, sarcasm or elevated competitiveness (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Gill, Henwood and McLean, 2005; Lyman, 1987).

Given that the structure of competitive team sport unites boys and men together in large groups (Anderson, 2009), each of the 60 participants interviewed made reference to the presence of banter among teammates. Attempting to define and understand the term, however, remains troublesome and problematic. As I have argued elsewhere within this thesis (see Chapter 11), one must attempt to understand the context surrounding the construction of banter. Accordingly, as part of this research, participants from each of the three football teams were asked to define their personal understandings of banter.

From Academy 1, for example, Lewis suggests that banter incorporates a broad range of behaviours: "It can be anything – it could be just joking around, or it could be slapping each other's bums and stuff". Harry echoes this sentiment, outlining that, "A lot revolves around taking the piss out of each other, but only in a funny way". Charles explains that, "Sometimes we're just a bit hyper and want to have a laugh". Others, however, including Peter, found it difficult to define banter in a complex manner. Following a long pause, he responds: "It's hard to define! It could be loads of stuff; we just kind of banter around".

Participants from Academy 2 also defined banter in a similar manner. Phil, for example, simply describes banter as, "Just taking the piss out of each other, really". Dave also offers a brief response, commenting that, "Banter is just something you do with friends for a laugh". Others provided a more detailed definition: Mark describes banter as:

Ripping [sic] into each other – anything and everything; playing pranks, or doing anything for a bit for a bit of a laugh. Nothing serious, though, just taking the piss out of each other.

Echoing this sentiment, Raheem says that, “We wind each other up about anything, to be honest”, whilst Fred comments, “It’s just taking the mick out of each other – like me with my grey hair! Or if someone’s breath stinks”.

Definitions of banter from participants of University FC offered more detail. Alfie, for example, explains that banter incorporates, “Telling jokes, taking the mick out of people for things that might’ve happened...It can be something related to football but also other stuff, too”. Similarly, Ben interprets banter as, “Something that’s a joke, not something that’s malicious...It’s never a personal attack, just a bit of a laugh”. Larry makes reference to “football banter”, commenting that, “Banter, to me, is something that you wouldn’t get offended by. Football’s a very social event, and easy for jokes”.

A number of participants provided examples of banter which was commonplace. James, for example, a participant from Academy 1, outlines that banter manifests in multiple ways: “It could be taking the piss out of each other’s girlfriends or other similar ‘in-jokes’ like that – or sometimes we kiss and pretend to fuck each other as a joke”. From Academy 2, Joe says that banter alludes to:

Cussing each other, making jokes...it could be name-calling – there’s a lot of taking the piss out of each other’s mums...or we jump around on each other and stuff like that.

Accordingly, these forms of banter can be loosely categorised into two main forms: jocular and physical – both of which were commonplace among each of the three football teams. It is still important to note, however, that these categories are not exhaustive and, at times, often overlap. Other forms of banter can also be characterised in alternative ways.

Participants from University FC provided a range of examples to highlight the prominence of banter. Most outlined that banter can occur about football or about social situations. Highlighting this, Larry simply comments, “It [banter] can consist of things that have happened in matches or during social nights. We all take part in it”. Nicholas concurs, also referring to the players’ familiarity with one another in a number of contexts:

Banter can be about anything – who’s got the biggest bum, smallest bum, or biggest penis, smallest penis – anything like that. It could be about girls...It’s an ‘open field’ because anyone and everyone is contributing to the banter.

Similarly, Alfie also comments that:

Banter can be about a lot of things...a few weeks ago I missed a penalty, so I got banter for that. Or when someone fell over or was sick on a night out, there was lots of banter for that”.

Lawrence comments that, “You’re asking for banter if you wear stupid clothes or wear your hair stupidly”.

Within Academy 2, it became apparent that banter took a much wider form. One of the most ubiquitous forms of banter occurs through the prevalence of nicknames. Fred discloses that each member in the team has a nickname, usually based on his appearance, and frequently in comparison to professional players. For example, one boy, Duncan, was referred to as ‘Rooney’, referencing his balding hairline – similar to that of Manchester United and England forward, Wayne Rooney. Another, Fred, was nicknamed ‘Derry’, due to the similarities of his hair colour with retired footballer (now manager), Shaun Derry. Similarly, Raheem laughs as he discloses that he is often nicknamed a ‘Nazi’ because he hails from Germany. Discussing the origin of nicknames, Robert adds: “They can also come if someone has done something stupid – but they [the nicknames] wouldn’t be anything too vile”.

Banter comes in other forms, too. Phil states that, “Banter can be about anything!” Doug, for example, describes that banter occurs, “Both on and off the pitch. It could be if you’ve been nutmegged, or because of the clothes you’re wearing”. Supporting this, Ross says that:

It depends on what has happened...Say if something has happened in training, like someone went past you with a piece of skill and made you look stupid, then everyone might jump on that person. In the changing room, too, people are always saying stuff like, ‘you stink, mate, have a wash’. Just little things like that, really.

Recalling a similar situation, Simon quotes: “Two girls who were...not the best looking...started talking to Max, asking for his number. Then Josh gave them Doug’s number instead of his”. Robert references the nature of “football banter”, suggesting that it can often be ruthless. Exemplifying this, he recalls an incident from his previous club:

It can be horrible stuff, sometimes. When I was at another club, we used to piss in the water bottles (laughs). Sometimes you might cut the heel out of a sock! Here, we often tape shoes to the ceiling, or you might take clothes and put them behind the toilet.

Although such activities are primarily designed to facilitate familiarity and solidarity among teammates, they can potentially have a detrimental effect, also.

Participants from Academy 1 also provided examples of how they banter with one another. Ashley, for example, says that, “The banter we have is a laugh...it can be a joke about someone’s fashion or something”. Similarly, Brian comments that, “We like to joke around so there are a lot of jokes about more or less anything really – anything is fair game, really”. Whilst Charles outlines that banter regularly occurs between team members at Academy 1, levels may vary on closeness with that specific person: “We banter...but with banter, you would do it a lot more with your best mate”. The most significant discussions of banter from Academy 1, however, came in physical form.

### ***Physical Banter***

Participants from each football team commented on the frequency of, broadly speaking, physical banter – or homosocial ‘gay banter’. Many of the athletes from Academy 1 discuss that this occurs on a regular basis, especially when traveling to an away game, which often consists of long periods of travelling on a coach. This normally revolves around feigned sexual attraction for one another, as John outlines: “There’s a lot of hitting bums and stuff in the showers and a lot of sarcastic banter [meaning mock gay sex]”. Adrian also says that, “Yeah, the guys pretend to fuck each other and doing all sorts of things like that”. James adds: “There’s quite a lot of kissing and [pretend] fucking...this even happens in public”.

Mock gay sex is not a new phenomenon: a number of scholars have observed this overtly playful behaviour in a variety of other private male spaces (Anderson, 2005b; Diamond, Kimmel and Schroeder, 2000; Flood, 2008; Schroeder, 2002). Participants within this research even highlighted the frequency with which this occurs in public spaces, too. These findings are also consistent with Anderson (2014), who argues that the feigning of sexual attraction between heterosexual men is the most common form of banter between friends.

However, this physical banter is not restricted to mock gay sex. Participants also discuss a range of other forms of physical banter. Acknowledging this, Lloyd says that, “There’s quite a bit of physical stuff: small hugs, testicle slaps, bum touching [and] high fives”, before adding: “It sounds weird when you say it,

but yes, we do it". Similarly, Bryn comments that, "If there is a big bunch of us and we were messing around...[we'd be] not really fighting but putting each other in headlocks and stuff like that". However, Richard highlights that not all participants engage to this extent: "I give them a little tap on the bum or something, but that's about it really".

Participants from Academy 2 also outline similar forms of physical banter. Raheem, for example, comments how physical banter comes in multiple forms:

There can be pushing each other around or pretend fighting...If you think about it, it's just stupid – one thing, you're standing in the shower and the next thing you see someone pissing on someone's leg! It's just the most random stuff".

Max supports this, suggesting that physical banter occurs frequently, particularly within the changing room environment. He says: "Sometimes you slap someone's arse – or you might smooch them. It happens off the pitch a lot, but on the pitch, too". Doug outlines similar behaviour: "A few of the lads have play fights and will start wrestling each other...just play fighting". While Steve concurs with these observations, he claims that the frequency has reduced as they have got older, perhaps denoting that this is viewed as a sign of immaturity.

A small number of participants also discuss 'gay chicken' – a game usually involving two men who motion towards a kiss, with the winner being the one who retreated last (Anderson, 2014) – suggesting that it has occurred at social events. During his interview, Ross consistently laughs as he tells me his account of two participants playing gay chicken:

I don't know if anyone has ever gone the whole way...actually, [name] might have...Some people do that stuff, just as messing and having a laugh. Thinking about it, I think [name] and [name] have done it. Those two are best friends and absolute comedians.

When asked how he interpreted these interactions, Ross says that, "It's nothing – it's not mocking gay people or anything, we're just messing around". Others also commented on gay chicken: "I've seen that happen sometimes", says Phil, "It's hilarious...it's just us having a laugh together, really. Nothing horrible is meant by it".

The acceptance of kissing, in the form of gay chicken, is significant given that there is no historical tradition of men kissing in the United Kingdom (Anderson, 2014; Fox, 2008). Also, some scholars have traditionally interpreted such forms of homosociality as a means of mocking gay men (Dunning and

Sheard, 1979; Sedgwick, 1985) – something that young men from iGeneration strongly refute (Anderson, 2014). Rather, these men argue that activities such as gay chicken are common because they facilitate and strengthen the bond of their group friendship.

Participants from University FC also outlined the regularity of physical banter. Highlighting this, Paddy suggests that physical banter can be as mundane as “tripping someone up in the warm up” to “full-blown pushing, shoving or hugging”. Tony says that, “Someone will always be patting someone on the bum – especially when something’s happened in training or something”. Similarly, Gary comments that physical banter is often facilitated by the exchange of jocular banter:

People are always hugging and joking, and sometimes people slap others on the bum. It happens a lot if they’ve played a good joke, such as throwing a towel in the shower or putting *Deep Heat* [a pain-relieving ointment commonly applied by athletes] in someone’s underwear.

Interpreting these actions, Nicholas says that, “There is socially allowed or accepted behaviour in football, such as touching bums or hugging everyone around”.

Most of the participants from University FC, however, commented on the role of their weekly team socials in facilitating physical banter. Held every Wednesday, the social secretary of University FC, Roger, outlines a typical social event:

The game finishes and on the way back we’ll take some alcohol. Then we start singing songs and joke around together before getting ready. We have fancy dress most weeks, so we’ll help each other get ready and then we meet down the pub, watch the football on TV and then head out to [name of club] for the rest of the night.

The influence of alcohol is significant here: Peralta (2007) shows that men frequently use alcohol in their homosocial bonding, whilst Anderson, Adams and Rivers (2010) highlight the prevalence of alcohol in influencing men’s kissing.

This research is supported by the findings from participants of University FC. Illustrating this, Russell says that, “At socials there is a lot of physical banter – it’s always fuelled by alcohol. We always have group hugs and dancing together at the end”. Colin concurs with this sentiment, stating that, “We all jump up and hug together – especially when there’s a specific song that comes on and we’ve all had a few [drinks]”. Likewise, Frank laughs as he comments, “Oh yes – it’s strong

banter anyway, but it's always worse when we've been drinking. Hugging, jumping around, kissing [and] singing: we do it all". Supporting this, Alfie says that, "Yeah, absolutely [there is physical banter], especially when there's been alcohol. We have hugs and when a good song comes on then we'll all dance together". Alfie continues to outline that towards the end of a team social, physical banter would be at its peak due to the volume of alcohol consumed by participants:

There could be a group of 20 of us having a big huddle – just hugging and jumping on each other. Kissing would happen quite a lot, as well, to be honest. There are certain players who do it more than others. That's standard on a night out really.

Interpreting this, he says that, "I wouldn't say anyone feels weird about it [kissing]...I've never seen anyone resist it". Tony understands this in a similar way as his teammate: "No [it doesn't bother me]. It's [kissing] just a way of showing love for friends in the team, really".

When discussing how the extent of physical banter exacerbates during team socials, Roger says, "I think it's weird sometimes". Given his previous proclamations of frequently engaging in physical banter, this seemed an odd response. When I asked him to clarify, it emerged that he was referring to many of his teammates' restricted behaviours:

When people are drunk they let their feelings out – I find that weird. People need to be themselves! When they're drunk they're being themselves, and when they're not they keep themselves to themselves. They don't actually show their personalities as much.

Asked if he would find this behaviour unusual, Roger responds, "No, of course not. If people want to kiss and hug all the time then they should just do it!" Although Roger is alone in raising this issue, he suggests that the normalcy of physical tactility among the participants of University FC means that nobody would be marginalised or homosexualised should they engage in such acts regularly.

Because older research has often documented high levels of homophobia accompanying these various forms of banter (Dunning and Sheard, 1979; Elias and Dunning, 1986; Sedgwick, 1985), I sought to offer further explanations for the behaviours described by the participants. Thus, in order to further understand the complex subject of banter, these questions did not cease with initial responses from participants. To further address understandings of banter, I pushed questions broader, in an attempt to understand the meanings and interpretation of this behaviour.



### ***Contextualising Banter***

Illustrating their interpretations of both jocular and physical forms of banter, participants from Academy 1 commented on banter as humorous exchanges between friends within a closed environment (Manley, Palmer and Roderick, 2012). Charles, for example, says: “We spend so much time together that we feel comfortable with each other...No-one thinks anything of it [the banter] – I find it funny...Nobody thinks about it”. Supporting this, Richard shortly declares that, “It’s a way of showing love for your close friends”. Along a similar theme, Harry says that, “I don’t think it’s ever serious, what we do...It’s just a way of having fun with everyone”, while Peter comments that, “Some people can be vicious with their banter, but it’s a laugh; some people take it further than others, but people don’t get offended”.

Those from Academy 2 shared similar views. Mark, for example, says that, “We know the banter is nothing serious – it’s not bullying. Because of our friendship, we know it’s not to be taken seriously”. Similarly, Fred says that, “Nobody takes offence to it – it’s just a bit of fun”, whilst Jason says that, “It’s never banter that will upset anyone”. Raheem, the player frequently described as a ‘Nazi’ by his teammates, supports this sentiment: “Although we wind each other up about anything, at the end of the day, we are still friends”. Added to this, Ross explains that banter is often used as a means to “score points off each other”.

Participants from University FC offered similar arguments in their explanations of banter. For example, Alfie says that, “We know each other so well and spend so much time together that we know it’s not serious”. Jackson echoes this sentiment: “Just because we know each other so well...it’s the friendship we have between us all, so people don’t get offended by it”. Moreover, Ross suggests that, “Admittedly, the banter we use is pretty harsh – that’s what football is like – but we know that no-one means it seriously”.

Context and familiarity were of significant importance here. Participants commented that, in order to engage in banter, one must be an accepted member of the team, and have familiarity with those he is bantering. This is eloquently summarised by Steve, who acknowledges the often harsh nature of banter discussed earlier:

If someone completely outside of the football world came in here, they would think the banter to be very cruel. But for us that are used to it, we

just find it funny. If you do something silly then you are going to hear about it – but that’s the way it is...But I think none of us would like it if someone we didn’t know came in and joined in.

Supporting this further, Tom adds: “We only would do it to each other...it’s our way of showing a strong team relationship between us all”.

Again, this was similar among participants from University FC.

Incorporating the importance of context into his interpretations of banter, Roger comments that:

I’d say it’s joking around with each other. But with us as close friends and whatever, we have our in-jokes that we laugh about. We understand everything that each other says.

Similarly, Ellis says that, “Banter is developed over time – you have to feel comfortable with each other to do it”. Interestingly, Tony states that the manager occasionally participates with the construction of banter, but that: “Most of the banter is player-oriented...we like to keep the player-manager relationship professional, and he doesn’t know us as personally, so his banter doesn’t really fit”. Nicholas concurs: “It is team banter – the manager joins in – but it’s a matter of understanding someone”.

Given the subjective nature of banter, discussions surrounding the transgression of banter – something participants referred to as “crossing the line” – also occurred. Raheem, for example, says that he believes, “Banter would fail if someone doesn’t laugh, or he gets upset”. However, he was unable to recall an example. Likewise, Chris comments that, “There are boundaries...maybe if you’re talking about something really personal, you might hurt their feelings”. He, too, was unable to provide an example, because, “I’ve never witnessed anyone ‘cross the boundary’”. On the contrary, Tom believes he witnessed failed banter at his previous club: “It just went a bit too far and someone got upset, but it didn’t last long”. Asked how this was resolved, he replies: “It was just brushed away, and I think the same would happen here; if someone went too far then you’d tell them to go easy”.

Robert also provided an example of failed banter, again from a previous club, which almost escalated into a violent exchange:

I’ve seen people ‘snap’ – two boys from a few years ago, they were giving each other harsh banter all day, constantly going at it. And then he threw a snowball at him in the shower, and I’ve never seen someone go from

being calm to aggressive so quickly; it was like someone flicked a switch. They squared up and wrestled and were sliding all over the place.

Despite the aggression witnessed between the two boys, Robert admits that it soon became amusing for all involved. “I don’t think it would’ve gotten serious – there were enough people there”, he comments, before saying: “It never goes that far. There’s no point; I’ve never seen two teammates have a real fight with fists”.

This was mirrored by participants from University FC. Tony suggests that banter would fail if it was overused: “It would be too far if it was constant and if someone was becoming disgruntled with it”. Asked if he had witnessed this situation, he responded negatively. Russell concurs, arguing that, “Banter is making fun of situations...it can’t be something that does too far. If it gets personal then it can be bad”. However, neither has he witnessed such a situation. Alfie states that he would “draw the line” under banter which was excessive:

If it was taking the piss out of something that had happened, like if my family or my girlfriend had a serious problem, then it would be too much. To be honest, I’ve never seen that happen, though. We’re all friends, at the end of the day; we’re not trying to bully each other or anything like that.

Reiterating the importance of context and familiarity, Lawrence comments that, “There’s a fine line between something which is banter and/or abuse. It depends what’s being said how you say it, as well as how long you’ve known the person”.

Footballers across the three football teams sampled for this research emphasised the importance of familiarity when engaging in banter. This is further supported by describing their discomfort with an outsider potentially attempting to share their banter. Further, although a small number of participants provided examples of when banter had failed, and had transgressed into unacceptable altercations, most argued that these situations would be easily resolved.

### ***Changing Banter***

In Chapter 8, I documented how men from these three football teams demonstrated high levels of acceptance towards the hypothetical scenario of having an openly gay teammate. This inclusivity also extended to different levels of support, including social and civil equality for same-sex marriage, public proclamations of friendship and defending a gay teammate if he were to be

homophobically victimised. These findings are also supported by their discussions of how their banter may alter in the presence of an openly gay teammate. Respondents from all three teams demonstrated empathy and awareness of the potential sensitivity of the situation.

Exemplifying this, when participants from Academy 1 were asked about how the presence of an openly gay man might interfere with their banter, participants offered detailed responses. John says:

I think that it [banter] may change because obviously they may find offence. I don't know how it would work, because part of the banter thing is jumping all over [pretending to have sex with] someone who doesn't want to be jumped all over. But if the guy wants that, then it sort of takes the fun away from it.

Danny also worried that his hypothetically gay friend could negatively interpret this banter. He comments:

There would be certain things I wouldn't do to that mate; like I wouldn't think about it if were just having a laugh. I just wouldn't want to give him the wrong impression, that's all. I just wouldn't want to hurt him if you know what I mean?

Banter, of course, occurs in a number of settings, such as hotels, changing rooms and between friends in their shared accommodation – commonly referred to as 'digs' by participants (see also Parker, 1996a; Roderick, 2006a).

Accordingly, many of these discussions progressed to how banter may alter if living in the same room as an openly gay teammate. Harry says, "Obviously the banter would change if he was gay". Alex articulates why he also feels the banter might change:

I might think about it afterwards and think like, 'what did he think about it?' I think I would try to act the same physically and stuff, but in my head is always going be, 'what he's thinking?' Whether he's taking it seriously or thinking it's a joke. I just don't know how the physical stuff would go – boys don't do that [banter] with girls, do they?

Alex therefore hypothesises that the relationship would ultimately change because, "That's one thing about your friends – you don't worry about what's said or how I would act. But I'd have to see if it goes well". Referencing the mock gay sex discussed earlier, Joe says that it would probably continue but would just be different. He suggests that the player might get more gay sex than before he came out:

If someone sticks out a bit then they are going to be a focus of banter, we'd just have something to make fun of...I'd probably banter him even more, now that I have something to take the piss out of.

He then clarifies, "You know what I mean by that? Like, have fun with, not bully".

Overall, most participants from Academy 1 suspected that the presence of an openly gay player would change the nature of their banter, in not wanting to send the gay player a wrong message, or seem offensive. Charles highlights that the discomfort could run the other way, too: "I might feel uncomfortable if he took the banter too far [meaning made sexual advances towards him]". In other words, Charles wonders where the line is between mock sexual interest expressed from a gay teammate towards himself – or gay banter – and honest sexual desire being played out. When asked how he would handle the situation if he felt that his gay teammate was doing it more for his own sexual thrill than 'gay banter', he says: "I would make a joke out of it at first, but if he didn't get it then I would get irritated and have to tell him [to stop]". This, he clarifies, would be no different than if a girl was making unwelcome advances, except that, "I wouldn't want to hurt my best mate's feelings now, would I?"

Participants from Academy 2 demonstrated similar sensitivities and concerns with regard to offending an openly gay player with their banter. However, these men were not as detailed in their concerns as those from Academy 1. For example, Jordan simply comments, without elaboration, "I think some of the banter might change if there was a gay player here". Duncan supports this, suggesting that, "We would all be conscious I think – but I think we're all so close here that we would probably just talk to him about it". Robert comments: "I think we'd be aware. Some of the banter might change to begin with". However, matching his gay-friendliness, he follows up his initial comments by saying:

I think after a while, though, the gay player might join in the culture of banter on the team. *But*, if he was offended then it would stop – we don't want to offend him.

This awareness is shared by Simon: "Yeah, maybe the banter would change. People might be a bit more aware – some things can be borderline bullying [sic], really, can't they?" Mark echoes the sentiments of his teammates: "I don't think it would change relationships but we would be aware of what's been said". He then

follows this up with: “I’m not sure, though, because it’s not a situation everyone’s been in”.

Those from University FC were very similar in their sensitivities, although there was less gay banter among these players (see Chapter 11 on homosexually-themed language), thus leading to fewer potential changes. Jackson for example, states that, “There’s nothing homophobic I would say between any of us – so I don’t know if the banter would change, to be honest”. Alfie mirrors this, commenting, “I don’t see why things would need to change if we had a gay player in the team – nobody here is going to be uncomfortable with it”. Likewise, Roddy quotes that, “No, the banter wouldn’t really change – I don’t think it can be interpreted as homophobic in any way”.

Nevertheless, some respondents were still concerned about causing offence to an openly gay player through an example of failed banter. Colin says that, “Maybe it would change – we don’t want anyone thinking it is abuse”. Similarly, Fletcher comments that, “We don’t really have gay banter much, but I think the banter would change if we had an openly gay player – we’d be worried about offending that person”. This was something replicated by Anton, who argues that, “None of us want to cause offence to anyone – we’d be very conscious about it, I think”.

The level of sensitivity demonstrated by these young footballers not only highlights the fluidity of the way banter is constructed, but also challenges many claims that football remains a homophobic environment (see Chapter 1 and Caudwell, 2011). Indeed, Adams and Anderson (2012) show that gay athletes are often *consumed* into the banter, rather than the subject of it. Accordingly, the overview provided here again highlights the importance of understanding context (Anderson, 2014; McCormack, 2011); failure to do so obscures a complex web of forces at work. This is covered in more detail in Chapter 12.

## Chapter 11: Homosexually-Themed Language

This chapter outlines the utility and interpretation of what McCormack (2011, p. 664) terms 'homosexually-themed language'. Recognising the role of homophobia in understanding homosexually-themed language – as discussed in Chapter 5 – I apply McCormack's (2011) theorising to the language used by the participants of Academy 2 and University FC.

### Using Homosexually-Themed Language

Although the frequent use of homophobic discourse has been well documented within academic research on sport, participants from University FC reported that it is rarely used within their football club. Few examples were provided describing when this language might be used. Russell says that terms such as 'gay' are occasionally used by teammates: "But it's only meant that something is stupid, not in any other way". Similarly, Fletcher reports that, "Sometimes we call each other 'gay' or maybe a 'poof'. For example, if someone makes a sensitive comment on Facebook related to his girlfriend". This, he argues, should not be regarded as homophobic, because the person involved clearly identifies as heterosexual and, as a result, always respond positively. Russell and Fletcher were the only participants able to provide examples of when homosexually-themed language is used.

Aside from this limited number of examples, participants from University FC were keen to stress that they rarely use this sort of language. Colin admits that, "There may have been an incident when something has happened and someone gets called gay", though he describes this as a rare occurrence. Anton, though, along with many others, denies the use of this language, preferring what he describes as "generic football slang", the most frequently type of language used by members of the team. When asked, Roger even discloses his surprise at the lack of homosexually-themed at the club. Asked why homosexually-themed language is rarely used, Nicholas ponders for a short period, before replying:

It's a good question. I don't think I remember it being used. I personally don't think I have or would use that language because it's going a bit personal; you don't know if someone is gay and if they are they might be offended by it, especially if someone was closeted.

This could perhaps be interpreted as an example of heterosexism – participants use the language without noticing – though Lawrence suggests that the mixed

demographics of the team contributes to a high-level of respect. Others also declare the use of homosexually-themed language as unnecessary and immature (see McCormack, 2012a).

Interview excerpts are consolidated by observations of the players from University FC. Having attended a number of training sessions, this language was used by players on fewer than five occasions. When it was deployed, it was normally in response to a bad tackle, or on one occasion, during a jocular exchange between two participants. Contrasting from older research (Burn, 2000; Fine, 1987; Hekma, 1998; Pronger, 1990), at no time was this language intended to wound, victimise or marginalise other participants.

There were different admissions from the participants of Academy 2, however. Here, the vast majority admitted that homosexually-themed language was used on a regular basis. Simon, for example, acknowledges that, “Honestly, that language is used quite a lot. Words like ‘poof’ and ‘faggot’ are used, but people say it without even realising”. Duncan concurs, commenting that, “We say ‘gay’ 50 times a day, but no-one really thinks about it”. Raheem says that this form of language is, “Without meaning. It’s just an empty term – nothing ever serious gets used”, and Doug comments that, “It’s only used because we’re so close”.

Some participants discussed specific words and phrases employed within their footballing environment. Throughout interviews, three common terms emerged as the most popular choices among these participants: ‘gay’, ‘faggot’ (or ‘fag’) and ‘poof’. Other, less frequent terms were also used, however. Chris says that ‘batty’ or ‘batty boy’ is often used as an alternative to previous terms discussed. Other terms revealed by participants included ‘chi-chi’ and other similar variants, such as ‘chich’, terms which, upon further investigation, are revealed as homophobic epithets deriving from Jamaica (see Gutzmore, 2004). Its most famous use is heard in the 2001 song, *Chi Chi Man*, by Jamaican musicians T.O.K. Given the increased number of foreign migrants in Premier League academy systems (Elliott and Weedon, 2010), it is perhaps unsurprising that foreign colloquialisms are now also influencing players within this domestic environment. Many of the participants also discussed how other terms, such as ‘mug’ and ‘cunt’ were used among teammates on a regular basis.



Use of this language can be split into two settings: firstly, participants report that homosexually-themed language is employed when they are actively involved in football – either during training or in a match scenario. Steve, for example, comments that, on the pitch, anything can act as a prompt:

On the football pitch, if you don't go in for a 50-50 tackle then you might get called a faggot by some of the other players. I've seen that happen: 'Go in hard, you faggot' – stuff like that. I wouldn't say it happens every day but it happens.

Emphasising this as a perceived weakness, Ross adds that, "Coaches call us milk or milky if we pull out of a tackle because that's weak". Also describing homosexually-themed language, Simon describes how it can be instigated by anger: "In training and you don't pass them the ball and they have a go at you, you might say 'shut-up, you faggot'". However, he says that the anger would dissipate quickly: "They'd either laugh about it or they'd say it back to you".

Secondly, participants report how the language is commonly employed within their social environment. Raheem says that this is particularly common if something is perceived to be feminine, which would lead people to comment, "'That's gay, that' or 'What are you doing that for, gay boy?' But it's nothing serious". According to Duncan, this would be prompted by various acts: "If you're walking around and pretending that your pants are a G-string and your balls hang out, then everyone laughs and says, 'You're gay, man.'" This, he says, occurs on a regular basis. Similarly, Ross comments that, "There's this song by Rihanna about dancing like a girl, and people try and do it. They'll probably get called 'chich' or something like that". Dave also says that, "If someone went into the shower and someone started slapping his bum for a joke, then he might get called something". Duncan, though, admits that homosexually-themed language does not always need a prompt: "It's not just because something has happened – you just say it", whilst Simon comments, "Some can say it any time as a joke".

Although the majority of participants from Academy 2 commented on the frequency of homosexually-themed language among team members, there were three participants who differed. Robert describes it as "young banter", whilst Phil says, "No, I don't use it...I'm not in Year 5" – both referencing that they felt the language was immature – consistent with McCormack (2012a), whose participants comment they believe that this sort of language is no longer acceptable. Another

participant, Doug, says that, “I hate the word ‘faggot’, and anything similar. I used it once when I was younger and my mum told me off; I haven’t used it since”.

Nevertheless, the majority of participants at Academy 2 used homosexually-themed language on a regular basis, something I observed during my limited observation. Having observed the boys train on two separate occasions, the competitive environment was evident, occasionally leading to verbal disagreements between the players, which contained homosexually-themed language.

### **Understanding Homosexually-Themed Language**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, interpreting homosexually-themed language has traditionally fallen into two categories: homophobic and non-homophobic (McCormack, 2011). However, this categorising obscures the complex nature of homosexually-themed language – its presence does not necessarily equate to homophobia (McCormack, 2011). Interpreting homosexually-themed language instead goes far beyond what is said: one must consider context, including *how* something is said and *why* something is said (Anderson, 2014). Without knowing the true intent of those who use this language, it becomes impossible to categorise it as homophobic or non-homophobic. Accordingly, this section outlines the participants’ interpretations of the language they employed, providing more solid understanding.

Use of homosexually-themed language was limited among participants from University FC. Accordingly, participants did not interpret their language as homophobic, nor expected anyone else to. Illustrating this, Roger comments that, “I don’t think it’s seen as homophobic...the language and context we use it in is just seen as banter”. Similarly, Fletcher says that, “I don’t think it means that those who use it wouldn’t accept someone if he was gay – it’s just something that’s said”. Frank references the influence the closeness between team members and how it influences the acceptance of language: “That’s just the kind of club we’re in; if someone’s not happy then they’ll just say, and ask to have a quiet word after training”. Roger mirrors the sentiment of this teammate, suggesting that, “Everyone expects some language up to a point. If it goes too far there’d be resistance”, though doesn’t comment what “going too far” would be.

Participants from Academy 2, however, conceded that their language *could* be interpreted as homophobic, especially by someone who didn't know them – or an 'outsider' as many termed it. Importantly, they did not interpret their language as homophobic because no offence was caused to their friends on the team. Louis, for example, comments that, "It could probably be interpreted as homophobic if someone else came in and heard it, but we don't really pay any attention", and Jason says that, "I think it might be considered homophobic to some extent, but it's not to us". Dave casually comments that, "Everyone just gets on with it; it's a bit of a laugh and a joke in the changing room". Simon mirrors his teammate, stating that, "I wouldn't see it as being against homosexuality, I just think it's used as banter, as a joke...it's used quite a lot". Max says that, "It's only done in a jokey way".

Duncan and Doug liken homosexually-themed language to other forms of language: "It's like when you say, 'You son of a bitch', we don't mean it, we just do it to wind each other up. Everyone here knows that", says Doug. Although he doesn't approve of the language, he defended those who used it, stressing the significance of context:

Because we're so close, other words like 'nigger' are used, too. The black lads call us 'white cunts', but we always know they're joking. If someone from outside said anything like it to us, it would be homophobic because they don't know us. I'd probably want to give him a smack if that happened.

Doug's comments can be linked to Anderson's (2005a) concept of sport as a near-total institution. Although this is described in more detail in Chapter 9, it is also relevant here: Doug comments on his discomfort of an outsider interrupting the levels of team cohesion facilitated by the enclosed social system of a Premier League academy (Anderson, 2005a; Manley, Palmer and Roderick, 2012; Weedon, 2012).

Highlighting that the homosexually-themed language is not intended to wound, Chris comments that:

I don't know if it's homophobic. It's more of an insult – I've been around people all my life where if you called someone gay, it's just banter. Unless, of course, if you knew someone was gay and then you called them gay as insult; I'm not sure how that would be taken...But if you know someone's not gay, and you say, 'You're gay', it's just a bit of a laugh.

Chris's comments incorporate multiple meanings of the word 'gay'. Lalor and Rendle-Short (2007) document the evolution of the term, describing how it has changed from its original meaning – being happy and carefree – into a homonym, which can be used to describe both a person's sexuality *and* something considered as lame or stupid. Significantly, the second and third definitions have become disassociated with each other, meaning that the term can be used in multiple contexts (Rasmussen, 2004).

Without openly gay athletes from either University FC or Academy 2, it becomes problematic to judge levels of homophobia through language, though Anderson (2011a) argues that openly gay athletes no longer measure homophobia through this medium. Using McCormack's (2011) overview of homophobic discourse, however, suggests that use of this language should not be interpreted as homophobic. Participants discussed how their interpretation of the language was used without pernicious intent and without negative social effects. Consistent with other research (McCormack, 2012; McCormack and Anderson, 2010), participants discussed that this language has a positive social effect, although its presence is less progressive. Further, as Chapter 8 examined, these players have maintained pro-gay attitudes – therefore, this environment should not be described as homophobic.

To address this further, I also interviewed players about how homosexually-themed language might change if a gay player publically announced his homosexuality.

### ***Changing Homosexually-Themed Language***

Because members of University FC do not frequently use homosexually-themed language, only four participants made reference to how language may be impacted if a gay player was to come out of the closet. Roger hypothesises that, "If a gay person was to come out the closet then people would be more wary about what they say". Frank mirrors this contention, before stating, "But we don't really use that kind of language anyway, so it's irrelevant". With respect to limited homosexually-themed language used, Lawrence suggests that this would certainly change: "People would be scared to bring it up because it's [a person's sexuality] sensitive. They'd bring up something else to banter with".

Only two participants claim that use of this language would not completely cease: “It wouldn’t stop because, for some, it’s fairly standard, but if someone did come out then they already know the sort of environment they’re in”, says Roger. As the conversation then progressed, and the sensitivities of the topic became clearer to him, he then followed up his initial comments with, “To be fair, yes, people would be more wary”. The only similar comment came from Fletcher, who says: “I don’t think a player here would be offended by gay language so it wouldn’t change”, before backtracking: “Actually, unless he was new to the team – then he’d be offended...Actually it probably would change”, he laughs, realising the inaccuracy of his initial comments.

The majority of participants from Academy 2 claimed that an openly gay player would impact how homosexually-themed language was used among team members. Illustrating this, Raheem says that there are clear boundaries concerning what is acceptable among team members: “If there was a gay player when it would stop because there’s a clear respect between players – we wouldn’t want to offend him”. Simon simply comments, “People would be wary of using it because no-one wants to upset anyone”. Jason eloquently discusses his personal feelings:

I think if someone came out and he was in the changing room then I wouldn’t say it, because I know a lot of gay people and I get on well with them...Sometimes I use certain words, but I’d be worried about offending a gay player...You can’t be saying this and that; if there were gay people then I think it would affect you – you’d be aware of it.

Jason also made a comparison to racism, commenting that with black players in the team the presence of racial epithets would be absent.

Others from Academy 2 – such as Louis and Duncan – claim that the strong team relationship would affect how a gay player might feel about this language. Duncan contextualises this, by commenting: “Because we hang around 24/7, and we know each other so well, even if you say, ‘Your granddad’s a wanker’, and someone else’s granddad just died, it doesn’t really matter because you don’t mean it”. He then follows this up by stating he believes that the language may change initially, but would revert to how it was – but only if the gay player was comfortable. Chris offers a more detailed response on the matter:

I think if we were in the changing room, then of course you’d be careful with throwing words around...We’re a team, I suppose; just because they’re gay doesn’t mean they’re any different...I suppose they would be

worried about offending him...if you heard that word constantly then it might affect him a bit, and we don't want that.

Louis mirrors the sentiment of his teammates: "We would probably be more aware...But if he said it was fine to use it then people still would". Simon supports these comments during his interview, but comments that, "It's a really hard one to actually judge until you're actually in that situation yourself".

Raheem also reiterates the closeness among teammates at Academy 2. Thus, he offers a detailed justification of why a gay player may not be offended by the use of homosexually-themed language:

If someone in our changing room was gay, I don't think they would mind it, to be honest...The topic of being gay is not a problem – nobody has a problem with someone being gay, but you have to realise that these are your teammates, and you have to get the best out of each other.

As the discussion about homosexually-themed language with Raheem progresses, he then states his empathy towards an openly gay player within the team: "If they said that it was bothering them, then it would stop...If you were gay, would you want someone saying that stuff to you?" The awareness demonstrated by these participants in causing offence to an openly gay player both mirrors and substantiates the overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards homosexuality discussed in Chapter 8. Accordingly, it further supports the contention that this language should not be interpreted as homophobic.

### **Coaches and Homosexually-Themed Language**

Because sport has traditionally served as a medium through which misogynistic, femphobic and homophobic attitudes have been exhibited (Dunning, 1999), coaches – usually members of Generation X – have perpetuated this orthodox ethos (Anderson, 2014). The most significant element concerns their use of homosexually-themed language, which has provided the basis for contemporary studies of masculinity (see Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Anderson and McGuire, 2010; McCormack, 2011; McCormack and Anderson, 2010). Adams, Anderson and McCormack (2010) conceptualise this discourse through what they term *masculine establishing discourse* and *masculine challenging discourse*. This language often goes unchallenged by the athletes themselves.

Participants from Academy 2 did not discuss their coaches' language in great detail, though many commented that they do not use any homosexually-themed language. Illustrating this, Steve says that, "I don't think they'd use words like that – they wouldn't call players 'gay' from the sidelines or anything...I don't remember them ever using that language". Similarly, Phil simply comments that, "Coaches would never use that language", and Robert that, "No, I've never heard that – it would mainly just be us players, to be honest".

Only two participants responded affirmatively when discussing their use of homosexually-themed language: Fred reports that: "My goalkeeping coach...If I bottle out of a tackle then he'll call me a poof. It doesn't happen often, though". Significantly, Fred was the only goalkeeper interviewed from Academy 2, meaning that his coach differs than other members in the team. When asked how he feels about the language, he replies, "I just laugh. It doesn't bother me whether he does it or whether he carries on". The only other similar excerpt came from Ross, who comments that, "Sometimes coaches use the term 'milk' or 'milky' when players pull out of a tackle". Although this is not explicit homosexually-themed language, it could be argued that this is an example of masculine challenging discourse, whereby coaches call into question their players' masculinity, albeit not in such a violent way as shown in previous research (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; McCormack and Anderson, 2010). This is perhaps attributable to the professional nature of the setting, contrasting with previous research, which focuses predominantly on semi-professional football settings.

Use of this language was also observed in my observations of the players' training sessions. Although coaches were mostly encouraging, I frequently witnessed them encouraging players to exhibit their masculinity in order to achieve footballing success. Older coaches in particular adopted a more aggressive approach, and frequently employed phrases such as "man up" and warned players they needed to be stronger or "muscle up" if they wanted to succeed in Premier League football. Warrior narratives were also employed, as players were encouraged to "fight him" during an exercise (Jansen and Sabo, 1994). Another coach spoke of the demonstration of sacrifice by one player as he inadvertently blocked a shot at goal with his groin.

Aside from these examples, all other participants reported that their coaches did not use homosexually-themed language. Louis attributes this to their

professionalism: “Coaches are far too professional to use that kind of language”. However, this assertion is perhaps slightly undermined as participants reported that their coaches swear at them on a regular basis. Jordan comments that, “They say ‘fuck’ and ‘shit’ although I’ve never heard them say ‘cunt’ – I think that’s too deep a word”. Likewise, Doug said that coaches frequently swear: “It can be in training or a match. It doesn’t offend me – I grew up in a household where swearing is common. It’s context, really”. It emerged that coaches’ swearing was predominantly fuelled by poor footballing performance, thus causes no offence to the players interviewed. More importantly, this language was not intended to wound any specific player. Rather, it was intended to motivate the players in order to achieve more success, albeit in an aggressive manner (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010).

Contrasting this, Raheem provides a drastic example of a more senior player resenting this use of language by a coach:

This coach had a fierce reputation among the academy players who were scared of him. When he gave you *that* look, you knew you were going to get it! The coach tried to assert his dominance over this player who was from the First Team and 22 at the time. The coach called him a ‘silly prick’, so the player squared up to him and challenged him before walking out.

This example, though, is an isolated incident; no other participant from Academy 2 provided a comparable experience. It also appears that the seniority of a player – in this case a slightly older player from the club’s First Team – allows him to feel more confident in challenging a coach’s authority.

The more striking use of coaches’ homosexually-themed language, however, emerged from University FC. Here, participants described hearing their head coach deploy what they term as homophobic discourse, on a regular basis. This language usually demonstrated the dissatisfaction of the head coach. Alfie, for example, says that, “For some reason, a training exercise couldn’t be done, and he said, ‘That’s gay’”. Frank says that, “If someone couldn’t play then he would say, ‘How gay’, without even thinking”. Further, Roger comments that, “The head coach says it’s ‘gay’ if people can’t play – I’ve heard that a few times”. Anton, the club captain of University FC, and therefore a position of authority, also declares that:

He also always calls players a ‘gay wanker’, which is the only time I’ve ever heard that phrase in football. It happened regularly, particularly towards the player he didn’t like. He used it so much in the end that it had no



meaning to it – he'd use it in the same way that, 'You're an idiot' is used by others.

Alfie describes this scenario as “bemusing”, adding that it had caused division between the manager and some players.

When asked their interpretation of this language the majority of participants describe it as unprofessional. Roddy says that, “The word ‘gay’ is used far too much. There are also other words like ‘fuck’ and ‘cunt’, but it’s the consistent use of gay. It’s demoralising and unprofessional if someone keeps calling you it”. Alfie asks, “How can he say that if he’s head coach? Some of us looked at each other uncomfortably – it was all a bit bemusing”. Tony summarises the sentiment of many participants, suggesting that, “It’s not right to use it...He just doesn’t think when he says it”.

Although some participants interpreted the coach’s language as an attempt at banter – albeit a failed one – 15 of the 20 players interviewed felt that the language was homophobic. Using McCormack’s (2011) model of homosexually-themed language would support these claims: the coach’s language was designed to victimise and also had a negative social effect on participants, highlighted by participants’ admissions. The coach’s homophobic comments culminated into two significant events.

Firstly, players began to secretly mock the manager’s homophobia.

Illustrating this, Doug says that:

It got to the point when people used to use it as a joke *against* the manager, and it was so expected that he would say it, that people would quietly finish his sentences. We didn’t like it much!

Similarly, Trevor comments that, “It became a joke among the players”.

Oftentimes, participants report that this mockery manifested during training: “If you hit the crossbar or something, then someone would call you a gay wanker as a joke against the head coach”, comments Liam.

Secondly, and more significantly, led by Anton, the club captain, complaints were made by a number of senior players within the squad, which led to the head coach’s suspension during an investigation. Roddy justified this by saying that it affected the trust and respect between players and coaches: “No-one feels that they can take issues to the management which is an issue within itself”, before boldly commenting: “If you can’t talk about an issue to the

management then that needs to be changed”. Asked about the most desired outcome of the investigation, Anton says that:

He [the head coach] has ‘lost’ [the respect of] the players and should resign. To be honest, the players seem happier now that he’s away, and we’ve got an acting head coach who is far more highly [sic] respected.

Three months after data collection with the participants of University FC had been completed, the investigation concluded, and the head coach returned to his position without punishment. Although, according to the club captain, this was not the preferable conclusion, the stigma that participants attached to their coach’s language is still a noteworthy finding, particularly when taking into account that these players acted upon this language – as discussed shortly.

Stigmatising coaches’ language is nothing new: participants in Adams, Anderson and McCormack’s (2010) study of another semi-professional football team frequently commented on their discomfort their coach’s language, many choosing to ignore it. In another study, players comment that their coach should be fired because of his lack of professionalism and homophobic language (Anderson and McGuire, 2010). Participants in McCormack and Anderson’s (2010) study describe how coaches attempt to relate to them by using homosexually-themed language. Like the men from University FC, this is interpreted as homophobic discourse due to its negative social effect on participants.

Given that Lalor and Rendle-Short (2007) discuss how ‘gay’ has evolved into a homonym – a word with two discrete meanings – it is perhaps surprising that participants from University FC reject their coach’s use of the term, especially as a small number of participants also use homosexually-themed language. I argue that there are two reasons for this rejection. Firstly, the head coach is not accepted as a *social* member of the team. He doesn’t attend the team’s social events, nor engages in social media activities with the players. Like Lalor and Rendle-Short (2007, p. 164) comment: ‘The new use of *gay* functions as an in-group marker’. Without having achieved this status, use of homosexually-themed language is stigmatised as homophobic.

Secondly, because he also uses the word ‘gay’ as an insult (i.e. ‘gay wanker’) players feel uncomfortable, questioning whether this reflects the manager’s attitudes towards homosexuality. McCormack and Anderson (2010) argue that using ‘gay banter’ is a way of expressing comfort with homosexuality. In other words, ‘One can only banter outside homosexuality if a person espouses

pro-gay attitudes' (Anderson and McGuire, 2010, p. 920). Without this, others will stigmatise any form of homosexually-themed language – as in the case of University FC.

The case of University FC, however, remains somewhat unique in comparison to Academy 2 and previous research. Here, participants acted upon their discomfort with their coach's language, whereas previous studies have shown a more passive approach – partially attributable to fear of deselection.

## Chapter 12: Discussion

With this research, I set out to explore the construction of masculinities of the next generation of professional British footballers, with the intention to investigate the cultural changes that have occurred in recent years. I was present at Stamford Bridge the day that Chelsea player Graeme Le Saux – ostensibly heterosexual – was homophobically taunted by Liverpool player Robbie Fowler. Although Le Saux had suffered various forms of homophobic insults throughout his career, this was a particularly significant and symbolic moment, indicative of how football culture, at this time, suffered from homophobia: nobody was willing to accept anything other than a strong form of heteromascularity. As Le Saux (2007, p. 20) recounts in his autobiography: ‘No one wanted to deal with it’.

Academic research undertaken on the intersection of men’s team sports, masculinity and homophobia during periods of high homophobia supports Le Saux’s experiences, typically exposing high levels of homophobia, predominantly demonstrated through the deployment of homophobic language and violence towards gay athletes (Anderson, 2000; Bryant, 2001; Clarke, 1998; Griffin, 1998; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel, Toma and Morpew, 2001). Accordingly, during this cultural zeitgeist, boys and men were stratified according to their ability to embody, and conform to, a culturally esteemed form of masculinity; one characterised by elevated forms of aggressive homophobia and misogyny (Connell, 1995; Curry, 1991; Harry, 1995; see also Chapter 3).

However, times have changed: professional athletes – both in football and in other team sports – no longer face such homophobic oppression. At the time of writing, there are only two known currently active and openly gay professional footballers anywhere in the world: Anton Hysén (a lower league player in Sweden, who came out in 2011) and Robbie Rogers (a player who initially retired when he came out in 2013 after he was released by Leeds United, but three months later signed for Major League Soccer’s Los Angeles Galaxy in the United States). Both these players were positively received and supported by fellow players and fans when they came out (Cleland, 2013a; Cashmore and Cleland, 2014), demonstrating a cultural shift towards one of inclusivity (Anderson, 2014).

Indeed, since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been a large body of theoretical, conceptual and empirical gender scholars who have highlighted the changing context towards masculinity and sexuality in different subcultures within

the contemporary environment of football, and indeed sport more generally. This research has challenged traditional notions of hierarchically-structured masculinities, moving into one of horizontal alignment (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2005a, 2008b, 200c, 2009, 2011a, 2011b; Anderson and McGuire, 2010; Bush, Anderson and Carr, 2012; Cashmore and Cleland, 2011, 2012; Cleland, 2013a, 2014; Cleland, Magrath and Kian, under review; Jarvis, 2013; Michael, 2013). Indeed, iGeneration males have exhibited more inclusive forms of masculinities – espousing gay-friendly attitudes and enjoying increased forms of physical and emotional tactility without being homosexualised by their peers (Anderson, 2014; McCormack, 2012a).

Accordingly, I investigate whether this cultural change has reflected in the attitudes of the next generation of professional British football players. I investigate how accepting ostensibly heterosexual players would be of an openly gay player on their team, and how they would view matters if this individual to come out was their best friend, roommate, or a man they frequently shared the changing room with. I also examine how far these men carried their beliefs in civil rights for gay men, as well as whether they would intervene with homophobic victimisation.

This research also focuses on the way in which these men construct and maintain friendships within the confines of a closed football environment, in addition to the way these friendships are facilitated through the construction of jocular and physical forms of ‘banter’. Finally, it focuses on the way that these men deploy, interpret and contextualise homosexually-themed language (McCormack, 2011).

### **Discussion and Significance of Findings**

Without the ability to access the highest level of professional footballers in the United Kingdom, I interviewed 60 footballers: two groups of players on the doorstep of the Premier League, in addition to members of a widening participation (Osborne, 2003) university football team. At each club, I was permitted to interview, without conditions, all of the members of each team – although time restrictions permitted only the majority. Interviews varied in length, with many younger participants often providing little other than one-word answers to certain questions. All participants hailed from lower to upper-working-

class social backgrounds and all but one identified as 'exclusively heterosexual' (Savin-Williams and Vrangalova, 2013; Sell, 2007) – the exception saying that he was 'mostly heterosexual. Players also had mixed levels of religiosity, but reflected youth of this culture more broadly, in that were most were atheist, which was confirmed on a Likert scale (see Appendix 1).

Interview results were broadly consistent with other research on young British men of their age cohort (16-21). The majority of these men showed no overt animosity towards gay men, and espoused inclusive attitudes towards the hypothetical situation of having a gay teammate, best friend or roommate reveal their sexuality (see also McCormack, 2012a). Other than a small minority of strongly religious participants, the footballers interviewed for this research are largely unbothered by the issue of gays in sport.

This is significant twofold: firstly, it highlights the failure of the near-total institution to shelter men from wider cultural changes (see Clements and Field, 2014; Keleher and Smith, 2012); secondly, and more significantly, the acceptance of these iGeneration men (Anderson, 2014) is more complete than research a decade ago shows. The acceptance these young men articulate is not simply a matter of *tolerating* difference as young men used to. Whereas Anderson (2002) found gay male athletes accepted last decade only 'as long as one plays the sport well', today's heterosexual iGeneration male athletes offered almost unconditional acceptance of homosexuality. Even the majority of men who maintained Christian morals stood by the civil and social rights of gay men. Although they may have felt that homosexuality was not 'God's plan', they would not alter their living arrangements with a gay teammate, and all but two would accept responsibility of the position of 'best man' at a friend's same-sex wedding.

It might, therefore, be seen as surprising that, for a group of males with no direct contact to gay men, and for a group of men that has traditionally been thought to exhibit highly homophobic attitudes (Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel, Toma and Morpew, 2001), fewer than three of the 60 players interviewed said that they would have significant issues if their best friend came out. Even most of those from religious backgrounds, or those whose parents maintained highly homophobic views, did not think it would make a negative difference if their best friend or any other teammate came out. Without social contact with gay men,

when asked how they grew to be so inclusive of homosexuality, they simply stated they were just not homophobic, and that homophobia made no sense to them.

However, it is more likely that McCormack's (2012a) insight into the declining significance of homophobia is applicable here. He shows that media visibility has led to the unacceptability of homophobia for most young men in the UK today. Thus, there is reason to suspect that modern media would have had similar effect on other young men whose social networks are limited, apart from just those studied here. Exemplifying this, Bush, Anderson and Carr (2012) show that when surveying young male athletes who have migrated across the country to a highly ranked sporting university, there existed very little homophobia upon entry, and none upon exit. They write (2012, p. 16) that:

Results of this research make it clear that it is no longer sociologically responsible to generalize to all sports, and all men who play them as homophobic. Increasingly, it appears to be the opposite.

It is important to recognise, however, that the absence of overwhelming levels of homophobia does not mean there is an absence of heterosexism. One way heterosexism emerges in this research concerns a small number of participants – notably from Academy 2 – expressing their discomfort of witnessing or visualising homosexual affection. Another way heterosexism maintains cultural sway with these participants concerns the ironic juxtaposition of heterosexualised banter (see Chapter 10). This banter was apparent in two significant ways – what I describe as 'jocular' and 'physical' – which contained a variety of behaviours.

Here, athletes feared that the coming out of a gay teammate would alter this homosocial arena. The athletes interviewed were largely afraid that such banter might be insulting to a gay teammate, whilst others worried that the gay teammate might somatically enjoy the feigned gay sex. While these men articulate their feelings for gay banter for the hypothetical situation, it is also important to remember that a number of them stated that they did not know how matters would change, that it is hard to speculate without being in the situation.

However, when the issue of gay banter has previously been examined, by conducting ethnography on a university football team, during and after an openly gay player came out to the team, the researchers heard identical fears about the altering of banter in the presence of a gay teammate (Adams and Anderson,

2012). Nonetheless, as other gay male athletes also confirm (see Anderson, 2011a), it was found that the gay men not only continued to be part of the banter, but that their homosexuality also added a new element of banter, enhancing and promoting team culture.

Although these progressive results highlight the failure of the near-total institution in excluding these men from wider cultural processes, it is maintained in other ways. Illustrating this closed culture, players from the two Premier League academies outlined that they live in a training camp where they interact almost exclusively with the other young men from their team – and are mostly removed from other social networks. Accordingly, this may explain why less than half of the participants from Academy 1 and Academy 2 know of, and are friends with, an openly gay man or woman. By contrast, this number was significantly higher within the university-based football team, who have not been socialised into a comparably closed environment (Manley, Palmer and Roderick, 2010).

The influence of the near-total institution is also significant in other ways. Beyond a lack of overt homophobia, I also document how attitudes and responses are generally supportive of a pronounced shift in masculinities, and what is acceptable for a man to do in the presence of, and with, other men. However, these attitudes are somewhat variable and, in the case of Academy 1 and Academy 2, more conservative than other studies of men their age has noted (see Anderson, Adams and Rivers, 2010; McCormack, 2012a; McCormack and Anderson, 2014a), and the men from University FC.

While the behaviours of the men from Academy 1 and Academy 2 still broadly fit with McCormack and Anderson's general thesis, it is clear at times that these young men are not as obviously committed to the redefinition of masculinity as outlined in contemporary masculinity research. Instead, these men present a sometimes more conservative version of masculinity, due, in part, to the self-imposed and competitive pressure on these young men to secure a contract in professional football – a pressure not evident on participants from University FC, whose level of football, although competitive, is highly unlikely to result in professionalism. Accordingly, being emotionally open occurred regularly, and was also facilitated by their similar university courses. However, for the young academy footballers, being too emotionally open is problematic, and might make player be perceived, or actually feel, something less than 100% focused, and then



be deemed a weakness for the team, and in turn concern other team members. Respondents also reveal on several occasions that the explicit competition among individuals, in terms of making the team or achieving professional status necessitates a degree of emotional distance. Nevertheless, while this explains some of the more mildly conservative behaviours, it should be clear that many of these boys talked of having a close friend on the team whom they might confide in.

Overall, these findings are significant; they offer a challenge to commonly-held assumptions that contemporary football remains a strong homophobic environment (Caudwell, 2011; Jones, 2014). Furthermore, this research adds to a now large body of research which documents various subgroups in football, and sport more broadly, have paralleled the decrease of cultural homophobia (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2014; Cashmore and Cleland, 2011, 2012; Cleland, 2013a, 2014; Cleland, Magrath and Kian, under review; Dashper, 2012; Jarvis, 2013; Michael, 2013; Willis, 2014). Put simply, contemporary football culture no longer represents a hostile environment for sexual minorities: instead, it is one of inclusion of gay athletes.

Given that much of this research focuses on the next (potential) generation of elite-level footballers in the United Kingdom, I conclude this section by suggesting that the hypothetical inclusivity articulated by these men serves as a roadmap for when one of their teammates actually does come out – something which research on Robbie Rogers would perhaps confirm.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The most prolific means of theorising masculinities in Western cultures has come from Raewyn Connell (1995), in the form of hegemonic masculinity theory. Replacing the simplistic sexism, sex role theory (Brannon, 1976), hegemonic masculinity recognised gender could not be fully understood without analyses of power (Connell, 1987). Accordingly, Connell (1995) articulated two social processes which occurred as a consequence of hegemonic masculinity: (1) All men benefit from a patriarchal society – described by Connell (1995, p. 82) as the ‘patriarchal dividend’; (2) How men are stratified within an intra-masculine hierarchy, with gay men residing at the bottom exhibiting a subordinate form of masculinity.

Lacking empirical evidence, however, few scholars engaged with her concept of the patriarchal dividend. In contrast, such was the level of cultural homophobia at the time, the intra-masculine hierarchy made sense at the time it was published (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985; Connell, 1987, 1995). Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity theory achieved hegemonic status because, rather than attempting to explain complex social dynamics within data, many scholars interpreted patterns of hegemonic masculinity too easily. However, whilst hegemonic masculinity accurately captured this homophobic zeitgeist, it does not account for the decrease of cultural homophobia (Anderson, 2009; Clements and Field, 2014; Keleher and Smith, 2012), nor the positive advancements of the LGBT community since the turn of the Millennium (Weeks, 2007).

In response to these advancements, Anderson (2009) found Connell's scholarship incapable of explaining the reduction of cultural homophobia, shift in homosexually-themed language and increase of same-sex emotional intimacy. Instead, he developed inclusive masculinity theory, which maintains the accuracy of Connell's (1995) work during a zeitgeist of elevated homophobia. An essential component of inclusive masculinity theory is that of homophobia – discussed throughout this thesis – which Anderson (2014, p. 37) theorises as, 'the fear of being homosexualised through the wrongdoing of gendered behaviors which leads men to align themselves with extreme notions of masculinity'. Essentially, the level of cultural homophobia impacts on whether boys and men are culturally homosexualised by their peers for their behaviours (McCormack, 2012a).

In a culture of homophobia, such as that in Anglo-American cultures throughout the 1980s (Anderson, 2009), men are severely limited in the physical and emotional closeness they enjoy with other men. In contrast, a culture of inclusivity permits men greater levels of intimacy. Some of the most influential mandates of inclusive masculinity theory documented in contemporary research include men, particularly those from iGeneration, harbouring inclusive attitudes towards homosexuality (McCormack, 2012a) and bisexuality (Anderson and Adams, 2011; Morris, McCormack and Anderson, 2014), in addition to the permission of same-sex emotional intimacy, including crying (Adams, 2011a; Anderson, 2011b; Anderson, Adams and Rivers, 2010; McCormack and Anderson,

2014a). Moreover, homophobic intent is absent from the utility of homosexually-themed language (McCormack, 2011; McCormack and Anderson, 2010), as well as the attachment of stigma to homophobic language (Adams, Anderson and McCormack, 2010; Anderson and McGuire, 2010; McCormack, 2012a). Although these tenets are not exhaustive – more are outlined in Chapter 6 – these, arguably, have been the most widely documented in contemporary academic research, particularly with research focusing on men from iGeneration.

Accordingly, McCormack and Anderson (under review) argue that, within the academic discipline of masculinity studies, a paradigm shift is evident – supported by a number of factors (see Chapter 6). This claim is further supported by the evidence presented throughout this thesis. Indeed, the data presented from the three football teams falls broadly in alignment with Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory.

Other than those influenced by a strong religious faith, these young footballers all maintained pro-gay attitudes, predominantly through support for social and civil equality – such as same-sex marriage. These pro-gay perspectives were further substantiated by participants declaring various levels of support for a gay friend or teammate – including support from homophobic victimisation and accepting the role of best man at a same-sex wedding. Significantly, there is little evidence here to suggest that gay men would be excluded or marginalised, diverging from Connell's (1987, 1995) theorising, which has relegated them to the bottom of masculine hierarchy.

This is also supported through the use of homosexually-themed language by these young men, which was void of pernicious intent and negative social effect (McCormack, 2011), and often viewed as a sign of immaturity (McCormack, 2012a). In his research on sixth form boys, McCormack (2010, p. 141) writes that, 'scholars need to give central contribution to context understanding nature, impact and effects of discourses of sexuality and gender'. Accordingly, I use McCormack's (2011) model of homosexually-themed language (see Chapter 11, Figure 3) to explain the use of language by the young footballers in this study.

Through its presence, it is perhaps easy to identify homophobia among these men – particularly those from Academy 2 – as traditional homophobic pejoratives such as 'poof' and 'faggot' were routinely employed by these young men (see Hekma, 1998). However, I move away from the, 'rigid theorising of

homophobic discourse' (McCormack, 2010, p. 141) to contextualise this.

Consistent with inclusive masculinity theory, I show that these participants use homosexually-themed language not to marginalise but, rather, to maintain and enhance their friendships within a close team environment (see McCormack and Anderson, 2010).

This is consolidated in three ways: (1) Because this was a marker of friendship, the potential use of 'outsiders' using this language was rejected; (2) An openly gay player would impact the frequency of this language to prevent discomfort and offence; (3) 'Genuine' homophobic language – that of coaches – was stigmatised as unacceptable. Like McCormack (2011), I recognise that the interpretation of language may vary for others, and that the language certainly privileges heterosexuality. Nevertheless, it is pivotal to note that this language was not used in a pernicious manner, like older research documents (Burn, 2000; Giulianotti, 1999; Hekma, 1998; Pronger, 1990). Thus, I reiterate significant conclusions drawn by McCormack: firstly, understanding *how*, *why* and to *whom* something is said remains critical in interpreting homosexually-themed language; secondly, recognising that levels of homophobia differ across time and space, and language oftentimes reflects this (see, for example, Lalor and Rendle-Short, 2007, who capture the evolution of the word 'gay').

Inclusive masculinity theory also posits that in a culture of inclusivity, emotional intimacy and openness between men, without being homosexualised, is common. These men discussed how the opportunities to socialise with closer, long standing friends back home, bring them a freedom of expression more conducive to the extension of masculine behaviours often found in inclusive masculinities literature. Accounts of positive emotional closeness were often markedly pronounced when the boys were discussing 'back home'. I hypothesise that this is for two, interrelated reasons.

Firstly, this is potentially linked to alcohol consumption – something that is much more difficult during their period at the football club – which has been demonstrated to make a significant difference to performances of more liberalised masculinity (Anderson, Adams and Rivers, 2010; Peralta, 2007). This differentiated performance, free from the constraints and influences of the institutional norms, makes sense because, as Richardson (2010, p. 738) explains:

Men enact masculinity in different ways, depending not only on their social characteristics but also on the dynamics of the social spaces in

which such enactments take place, whether this is a more private or public setting.

Secondly, and more importantly, these masculine identities are not restricted because of the presence of homophobia: boys in these settings did not fear being homosexualised by their peers due to their behaviour. Rather, the competitive environment of a Premier League academy demands and promotes homogeneity of thought and action as the basis for achieving desirable athletic results. Here, young men vie with one another to secure promotion to the First Team of their club, consequently restricting the degree of emotional openness these men enjoy. This is particularly evident compared to the participants from University FC. It is perhaps fair to conclude, then, that friendships constructed with teammates are deemed secondary to the enhancement of one's career in football.

While the findings of this research broadly support the main tenets of inclusive masculinity theory, the most significant theoretical implication that this research offers is, I argue, the complex construction of 'banter' promoted by men across these three football teams. In Chapter 10, I explicated various definitions of banter, before categorising it as 'jocular' and 'physical' – though some crossover is, of course, inevitable. Although considerable research has already documented various forms of male camaraderie (Anderson, 2005b; Baxter, 2004; Flood, 2008; Hein and O'Donohue, 2013; Renold, 2004), very few of these studies have attempted to understand the complex context which surrounds banter.

Similar to homosexually-themed language, limited attempts have been made to theorise the interpretation of this banter. Rather, scholars have assumed the intention of sexism, misogyny and homophobia (Gill, Henwood and McLean, 2005; Lyman, 1987; Pronger, 1990), rather than how this impacts masculinity construction. Whilst this may have been true in a culture of homophobia, where a combination of, 'homophobia, femphobia and compulsory heterosexuality' (Anderson, 2009, p. 7) allowed men to demonstrate their heteromascularity, this holds less cultural sway in a culture of inclusivity. Banter, though, is a somewhat subjective process, and can be interpreted in a number of ways, often transgressing personal boundaries. It could, for example, be deemed as an example of ironic heterosexual recuperation (McCormack, 2012a).

Banter, of course, does not need to incorporate any element of sexuality whatsoever. Like other essential findings here, it emerges as another significant means of constructing friendship between these young men. Similarly, it can also be employed as an 'outlet' – a way for these young men, particularly those within the pressured environment of a Premier League academy, to cathartically express their emotions in a somewhat jocular and entertaining manner. Alternatively, it could *facilitate* the competitive nature of this environment, as participants attempt to 'score points' off each other, humorously winning a subconscious 'battle of wits'. More broadly, this banter may be used as a technique for understanding and judging limits of acceptable camaraderie with one's teammates: this would be consistent with examples provided in Chapter 10.

Accordingly, I argue that scholars must demonstrate an awareness of the various contextual factors which may shape the construction of differing forms of banter. For example, this research includes both footballers on the verge of professional status, as well as undergraduate students who participate in their university's football team. This likely impacts the role and purpose of banter: for example, within a professional football club, the pressure to succeed to secure a professional contract is high. In contrast, undergraduate students are unlikely to progress to professional football, resulting in less pressure. Accordingly, banter is likely to have a different effect in these varying settings.

Nevertheless, understanding banter remains a challenging and complex process. Whilst I am predominantly focused (although not limited to) the construction of homosexually-themed banter, I also recognise that it is important not to overlook other forms of banter, which also impacts on individual and team relationships in different ways. Furthermore, I also acknowledge that other forces could be at work – those beyond the scope of this analysis. This offers a pathway for future research.

In summary, this research further evidences that hegemonic masculinity theory is increasingly incapable of conceptualising contemporary masculinities. Unlike Connell's (1987, 1995) theorising, there is no idealised version of masculinity that these young men aspire to, nor do they espouse any hostility to homosexuality. On the contrary, consistent with other contemporary research with men of this age (Anderson, 2011b; McCormack, 2012a), many embraced the hypothetical scenario of a teammate publicly announcing his homosexuality.

Neither do these men maintain physical and emotional distance from one another and, although there were strong levels of banter, this was not manifest in a homophobic manner. Accordingly, there is nothing to suggest any form of masculine hierarchy among these young men – strengthening the position of Anderson’s (2009) inclusive masculinity theory as the most dominant contemporary masculinity paradigm.

### **Recognising Generalisability**

When discussing the generalisability of these findings it is important to recognise the cultural significance football has in the UK (Goldblatt, 2014; Harris, 2009). Thousands of football teams participate in a competitive football environment every week at various levels – amateur, semi-professional and professional (Roderick, 2006a). Because this research focuses on a limited sample of participants containing a homogenous group of young footballers, there are restrictions on the claims made within this research – it is unlikely that these findings can be statistically generalised to all academy and university players of this age across the country. Indeed, declining levels of homophobia is, of course, an uneven social process, and can differ across varying socio-demographic factors (Anderson, 2009; Collier *et al.*, 2013; Froyum, 2007; Hicks and Lee, 2006; Pompper, 2010; Worthen, 2012).

Nevertheless, I can see no fundamental reason why young men from other Premier League academies, or university football teams, should vary significantly in their attitudes towards gay male athletes. Instead, this research provides insight into the attitudinal disposition of young athletes who appear to be maintaining no significant difference to non-elite athletes of their cohort that is being found across various demographic groups of men across the United Kingdom (see Anderson, 2014; McCormack, 2012a; Roberts, 2012). However, other elements of this research may differ within other contexts: for example, banter construction may vary across different levels of football – as in the examples provided in this thesis.

Moreover, as Chapter 7 acknowledges, between 60 and 65% of academy footballers are rejected aged 18 (James, 2010), partially as a consequence of the English Premier League’s large-scale increase of overseas players (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009); even Premier League academies are not exempt from this

foreign influx (Elliott and Weedon, 2010). Accordingly, only a small number of men from the two Premier League academy clubs will play at this level of the game. Premier League football culture is influenced by more than just British values. This is not to say that these players will completely dropout of football; many will continue, even at professional level for clubs in the Football League or Football Conference. Therefore, even though many of these participants may not compete in the Premier League, this research still provides insight into the attitudes of potential professional footballers.

The findings presented throughout this thesis, however, rely predominantly on interviewees' speculation. Thus, there is no guarantee that these players' reactions would mirror exactly what they claim within their interviews – their comments are merely indicators for when such a situation does potentially occur. Fortunately, however, previous research (Adams and Anderson, 2012) found relative results. When interviewing players about their perceptions of how their team would treat a gay players, and then being in the research field when their teammate actually came out, actions were upgraded, not downgraded, compared to what the athletes would thought would happen.

Finally, given that many of the participants within this research may well matriculate to professional status, it is important for this section to examine the current situation regarding elite-level professional footballers – those competing in the Premier League. Popular assumption is that the lack of openly gay footballers amounts to high levels of homophobia when, in fact, the absence of gay men is multifaceted. In Chapter 5, for example, I outline how Ogawa (2014) suggests three hypotheses why there is a lack of openly gay professional athletes: (1) Gay men stay silent about their sexuality – 'silence'; (2) Gay men choose not to participate in sport – 'non-selection'; (3) Gay men are unlikely to achieve professional status – 'selection'.

While these offer a useful preliminary overview, I also argue that there are other reasons, too, particularly in football. Unlike the top four American sports (American football, baseball, basketball and ice hockey), many professional football players – typically those contracted to successful clubs in the Premier League – are required to travel across the world, often to countries where homosexuality remains illegal. Russia, for example, are allocated five places in Europe's most prestigious competitions – the UEFA Champions' League and the



UEFA Europa League – whilst the next two scheduled FIFA World Cups will be held in homophobic nations – Russia and Qatar.

Accordingly, the lack of openly professional footballers in the Premier League is not necessarily due to high levels of homophobia. The current generation of these footballers is averaged between 25 and 29 years old (though Premier League squads typically comprise of players aged between 18 and 35), though the current group of burgeoning players are categorised under what Anderson (2014) calls iGeneration. When men from iGeneration comprise the majority of Premier League players, it is highly likely that the league will represent an even more inclusive group of men. It is also likely that this process will also occur with the next generation of football fans (Magrath, under construction). However, it is still important to acknowledge the influence that overseas players have in the overall demographic of players in the Premier League (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009).

### **Recognising Social Desirability Effect**

Another significant issue concerning the overall positive findings of this research concerns that of *social desirability effect* or *social desirability bias* (Fisher, 1993; Marvasti, 2004). Described as Bryman (2012, p. 716) as, ‘a distortion of data that is caused by respondents’ attempts to construct an account that confirms to a socially acceptable model of belief or behaviour’, one might suggest that the answers afforded by these participants simply reflect this description. This is a consistent accusation I encountered throughout the research process. Having presented some of these findings at a selection of domestic and international sociology conferences, and through informal discussions with other academics, delegates frequently commented, “They’re just telling you what you want to hear”, and, “Of course they’re going to say those things”.

This, in itself, is a positive finding, given that athletes from previous generations were proud of their homophobia (see Anderson, 2000; Pronger, 1990; Sabo and Runfola, 1980) and, oftentimes, boasted of their intolerant attitudes towards homosexuality (see, for example, Brian Clough’s boastful recounting of his exchange with Justin Fashanu, or the runner brutally assaulted due to his association with an openly gay coach, in Chapter 3).

But, there is no evidence to suggest that these footballers are exaggerating their inclusivity. Instead, I take seriously my participants' disclosures of support for homosexuality, and their interpretations of banter and homosexually-themed language – there is no reason not to trust their assertions, especially given that many of these findings are consistent with other football research (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2011b). In addition to there being no counter-evidence to suggest high levels of overt homophobia, I argue there exist four primary reasons why there is no reason not to trust these participants' proclamations:

Firstly, interview responses were substantiated with some, albeit limited, participation observation with participants of each football club – as outlined in Chapter 7 – allowing rapport to be built with participants. Secondly, during post-research de-briefing, the gatekeepers of each of the football clubs confirmed that, to their knowledge, the young men in their club represent a group of gay-friendly and inclusive players. Next, answers to interview questions did not vary whether the young men were talking to me (heterosexual, at the time 23-24-year-old male), my PhD advisor (openly gay, at the time 45-year-old researcher), or my senior academic colleague (heterosexual, at the time 34-year-old researcher)<sup>10</sup>. Finally, a small number of these participants *did* espouse a degree of personalised homophobia, perhaps demonstrating that they were unconcerned with issues of social desirability.

This list is not exhaustive: unlike similar contemporary research, I was 'openly straight' to these participants. As an openly gay researcher in a traditionally conservative environment, McCormack (2012a, p. 17-8) acknowledges that, 'it is possible that knowledge of my sexuality influenced some students to...exaggerate their support of gay rights or temper[ed] their use of homophobic language'. With my research, the opposite is true: participants were aware of my heterosexuality during early stages of the research process. Accordingly, it is possible that my overt heterosexuality was influential in reducing social desirability bias, as participants would be unlikely to overstate their support for gay rights.

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<sup>10</sup> As outlined during Chapter 7, my PhD advisor and another senior masculinity scholar (from another institution) conducted a small number of interviews at one of the three football clubs sampled for this research.

That said, I made no attempt to hide my inclusive outlook on LGBT rights, which may have positively impacted upon participants' assessments of homosexuality and homosociality. Nonetheless, issues of anonymity and confidentiality (Homan, 1993) for both the participant and their club were reiterated on several occasions.

Therefore, it can be argued that the most striking finding in this research was that many of these young men – notably those from Academy 1 and Academy 2 – have little to no contact with gay men, yet their dispositions towards homosexuality remained nonetheless inclusive, particularly as they denoted high levels of hypothetical support offered to a gay teammate.

### **Further Research**

The overall aim of this thesis was to investigate the construction of masculinity among the next generation of professional footballers. Specific attention was paid to attitudes towards homosexuality, the development and maintenance of friendships, understanding what participants consistently referred to as 'banter', and the nature of homosexually-themed language within these settings. Whilst I believe this research offers a fascinating and comprehensive insight into the relationship between contemporary masculinity and sport, some elements of masculinity were overlooked during the research process.

This was particularly the case with what can be referred to as more personalised forms of masculinity. Firstly, discussions with participants lacked focus on their individual understandings and definitions of masculinity, and their feelings on what it's like to be a man in contemporary society. Rather, these conversations focused on the aforementioned list of themes. Accordingly, this provides scope for future research to be undertaken focusing on these aspects of masculinity – perhaps also including the impact a challenging economic environment has on constructing masculine identities (see, for example, Roberts, 2013).

Secondly, although some participants voluntarily discussed their girlfriends or female sexual partners, limited attention was afforded to participants' relationship with women. Though it is likely sexism will decrease in a culture of inclusivity (Anderson, 2014), limited contemporary research has been undertaken on how decreasing homophobia directly impacts men's relationships

with women (see Anderson and McGuire, 2010 and McCormack, 2012b) – particularly wives and girlfriends. This therefore offers a useful direction for future research projects aiming to identify a unique area of under-researched contemporary masculinity.

Nevertheless, despite these omissions, I remain confident that the findings of this research remain significant. In recent years, the Football Association – English football’s governing body – have been widely criticised for their failure to appropriately address LGBT discrimination (Bury, 2013). However, with all of English football’s stakeholders, including the Football Association, now committed to challenging homophobia and transphobia in the game, there is hope that this research will prove useful when shaping future policy. The Football Association’s current action plan for addressing LGBT discrimination, *Opening Doors and Joining In*, expires in 2016. Thus, this permits the opportunity for these findings to be shared with policymakers in the game – perhaps allowing the strengthening of education programmes.

## **Summary**

At various points throughout this thesis, I have consistently discussed how British football continues to be described as a notoriously homophobic institution, resistant to the wider cultural shift of decreasing homophobia (Anderson, 2009; Clements and Field, 2014; Keleher and Smith, 2012; Loftus, 2001; Savin-Williams, 2005). This research attempted to investigate the contemporary intersection of football, masculinity and homophobia, in order to test whether this contention maintained credence. Challenging this, though, I showed how homophobia has greatly decreased among the (potential) next generation of elite footballers, and that although these young men live in an ‘insular host culture’ (Weedon, 2012, p. 207), they are not exempt from a culture of inclusivity (Anderson, 2014). Contextualising results using Anderson’s (2009) theoretical lens of inclusive masculinity also helps to show that these changes are broadly consistent with other contemporary football and masculinity research (Adams, 2011a; Adams and Anderson, 2012; Anderson, 2011b; Cashmore and Cleland, 2011; Cleland, 2014; Cleland, Magrath and Kian, under review; Willis, 2014).

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## Appendix 1: Participant List

Academy 1				Academy 2				University FC			
Lewis	16	White	2	Mark	16	Black	5	Lawrence	18	Black	5
James	16	White	1	Simon	16	White	2	Nicholas	18	Black	2
Edward	16	White	1	Max	16	Black	3	Tony	18	White	2
Adrian	16	White	2	Doug	16	White	4	Jackson	18	White	1
Richard	17	Black	5	Steve	17	White	1	Roger	19	White	2
Callum	17	White	2	Dave	17	White	1	Russell	19	White	2
John	17	White	2	Chris	17	White	2	Alfie	19	White	2
Lloyd	17	Black	1	William	17	White	5	Colin	19	Black	4
Bryn	17	White	2	Raheem	17	White	1	Ben	19	White	2
Peter	17	White	1	Jason	17	White	3	Roddy	19	White	1
Danny	17	White	1	Fred	17	White	4	Larry	19	White	2
Anthony	17	White	3	Tom	18	Black	5	Gary	19	Black	2
Charles	17	Black	2	Robert	18	White	4	Fletcher	19	White	2
Jake	17	White	1	Jordan	18	Black	3	Donald	19	White	1
Joe	17	White	2	Ross	18	Black	2	Liam	20	White	3
Harry	17	White	1	Louis	19	White	1	Frank	20	White	2
Oliver	17	White	3	Phil	19	White	3	Paddy	20	White	1
Alex	17	White	1	Duncan	20	White	2	Ellis	21	White	2
Ashley	17	Black	3					Anton	21	White	2
Jamal	17	White	5					Trevor	21	Black	3
Gerald	18	White	2								