

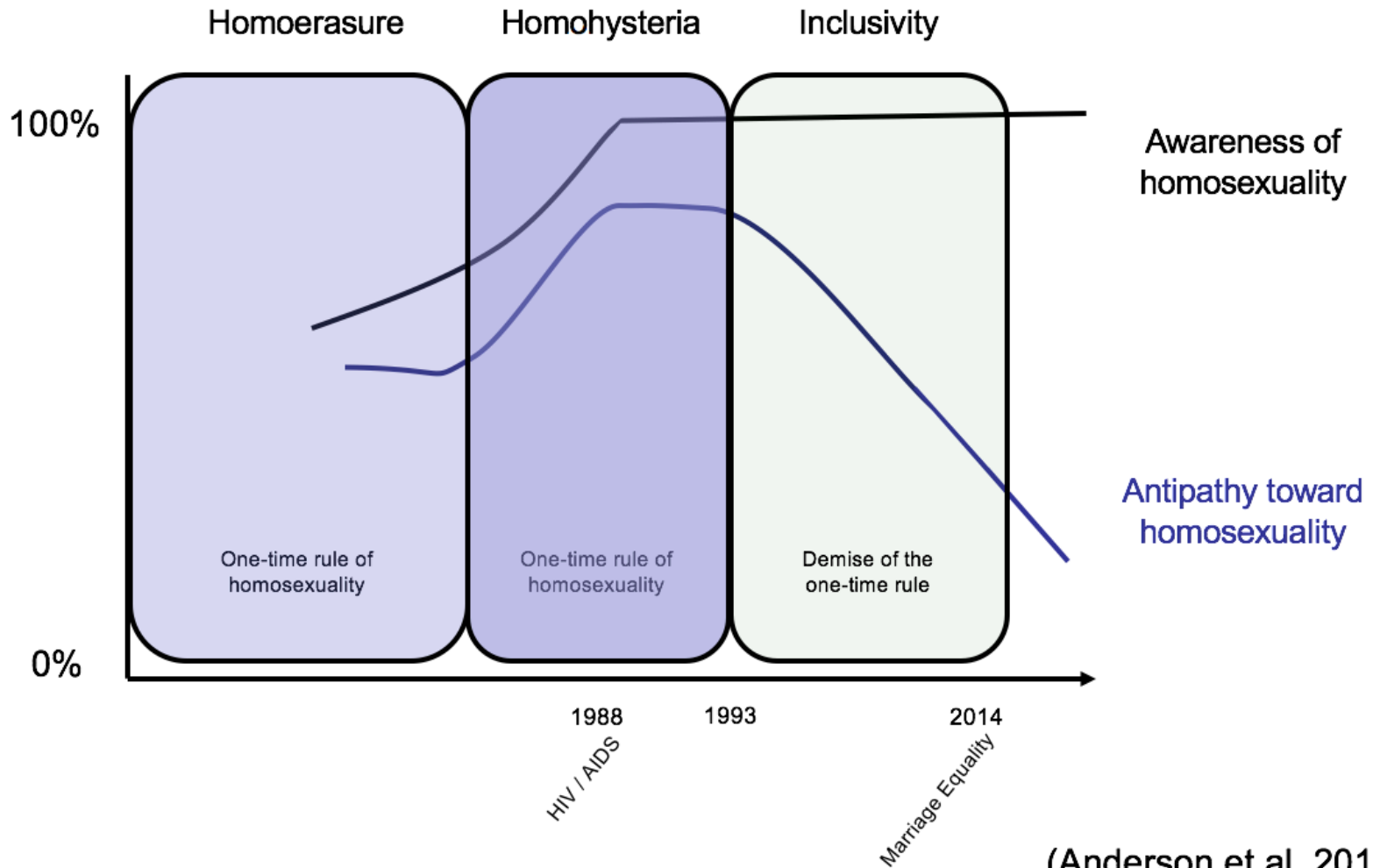


Examining homophobia in female elite team sports

Disclaimer

- Half way through data collection period
- Four initial interviews
- Initial findings
- Elite but not full internationals

Homophobia



Culture change







Lionesses  @Lionesses · Jul 1

 @ellsbells89's and @JoPotter8's tribute to the anti-homophobia campaign celebrated at today's game 🥰



Participants

- Four participants
- Age range: 24-34
- Football and rugby
- Elite level
- Two retired
- Average 45 minutes
- Semi-structured interviews

Declining homophobia

- P2: “Back in the day it was the worse thing that you could say to a female footballer”
- P2: “Society has come a long way”
- P3: “Overall perception of LGBT is changing”

Team climates

- P1: “Being in that environment almost made me feel reassured that it was ok”
- P1: ”Coming out would not have been a problem...in any of my teams”
- P2: “Club level is an easy environment to be a lesbian”
- P3: “You feel safe...you feel comfortable”
- P4: “A comfortable environment to be who I knew I was and who I wanted to be”

Climates – Griffin, 1998

Hostile

- “Lesbian participation prohibited” (p. 93)
- “Identity must be concealed” (p. 93)

Conditional tolerant

- Don’t ask, don’t tell
- Glass closet

Open and inclusive

- “Can be **more** open” (p. 104)
- “Without **as much** concern about the kinds of discrimination or harassment experienced” (p. 104)

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Welcoming and supportive

- Completely open
- Welcoming environment
- Supported by team mates

Coming out – team confidence

- P1: “Gaining confidence speaking to my teams and friends, I then spoke to my parents”
- P3: “You can walk into a team like that [with open players] and just be like, ok I am safe, this is fine”
- P4: “I definitely remember feeling a lot more, at that time, more comfortable in football and around my football friends, just to be gay and to be who is was”

Coming out quietly

- P1: “There is not that moment when you sit people down”
- P2: “There was no real coming out”
- P3: “You don’t physically stand there and say ‘Hi I am [name] and I am gay’ ”
- P3: “There’s no actual having to come out”
- P4: “It wasn’t an announcement...It definitely wasn’t a coming out like I did to my family”

Homophobia

- No homophobia from team mates or managers
- P2: “My manager is really supportive”
- P4: “I can’t remember any incident when anyone has said anything nasty to me or made me feel like they aren’t accepting of me”

Exception

- P1: “A familiarity with the manager that I didn’t appreciate”

Homophobia - fans

- P1: “I have heard it in the stands, a lot...I went to watch a match last season and there was a guy behind me saying it and I had to say ‘are you actually joking?!’”
- P2: “Fans were really supportive of me”
- Not many spectators at games

Media and sponsors

- Not asked by the media or sponsors
- P1: “No there was never an incident when I had to come out to sponsors”
- Evidence of some activism
- P3: “I wouldn’t want to be sponsored by someone who didn’t accept that of me”

Travelling

- P2: “I would find it difficult going to play sport in a country now with having to be somebody else...I probably wouldn't go”
- P3: “I probably wouldn't go”
- P4: “I have played in Russia, twice maybe three times...I can't remember any incidents or feelings of being uncomfortable or anything like that...[when asked if things had changed] I think for me I wouldn't be happy at all about it but its never down to the players in this situation is it...I just don't like tolerating that sort of stuff”

Room for improvement - international

- P1: (at junior international level) “It’s an environment where you can’t always be yourself”
- P2: (at junior international level) “I found it really, really difficult in the England set up at club level it was really easy”
- P2: “I hated my England experience”

Room for improvement - coaching

- P1: “He brought me off the pitch...he tried to shake my hand, I refused. He approached me aggressively, grabbed my jacket and started screaming in my face...I told him to ‘fuck off’ because I was scared...my confidence was sort of shot to pieces. You are trapped because you can’t leave unless the manager says to can. It took me about a year to get over that...I don’t know if it had something to do with sexuality...he couldn’t turn the charm on with me”

Summary

- P1: “Being gay within my sport gave me the confidence to be gay...I was accepted”
- P3: I am part of an open inclusive welcoming team so my sexuality has never been an issue...I think that makes me a better rugby player I don't have to hide anything”
- P4: “Football has always made it really easy for me”

Limitations

- Two sports
- Not full internationals
- Some areas are limited on data due to lack of international experience
- Wider range of experiences needed

Participants wanted!

Participant requirements:

- Female— identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- Played a team sport at a national league level/international level for at least one season in the last 10 years.
- To take part in a 1-to-1 interview for around 90 minutes.



Aims of the project:

1. Examine the environment of elite team sport in the UK.
2. Investigate if the environments differ across sports.
3. Analyse any cohort differences between athletes.

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out in sport



**The experiences of openly gay and
lesbian athletes in competitive sport**

**Eric Anderson,
Rory Magrath and
Rachael Bullingham**

References

- Anderson, E., Magrath, R. and Bullingham, R., 2016. *Out in sport: The experiences of openly gay and lesbian athletes in competitive sport*. Routledge.
- Griffin, P. (1998). *Strong women, deep closets*. Leeds: Human Kinetics.