

**“To be honest, no-one really knows”:
Exploring community sport volunteers
experiences of diversity**



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Aim: Diversity within Community Sport

Key problem

- “Sports participation should be representative of Australia” (ASC, 2015), currently it is not. Little known about the role of volunteers within diversity debates.



Research Questions

How is diversity enacted by volunteers at one community sport club in Melbourne, Australia?

- What are the institutional diversity practices at RSSC?
- Why do some volunteers at RSSC engage with diversity work whilst others do not?

- What are the experiences of those volunteers committed to diversity work at RSSC?

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Margaret Court says 'tennis is full of lesbians' as row escalates

Tennis great criticizes push to have her name removed from a show court at Melbourne Park as Samantha Stosur says her latest outburst is 'pretty crazy stuff'



POLL UNDER FIRE FOR ASKING IF A TRANS WOMAN SHOULD PLAY WOMEN'S SOCCER

Can you picture it in your mind? You ask the question and you're asked "No?"



AFL great Adam Goodes is being booed across Australia. How did it come to this?

The Indigenous Sydney Swans player should be enjoying the highlight of his career amid a hail of plastics, instead he's on the verge of being booed out.



Herald Sun

Can you picture it in your mind? You ask the question and you're asked "No?"

AFL should stop politics and just play the game

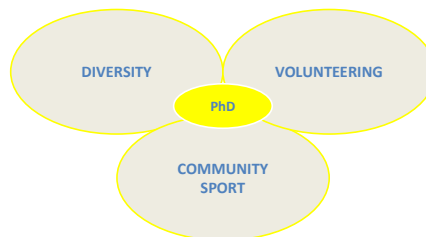
PHO PHOENIX, Herald Sun, August 03, 2015, 10:05am

Subscriber only

THE AFL has to decide whether it wants to be Australia's premier sporting code or a vehicle for 'socially progressive' change.

In the past two decades, the league has enthusiastically jumped on every Left-wing bandwagon from the worthy to the absurd.

Literature



Theoretical concepts:

- Diversity work (Ahmed, 2012; 2017)

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METHODOLOGY

- 1 in depth case study at a community cricket club
- Ethnographic approach: interviews and participant observations
- I volunteered with the AA teams
- Inductive approach: see what diversity emerged from the club



Findings: Diversity practices

- Diversity = “All Abilities” = 2 teams for players with an intellectual disability.
- Teams and the AA volunteers operated on the periphery of the club.
- Diversity seen as an add on, not part of the club's core business
- Diversity work not seen as the club's work, but work to be done by other people = 4 AA volunteers

“Yeah. I guess so. And I guess that's something that's got to be explained to the players I guess, and the club. To be honest, no-one really knows. It's... But now they're here we've just got to deal with it”.

- Sam, Committee member

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Findings: Experiences of doing diversity work

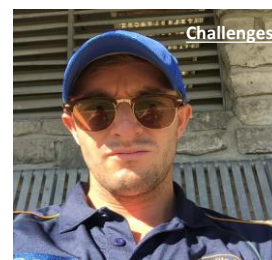
“To see them so competitive and know that they’ve got something to do every Wednesday night and the carnival coming up is a really big deal. The boys that I drove home on Sunday said, “We can’t wait for the carnival Olive. We can’t wait.” It’s something for them to look forward to and that just gives me some satisfaction, I think. Yeah” (Olive, AA Volunteer).

Rewards



Resistance and the ‘brick wall’

- Committee voted against the AA teams
- Key individuals not supportive of disability as a form of diversity (Active + passive)
- No resources and volunteers (non performative speech acts)
- Signs of burnout amongst volunteers



Challenges

Institutional brick wall (Ahmed, 2012; 2017) : Feeling of doing diversity work can feel like banging your head against a brick wall . Walls appear as forms of resistance.

Are you getting all this down? You couldn’t make this up could you? You could write a book about all this! Mind you, no one would believe you. I’ve stopped telling my husband all these stories and tales, he wouldn’t let me come down if he knew what was going on. (Olive, AA volunteer).

I had to ban [player x] and [player y], they swore at me and were rude. [player z] now saying I’m sexist for not playing her in the 1st team. Wow. Sorry but if I am driving two hours two times a week to volunteer my time and run a program to help others; I don’t wish to be abused. We live and learn this year (Robert, AA volunteer).

Discussion/ Conclusions

- No institutional structures in place to support volunteers committed to diversity work > recruited from outside the club.
- Diversity not institutionalised, not seen as core business.
- Club volunteers do not see their role as doing diversity work – do not know how to do diversity work.



- Need to better support volunteers who are engaged in diversity work . Individual champion approach – not sustainable.
- Diversity work needs to be EVERYBODY’s work for it to be institutionalised – not just one person.

Implications: Points of discussion

1. Enacting diversity through a single diversity champion?
2. Resistance and transforming the institution: new clubs better policy implementers?
3. Are community sport clubs set up to do diversity?

THANK YOU

Questions

Central thesis argument: volunteers don’t see diversity as their job; so whose job is it?



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