

**IS THERE COMMONALITY TO  
DIFFERENCE? TOPICAL LIFE  
HISTORIES OF SEXUALLY DIVERSE  
VOLUNTEERS IN SPORT**

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**IS THERE COMMONALITY TO DIFFERENCE?  
TOPICAL LIFE HISTORIES OF SEXUALLY  
DIVERSE VOLUNTEERS IN SPORT**

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# ABSTRACT

Sport volunteering can be a valued and meaningful way to engage in sport beyond participation. However, sport volunteers in the UK lack diversity (Sport England, 2016). Studies have examined recruitment, retention and motivation of sport volunteers on a general level and at single points in time. Yet, there has been lack of insight into the experiences and identities of LGBT+ volunteers in sport and the meaning of their volunteering over time. Understanding LGBT+ volunteers' experiences can enhance visibility of a minority group to support ongoing efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in sport volunteering. Topical life history interviews (Plummer, 2001) of 16 sexually diverse sport volunteers were conducted to explore (1) what meanings LGBT+ volunteers in sport give to their volunteering experiences in the UK over time (2) how LGBT+ volunteers manage, construct and negotiate their identities over time and (3) how LGBT+ volunteers in sport influence inclusion within sport. The data collected from these interviews was analysed through the lens of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), and resulted in a model on understanding LGBT+ engagement in sport volunteering. The data suggests that the meanings participants denoted to their volunteer experiences fall into the categories of 'becoming', 'belonging' and 'being' – and that the meanings participants give to their volunteering experiences tend to be fluid as they may simultaneously fit within more than one category and/or shift between these categories over time. Through the lens of identity work (Watson, 2008; 2020) three volunteer personas were identified to understand how participants present their identities: the 'advocate', the 'community-minded' and the 'sports person'. Participants, across all three volunteer personas, demonstrated an intention to influence the level of inclusion in sport (and in other areas of their lives) as an extension of their identity work within the sport volunteering setting. Implications for promoting inclusion and recruiting LGBT+ volunteers are provided, with an emphasis on developing recruitment messaging around volunteer personas and meanings of volunteering. The organisations that should be targeted and how they should be collaborated with are discussed. The actions identified aim to align volunteer roles and activities with the changing needs and aspirations of diverse volunteers.

Key words: LGBT+, sport volunteering, life history, identity work, diversity work

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# CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Lahti, S. (2023, September 12-15). *The Advocate, Community-Minded, and Sportsperson: Constructing Personas to Understand the Identities of Sexually Diverse Volunteers in Sport* [Conference presentation]. The 31st European Sport Management Conference of the European Association for Sport Management (EASM), Ulster University, Belfast, UK.

Lahti, S. (2021, September 6-7). *At the identity intersection – lived experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport* [Conference presentation]. 2021 Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research (VSVR) Conference, Aston University, Birmingham, UK.

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Lahti, S. (2019, September 10-11). *Lived experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport* [Conference presentation]. 2019 Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research (VSVR) Conference, Aston University, Birmingham, UK.

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# DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others. Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this commentary has been approved.

Approval has been sought and granted through the researcher's submission to Northumbria University's Ethics Online on 1 March 2019.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is 81,594 words.

Name: Saara Lahti

Date: 1 March 2023

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Researching as outsider-insider

I am a white, able-bodied, co-habiting gay cis woman in my early thirties. I do not practice any religion. I grew up in a middle-income family in Finland, but I have spent the past six years of my adult life living in the UK where I have been educated to a postgraduate level. I have worked full-time as a Graduate Tutor in Sport Management while undertaking a part-time PhD programme.

When I was seven years old, I picked up a newspaper that had an advertisement for my local ringette club and told my parents I wanted to learn to skate. I did not know what ringette was at the time, but I knew I wanted to be there. Ringette is an ice-based team sport predominantly played by women. It did not take many years for ringette to occupy every week of my calendar and every day in my mind. Ringette took me from junior to national competition level and even international duty with me spending a gap year after high school playing ringette and working in Canada as well as representing Finland Juniors at the World Championship stage. For a long time, playing the sport was my main form of involvement. In addition, at 15 years of age I became a member of Ringette Finland's youth parliament with the prospect of a summer job as a camp counsellor which was my main motivation for taking up the role. My father encouraged me to apply for the role, as he was a director with Ringette Finland at the time, a role he had taken up because of my involvement in the sport. I had attended the Ringette Finland summer camps from the age of nine and always looked up to the camp counsellors and wanted to be one of them. I ended up working as a camp counsellor for three consecutive summers. That experience and the connections gained through my Ringette Finland network helped me secure my first work placement during undergraduate studies at university and also volunteer experience at the Finnish Championships as well as the World Ringette Championships. I never thought I would want to work behind the scenes during the height of my playing career but after moving

to the UK and finishing my playing career, volunteering with the International Ringette Federation (IRF) provided me with a way to stay connected to my ringette roots.

I was approached by the outgoing President of the IRF who I shared a long history with, her being my first summer camp counsellor when I was nine. I had followed her (volunteer) career with interest and also thought of applying for a role with the IRF as I was eager to put everything I had learnt during my MSc Sport Management into practice. She recommended me for the role of Member of the Council and Communications Director for the IRF. I served a four-year term at the position and learnt the ins and outs of internal and external marketing communications which I wholeheartedly applied to my teaching practice on the undergraduate sport management programme. This was important in applying the skills I learnt from volunteering to working life.

When I started the PhD programme, I was first interested in looking at female referees' narratives of officiating in the male game but realised quickly the topic did not resonate with me on a deeper level even though a knowledge gap existed. I was merely following the advice of a more experienced PhD candidate who told me to pick a topic that I loved so that by the end of the PhD I would still like it.

The topic of sexual identity and sport had interested me for years having seen how muted and sensitive the topic had been in some teams I had played in and for me personally. It was not uncommon to hear teammates talk about losing a lesbian-free zone when an out couple joined the team or parents questioning the safety of their children because of an out lesbian coach. In order to navigate the discriminatory attitudes and potential backlash within certain sporting environments, I conformed to heteronormative expectations. These things left a mark and made me avoid conversations about my personal life altogether because I was only finding out who I was. By not discussing my identity, I avoided direct negativity and discriminatory remarks that targeted LGBT+ individuals. However, this came at a cost to my own authenticity and personal well-being. The constant pressure to hide a significant part of

myself and suppress my identity created a sense of isolation and disconnection from teammates, fellow volunteers and my own sense of self.

This made it challenging to envision a future where my identity would be fully accepted and celebrated. The dearth of visible LGBT+ individuals in leadership positions around me further reinforced the notion that being 'out' and involved in sports was an uphill battle. It was after I had been open with friends and family for years before I told a fellow ringette volunteer about having a female partner.

This inner turmoil of PhD topic choice luckily coincided with a presentation from Professor Jane South of Leeds Beckett University where she dissected the lack of research on LGBT+ volunteers even though great examples of social action and activism within the population group were evident. There was no big picture on LGBT+ volunteering in October 2017 when I attended Professor South's Sports Volunteering Research Network presentation at Northumbria University. The presentation was the missing link between a topic that was important to me on a personal level within the context of sport volunteering. It was clear that there was a lack of in-depth data to be able to document experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport. The PhD started slowly coming together and a year later, in October 2018, another important presentation, this time by Pride Sports UK Director Lou Englefield, took place in London at the Sports Volunteering Research Network conference. Lou provided the practitioner perspective on the dearth of research into LGBT+ sport (volunteer) experiences, validating the need for the study and just like that the direction of my PhD was sealed.

“It is surprising that no literature concerning barriers to volunteering and ‘sexual orientation’ was identified in this review given the strong traditions of citizen activism and volunteer/peer health programmes in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities (Gates et al. 2016).” (Southby et al., 2019, p. 916–917)

The terminology used in this thesis acknowledges the diverse and evolving nature of LGBT+ culture, communities, and research. Throughout the thesis, consistent language

has been maintained when referencing the terminology used in the studies cited, such as 'gay sport club' or 'homosexuality'. The terms LGBT+, sexually diverse, sexual orientation, and sexual identity are used interchangeably in the introduction, literature review, and methodology chapters. However, in the findings and discussion chapters, the choice of terminology depends on the context. If the term was used by the participants themselves in their accounts, it is reflected accordingly. Additionally, when describing the population sample in the study, it is noted that the participants were sexually diverse but not gender diverse, as all participants identified as cisgendered. A glossary is provided at the end of the thesis and includes definitions for LGBT+ terminology with the source of the information indicated after the term. Sources for the definitions are a mix of UK-based LGBT+ advocacy organisations such as Stonewall UK and LGBT Foundation, academic sources, and definitions provided by me as the thesis author, in order to acknowledge and incorporate a range of perspectives and expertise.

## 1.2 Background to the study

Sport volunteering is deeply rooted in the cultural institution and therefore provision of sport in the UK (Reid & Findlay-King, 2018). Sport volunteers are widely acknowledged as the biggest workforce in sport – and the largest group of volunteers within the UK (Benson & Wise, 2017). Alongside the resource contribution of volunteers to the sports infrastructure (Join In, 2015), there has been a great deal of other value placed on volunteering in sport (Nichols et al., 2019). Volunteering provides an opportunity for mutual aid or activism, and a platform for government policy, promoting social capital, social inclusion, health and lifelong sports participation as well as creating leisure opportunities (Nichols et al., 2016). At national sport policy level there has been particular emphasis on giving back to community (Doherty & Hoye, 2011; Taylor, T. et al., 2006), integration in sport (Nichols et al., 2004) and contribution to positive mental health (Sport England, 2016; Lu et al., 2019).

In line with this, Sport England (2016) proposes that everyone should be able to engage with and benefit from sport volunteering. This draws on the evidence from the GIVERS

report (Fujiwara et al., 2018), whereby volunteering in sport is shown to have a statistically significant relationship with well-being. Furthermore, there is a growing focus in ensuring that sport volunteers have a positive and meaningful experience, that the volunteer population increases, and that people from various backgrounds are encouraged to join sport volunteering (Sport England, 2021). Sport England has a stated drive to both increase but also diversify volunteering and make sure everyone can volunteer (Natale, 2022).

This increasing focus on equality, diversity and inclusion mirrors the agenda of the wider UK third sector, with the National Council for Voluntary Organisation critiquing the problems of homogenous volunteer workforces in 2017. However, progress has been slow to increase diversity in volunteering in the third sector (Hylton et al., 2019), with UK sport volunteers tending to be male, white and middle-class (Reid & Findlay-King, 2018). Within sport, there may also be a difference between what is (1) spoken about and valued at national level and (2) what happens in local, grass roots contexts. As Legg and Karner (2021, p. 3) point out “volunteer recruitment in sport clubs is primarily driven by shared identities”, suggesting that sport organisations are likely to recruit and retain a homogenous pool of volunteers (Nichols, Tacon, & Muir, 2013).

Whilst commitment to diversifying volunteering is stated by Sport England, there is an added impetus to this drive as now, more than ever, there is a need to engage new sport volunteers in a post-Covid-19 world. Sport England’s annual Active Lives survey noted the loss of nearly 600,000 volunteers over the three years prior to Covid-19 (Sport England, 2020a) and since then volunteer numbers have continued to fall (Sport England, 2022a). Further, the impact of austerity measures on public leisure facilities and services also renders volunteer contributions to civic society more important as the state retracts resources (Downward et al., 2020; Lup & Booth, 2019; Stride et al., 2020).

When this PhD study commenced, Sport England’s Volunteering Strategy (2017-2021) referred to a desire to bring more people into volunteering from under-represented groups. However, this focused generally on inclusivity and an evaluation of the inclusion



fund connected to this strategy (2016) did not include detailed plans for investment into LGBT+ volunteer specific development projects. The strategy also stated an intention to “develop our insight and understanding of the needs, motivations and barriers to volunteering in sport and physical activity” (Sport England, 2016, p.4). Sport England did indeed commission research into some under-represented groups to identify barriers to their sport volunteering: women (Women in Sport, 2017), racial and ethnic minorities (Sported, 2020), social gradient (Fujiwara et al., 2018) and disabled (Activity Alliance, 2017). A small study by Pride Sports UK (Englefield et al., 2016) forms the only Sport England-commissioned research into LGBT+ sport participation and volunteering. The research on this topic conducted independently of Sport England commissioning will be discussed further below. The annual Active Lives survey run by Sport England also follows the volunteering of LGBT+ people in sport, however this data has not been extracted by Sport England in their summary reports and has only recently been included in the survey from November 2019 – November 2020 onwards (Sport England, 2023).<sup>1</sup>

During the course of this PhD study there has been some change in Sport England’s focus on inclusivity. The latest strategy promises “an unrelenting emphasis on diversity, inclusion, skills and behaviours, to open up and increase volunteering and employment opportunities for people from a broader range of backgrounds and experiences” (Sport England, 2021). 2022-2025 implementation plan of the strategy makes a statement acknowledging LGBT+ experiences of prejudice and discrimination (Sport England, 2022b).

Whilst LGBT+ people are talked about as a minoritised group to be developed as sport volunteers by Sport England, there remains little research on LGBT+ volunteering experiences or how being LGBT+ may influence volunteering in sport. Barriers to

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<sup>1</sup> Gathering data on LGBT+ population on a wider scale took a major step forward when the 2021 Census recorded LGBT+ populations for the first time in England and Wales with more than 1.5 million (3.2% of the population) identifying as LGB (Office for National Statistics, 2023).

volunteering and volunteer experience of marginalised groups within the sport volunteer workforce have not been widely explored (Hoeber, 2010). Persisting heteronormativity in sport (Smits et al., 2021) and the wider socio-cultural context of volunteering as a platform for activism (Nichols et al., 2016) support the need to explore the experience of LGBT+ volunteers (Southby et al., 2019). Since I began my research in 2017, other calls have emerged to examine the experiences of LGBT+ volunteers particularly in sport. For example, Hoye et al. (2019, p. 77) acknowledge the lack of research into LGBTQI volunteers in their book chapter about diverse sport volunteers:

“Sport plays a significant role in many societies such as... the UK...; however, it is a place where LGBTQI individuals are largely silent and invisible in terms of what is known of their volunteering experiences.”

This means that in the volunteer sports sector, LGBT+ volunteers remain under-researched as a group (Hoye et al., 2019). This research gap into the experiences of sport volunteers is also highlighted by Torrance (2022) in his review of inclusion policies and experiences of LGBTQ people in sports in the UK.

A study of 5524 European respondents (Hartmann-Tews et al., 2020) indicated sport is not a welcoming place for LGBT+ people in particular, with other studies on current rates of homophobic language use in male team sport settings (Denison, Faulkner, et al., 2020) and related research reviews confirming the findings. Research reviews focus on experiences of LGBT+ athletes and coaches (Kavoura & Kokkonen, 2020); discrimination of LGBT+ people taking part in sport (Denison, Bevan, et al., 2020), physical activity participation of LGBT+ adults (Herrick & Duncan, 2018a), LGBTQ youth school sport experiences (Greenspan et al., 2017) and LGBTQ+ experiences in sport management (Shaw & Cunningham, 2021). These reviews illustrate a burgeoning research field and repeated calls to make sport a more welcoming environment for LGBT+ people by challenging heteronormativity in sport (Hartmann-Tews, 2022).

Be that as it may, these studies have not focused on volunteers. LGBT+ volunteers have received limited attention and have not been the main population of interest but

have featured alongside workforce<sup>2</sup> members and sport participants (Energise Me, 2019; Englefield et al., 2016; Hoye et al., 2019; Jarvis, 2018; Mock et al., 2019; Storr, 2021; Symons et al., 2010). Given the documented consistent high levels of reported homophobic language use and discrimination based on sexual orientation in sport, this raises the question of the experience of LGBT+ volunteers in sporting contexts.

It is important to note the state of the related research field of LGBT+ sport participation, wider engagement and working in sport in the absence of scholarship on LGBT+ *volunteer* experiences in sport because LGBT+ sport volunteers are involved in sport in other ways than just volunteering (Englefield et al., 2016). Therefore, these experiences may contribute to the development of LGBT+ volunteers' identities as well as shape their volunteer involvement.

Thus, even though Sport England has a national agenda of diversifying volunteering, there is limited evidence on the success of the agenda in the form of research on LGBT+ volunteers. Whereas understandings of volunteering in sport can be expanded by exploring the experience of LGBT+ volunteers whose efforts go unnoticed, unrecognised and whose voices are often not heard (Hoye et al., 2019).

### 1.3 Orientation to the study and research questions

In this study sport volunteer meanings are explored over time as experienced by LGBT+ sport volunteers. Here, volunteer experience refers to:

“how volunteering is constructed, how it transforms people’s perceptions of themselves and society and what their engagement means to them (Wilson, 2012)” (von Essen, 2016, p. 246).

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<sup>2</sup> Workforce is defined as “those who support people to be physically active or who work/volunteer in a physical activity or sport setting” (Energise Me, 2019, p. 6).

Volunteering is more than just a one-time decision; it is a continuous process for the volunteer in which the meaning of volunteering and being a volunteer evolves (O'Toole & Grey, 2016, p. 90). Most volunteering is viewed as a formal process embedded in organisations (Wicker, 2017), but even informal volunteering involves helping and interacting with others. Volunteer experience (Wilson, 2012), or how individuals conceptualise the meaning of their volunteering (von Essen, 2016), has not substantiated widespread attention in volunteering research<sup>3</sup>. Shachar et al. (2019, p. 246) reason that this may be because influential actors such as governments, corporations and large non-profits are the ones to set these boundaries as to what stages of the volunteer process are researched because they “benefit from the *outcomes* of volunteering – for example how volunteer numbers equate to more funding and “enhance volunteers’ recruitment”.

Individual experiences, in turn, form patterns that intertwine with (and aid in the formation of) self in relation to society (Dixon & Bruening, 2005). Within research on LGBT+ people in sport, an identity approach has often been utilised (Kavoura & Kokkonen, 2020, p. 5). Rumens (2020, p. 555) in extensive work on LGBT+ experiences in organisations, argues for the use of identity as a core concept to expose “the diverse histories and challenges of living LGBTQ+ sexualities in everyday life”. Whilst research has sought to understand the experiences of LGBT+ athletes (Cunningham, 2019), coaches (Norman, 2012) and paid staff (Melton & Cunningham, 2014), using identity as a core concept to understand the experiences of sport volunteers who identify as LGBT+ has been limited (Legg & Karner, 2021).

Given the importance of sexuality as a basis for identity, as Rumens (2020) emphasises, a focus on how LGBT+ people make sense of their experiences in sport volunteering is inextricably linked to how they make sense of themselves/their identities within this context. Grönlund (2011) reinforces the importance of a focus on identity by associating volunteering with both expressing identity and providing volunteers with a sense of identity.

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<sup>3</sup> compared to antecedents and consequences of volunteering (Wilson, 2012).

*Identity as work* leads to the term "identity work," which is often used as a metaphor for "identity formation" (Brown, 2015). As a concept, it refers to the phenomenon of people actively constructing, reconstructing, and maintaining their identities through various forms of self-presentation and interaction with others. As a framework, identity work provides a structured way of understanding and analysing the complex processes involved in identity construction, maintenance, and change. Snow and Anderson (1987) recognised four identity work activities: (i) arrangement of physical settings, (ii) personal appearance, (iii) selected affiliation with others, and (iv) discourse about one's identity. In this study identity work is understood as a metaphor, concept and framework. Identity work helps volunteers understand who they are (becoming) as reflected by others, how to interact with others depending on their social context (Weller et al., 2021) and emphasises the effort invested in creating personal meaning (Atewologun et al., 2016).

The application of identity work as a concept has been broadened to include other 'social arenas' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), including sport volunteering (Wegner et al., 2019, 2020). Wegner et al. (2019) shed light on the process of identity formation for volunteers in sport organisations and how this process is influenced by the organisation's culture and values. Wegner et al. (2020) used the example of 'Black Girls Run!' to discuss how organisational membership can help marginalised individuals overcome conflicts between their sport identity and their cultural/gender identities. The findings of Wegner et al. (2020) suggested that organisational membership can provide a sense of belonging and support for individuals enabling them to create an identity around organisational beliefs or values, which may help overcome this tension. These studies helped me in showing how applying identity work can help uncover some of the challenges and opportunities faced by LGBT+ volunteers in sport organisations and how organisations can support their identity construction.

This PhD additionally considers LGBT+ volunteers' shaping of their individual volunteer experience, how they influence level of inclusion in sport volunteering and their ongoing identity construction over time rather than exploring a snapshot of collective

(marginalised) identities in one case study organisation. I suggest that identity work (Watson, 2008, 2009b, 2020) has the potential to reveal what strategies individuals use to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of opening up about their sexual identities in their sport volunteering context. For example, in a sports club environment, positive affirmation of LGBT+ identity made people participate more in the club activities in participant and volunteer capacity (Mock et al., 2019). Conversely, the fear of being rejected and the need to hide one's sexual orientation may lead to lower levels of psychological wellbeing and decreased sport participation. Even though society is becoming more accepting of sexual diversity in sports, there are still times when it leads to exclusion and discrimination (Herrick & Duncan, 2018a, 2018b). By gaining an understanding of how LGBT+ people engage in identity work, we can also consider how sport volunteering shapes individuals' identity against the backdrop of well documented issues of heteronormativity in sport (Müller & Böhlke, 2022).

As a broader consideration, examining experiences and identities of LGBT+ volunteers in sport can also provide insight into understanding the actions of these volunteers on inclusion. In the concluding chapter of her book on identity and inclusion experiences of LGBTQ people in sport, Hartmann-Tews (2022, p. 207) notes the central role that volunteers play in organising sports and identifies lack of research into volunteers' self-consciousness around LGBTQ diversity and "resistance to putting LGBTQ anti-discrimination on the equality agenda". Here Hartmann-Tews highlights the lack of particular focus given to LGBT+ volunteer experiences; LGBT+ volunteers are not considered as a distinct category of volunteers. To better understand LGBT+ inclusion experiences in sport, this study seeks to obtain directly from LGBT+ volunteers how they influence the level of inclusion in sport.

On this basis, three research questions were formulated:

- RQ1.** What meanings do LGBT+ volunteers in sport give to their volunteering experiences over time?

**RQ2.** How do LGBT+ volunteers in sport manage, construct and negotiate their identities over time through identity work?

**RQ3.** How do LGBT+ volunteers influence inclusion within sport?

In order to answer these research questions, identity work (Watson, 2008, 2009b, 2020) was used as a framework to understand the overall volunteer engagement of sexually diverse volunteers over time. This was accomplished by employing topical life history interviews to uncover the meanings of these experiences over time for managing, constructing and negotiating identities and how they influence inclusion within sport. I used topical life history interviews to shed light on how people negotiated their identities over time, presenting their experiences in larger contexts and underlining how they experienced major changes.

## 1.4 Significance of the research

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the current body of knowledge on LGBT+ volunteers in sport and the potential implications for sport volunteering policy and practice. The research addresses areas that have been underinvestigated in the field of sport volunteering: the experiences and identities of LGBT+ volunteers and the meaning of their volunteering over time.

Previous studies have primarily examined recruitment, retention, and motivation of sport volunteers in general, but there has been a lack of insight into the specific experiences of LGBT+ volunteers. By exploring the experiences, identities and meanings attributed to volunteering activities, this research provides valuable insights into a minoritised and underrepresented group within the sport volunteering context.

Furthermore, the research has global relevance. The increasing internationalisation of sports and the interaction of volunteers from different countries in sports events make understanding the experiences of LGBT+ volunteers meaningful. By comprehending the complexities and dynamics of these interactions, inclusive and respectful environments

can be fostered for volunteers from different nations, promoting a sense of belonging and embracing global diversity in sport volunteering.

Moreover, the research's focus on the UK context is significant as it takes into account the social and political landscape specific to the UK. By providing valuable insights into the experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in the UK, including their challenges and the meanings they attribute to their volunteering activities, this research can inform policies and practices aimed at enhancing diversity and inclusion within sport volunteering programmes. Many Western countries share common challenges and social dynamics in their sporting systems, making the insights gained from this thesis transferable to similar contexts internationally. This broader applicability is crucial given the global nature of sport and the participation of volunteers from diverse backgrounds in major sporting events.

In terms of academic discourse, this study expands the knowledge base on sport volunteering by examining a previously understudied population. The adoption of a qualitative approach adds depth and richness to the understanding of LGBT+ volunteers' experiences in sport. This study serves as a valuable resource for researchers interested in exploring the complexities of volunteerism within the LGBT+ community and contributes to the broader academic discussion on volunteer experiences, identities, and inclusion in sport. The insights gained from this research can be utilised to help develop and implement inclusive policies, guidelines, and programmes for volunteers in various countries. By promoting diversity, inclusivity, and meaningful engagement of volunteers, these initiatives can create more welcoming environments for LGBT+ individuals in sport volunteering contexts worldwide.

The study also introduces the concept of volunteer personas to understand how LGBT+ volunteers present their identities and engage in identity work within the sport volunteering setting. This application of identity work (Watson, 2008, 2009b, 2020) to the context of sport volunteering represents a unique contribution to the field.



This research's significance lies in its contribution to filling the research gap, its implications for policy and practice, its global relevance, and its contributions to academic discourse. By examining the experiences and identities of LGBT+ volunteers in sport, this research enhances our understanding of sport volunteering and advocates for more inclusive and equitable practices within the field. The originality of the work, the focus on volunteer experiences over time, the identification of meaningful categories, and the application of identity work add depth and richness to the existing knowledge on LGBT+ volunteer experiences in sport. While the study focuses on the UK, its findings and recommendations have broader applicability, informing policies, practices, and academic discussions on diversity, inclusion, and volunteerism in sport both locally and internationally.

## 1.5 Chapter summaries

**Chapter 1 (*Introduction*)** has (1) outlined the development of interest in sport volunteering experiences, particularly in LGBT+ specific and other sport settings (2) provided a brief overview to LGBT+ identities and sport volunteering (3) provided an initial orientation to the study and identified the use of identity work (4) outlined the key research questions to be addressed, and (5) outlined the significance of the study. Below I outline the remaining chapters of the thesis.

**Chapter 2 (*Identity work*)** will introduce identity work (the guiding theoretical framework of the thesis), explore the origins of the concept and how it has developed. This will lead up to examining the significance of identity for LGBT+ population and how identity work have been applied in the sport volunteering context.

**Chapter 3 (*Inclusive volunteering and diverse volunteer experiences*)** will address conceptualisation of volunteering and what is known about diverse volunteer experiences including LGBT+ experiences in sport volunteering and how sport volunteers engage in diversity work to contribute to more diverse sporting communities.

**Chapter 4 (Methodology)** details the research methodology, including: (i) ontological (interpretivist) and epistemological (weak social constructionist) considerations; (ii) research design (qualitative); (iii) data collection method (topical life history interviews); (iv) participants (LGBT+ volunteers in sport); (v) data analysis (constructivist grounded theory principles), critical evaluation of the chosen research design (limitations of interviews, timeline tool); (vi) trustworthiness of the study (combining constructivist grounded theory, life story and life history quality criteria); and (vii) ethical stance (working with minoritised participants).

**Chapters 5-8** discuss the study findings: instances of singularity and common patterns in participants' life history stories, with particular emphasis on sport volunteering experiences of these volunteers. **Chapter 5 (Changing cultural notions in the context of LGBT+ lives)** provides the backdrop for participants' life histories in the form of a composite vignette to illustrate the changes in the socio-historical landscape of LGBT+ lives in the UK. **Chapter 6 (Topical life history stories of sport volunteering)** presents shortened life history stories that uncover the volunteering experiences and identity construction over time to allow the reader a chance to get to know the participants individually before themed comparisons are made. **Chapter 7 (Cross-case analysis of LGBT+ volunteer engagement)** delves into the discourses surrounding sport volunteering and identity work within the context of LGBT+ inclusion/exclusion, exploring participants' volunteer journey, identity work experiences and future intentions for volunteering. **Chapter 8 (Conceptualising LGBT+ volunteer engagement)** examines the conceptual categories that were developed across the topical life history interviews with the participants in relation to their meaning of volunteering, identity work and diversity work.

**Chapter 9 (Conclusion)** will summarise the findings and consider the theoretical, methodological, conceptual and practical contributions of the thesis. It will also state the limitations of this thesis, consider future research possibilities and propose ways forward to ensure more inclusive volunteering experiences in sport.

## 2 IDENTITY WORK

This chapter examines how identity work emerged as a theoretical approach to studying identities and why it is useful in the micro-sociological and organisational context of LGBT+ and sport volunteering experiences. Identity work emerged as a sociological concept in Snow and Anderson's (1987) study on homeless men constructing and navigating positive personal identities and was introduced in organisational studies by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) on senior managerial identity. Identity work has since been used in an organisational context of work identities, metaphorically 'working on your identity', often to emphasise contradiction between personal and occupational identities (Caza et al., 2018). As stated earlier, research on identity work of LGBT+ individuals is lacking in the context of sport volunteering even though there is application of identity work of marginalised individuals in a sport volunteering context (Wegner et al., 2020). The research on identity work in sport volunteering has adopted identity work definitions and approaches from organisational and management studies. The limited amount of sport volunteering studies that employ identity work necessitates a brief overview on how identity work has been used in another relevant area: sexual identity management in the workplace.

Identity work examines the ways in which individuals manage their sense of self, including their professional identity and their relationships with others in the organisation, for example LGBTQ employees engage in "sexual identity management," where they try to avoid discrimination and harassment by downplaying their sexuality in the eyes of their heterosexual colleagues and clients (Baker & Lucas, 2017).

Individuals in organisations develop and maintain multiple identities that are shaped by their personal characteristics, organisational culture, and situational factors. Creed et al. (2010) for example explore the identity work of GLBT priests and the ways in which they navigate the complexities of their sexual orientation within a larger institution of the Catholic Church. The authors argue that GLBT priests engage in a constant process of

identity work, which involves balancing their personal and professional identities, negotiating their religious beliefs and practices, and managing the expectations of others. Identity work in organisations also involves managing the presentation of self and the impression that one makes on others, which can have important consequences for career advancement, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. Barker and Lucas (2017) suggest employees focused their efforts on being exceptional employees in the hopes that their skill and contributions would offset the stigma associated with their sexual orientation. Additionally, identity work can be influenced by power dynamics and cultural differences within organisations and can be affected by events such as leadership and role changes. Compton (2016) finds sexual minority employees are subjected to assumptions about their sexual orientation, having to navigate workplace norms that may be at odds with their own values. A better understanding of identity work can help organisations to improve employee engagement, build stronger teams, and enhance overall organisational effectiveness (Brown, 2015, 2017, 2021). People who are comfortable expressing their sexual orientation at work are more productive, loyal to the firm, generally happier (e.g., Brenner et al., 2010) and make greater creative contributions in their organisations (Cunningham, 2011). I will explore different elements of identity work in more detail in the next section as I also unpack the theoretical approaches that underpin identity work.

## 2.1 Theoretical approaches to identity work

Due to the plurality of the term “identity work”, empirical research may utilise identity work or related terms (Brown, 2015) such as “identity construction” (Caza et al., 2018) and “identity management” (Watson, 2008). This might be due to the multiple theoretical underpinnings in identity research that, in turn, inform identity work. This is why it may sometimes be difficult to trace the type of identity work referred to or the identity research tradition that underpins identity work studies. I turn to these attempts to define and compile approaches to identity work next before settling on a defined identity work approach for this thesis. I will discuss how I adopted my position in the following

sections but first I address the emergence of identity work from identity. Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p. 1165) define identity work as:

“...people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165).

The definition by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) reflects some of the hard-line debates around identities (in relation to how we see ourselves) and whether identities are: (i) selected by or assigned to people; (ii) typically stable, adaptable, or fluid; (iii) unified and coherent, or fragmented and potentially contradictory; (iv) driven (or not) by a need for positive meaning; and (v) characterised (or not) by a need for authenticity (Brown, 2015, p. 25).

In the next sections, I critically examine both: (i) the underlying theories of identity; and (ii) the use of these traditional theories underpinning identity work identity in sport, volunteering, LGBT+ and organisational studies, with consideration to these hard-line debates around identity (Brown, 2015) before explaining the theoretical approach to identity work used in this thesis. Following Brown (2021), this review acknowledges the overflowing nature of using identity work with studies sometimes fitting into more categories than one. Table 1 provides a high-level overview of theoretical underpinnings of identity work research and focuses on studies that make direct reference to using identity work approach(es). Studies only mentioning identity work tangentially without referencing an identity work approach have been excluded from the table.

Table 1. Theoretical approaches to studying identity work<sup>4</sup>

Identity research tradition	Foundational authors	Research examples in related fields	What is identity?	Key concepts	When do people work on their identities?	How do people work on their identities?	Why do people work on their identities?
<b>Social Identity Theory (SIT)</b>	Tajfel and Turner (1979)	Kreiner et al. (2006) Atewologun et al. (2016)	The awareness that one belongs to a social group or category and the related emotions (Roberts & Creary, 2013)	Group memberships, in-group and out-group distinctions	If collective meanings are altered or contested and when ingroup/outgroup distinctions are prominent (Caza et al., 2018)	Situate oneself with respect to ingroups and outgroups and alter how people define the groups to which they belong (Caza et al., 2018)	Self-enhancement, distinctiveness, belongingness (Caza et al., 2018)
<b>Role/ Identity Theory</b>	Stryker and Serpe (1982) Stryker and Burke (2000)	Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari, (2016) Mitchell (2019)	Self-meaning associated with the many roles one plays and the significance of individual behaviour (Roberts & Creary, 2013)	Role taking, role conflict, identity salience and prevalence	New roles, self vs. other, expectations, multiple roles (Caza et al., 2018)	Change oneself to conform to a role, alter role expectations, and alter one's own or others' views of roles. (Caza et al., 2018)	Self-verification (Caza et al., 2018)
<b>Discursive</b>	Foucault (2002, (1969), 1986 (1978))	Watson (2008) Atewologun et al. (2016) Soini and Eräranta (2023)	Multiple, dynamic, competing, fleeting, context-sensitive, and developing self-expressions that are formed by social, institutional, cultural, and historical divides across identity groups (Roberts & Creary, 2013)	Contextual discourses, cultural scripts, tackling the underlying status and power relations (Roberts & Creary, 2013)	Continually, in reaction to discursive efforts to shape identities (Caza et al., 2018)	Resist and/or participate with dominant institutional discourses' efforts at control (Caza et al., 2018)	Maintaining continuity and individuality (Caza et al., 2018)
<b>Dramaturgical/ Symbolic</b>	Goffman (2021, (1959);	Hockey (2005) Watson (2008, 2020) Down and Reveley (2009) Allen-Collinson et al. (2019)	A looking glass self (Cooley, 1902) where understandings of the self are constituted in social interactions with others or through using, displaying, and modifying objects as symbols (Brown, 2021)	Impression management, performances of self, settings and object symbols	When interacting with other people through identity performances	Engaging in facework, information management and concealment through personal appearance and object symbols	To manage other people's impressions of them, to present favourably
<b>Narrative</b>	Giddens (1991) McAdams (1993)	Watson (2009b) Ibarra and Barbulescu, (2010) Grönlund (2011) Weller, Brown and A E Clarke (2021)	An evolving, interpretative process of becoming that is recorded by an individual's storied self-understandings in relation to their social world (Roberts & Creary, 2013)	Life story and culturally embedded plots (Roberts & Creary, 2013)	Continuous yet intensified with transitions/change and uncertain or unexpected occurrences (Caza et al., 2018)	Developing and revising narratives that include personal histories and available discourses (Caza et al., 2018)	Coherence and plausibility (Caza et al., 2018)

<sup>4</sup> For more detailed reviews on identity and identity work see Roberts and Creary (2013), Brown (2015, 2017, 2021) and Caza et al. (2018).

### 2.1.1 Social identity theory

Originating in social psychology, social identity theory (SIT) investigates how group membership leads to individuals having shared characteristics and ideals that serve as a foundation for normative behaviour (Lock & Heere, 2017): how our sense of self might be founded on prominent features such as age and ethnicity (Tajfel, 1979). SIT creates awareness that one belongs to a social group or category and the related emotions by identifying and responding to identity challenges via group memberships. An example of this can be found in Atewologun et al.'s (2016) study on minority ethnic managers and how they negotiated their group membership in corporate environment with those who they considered similar or different to them based on intersectional dimensions of their identities such as ethnicity, gender and level of seniority within the company.

Furthermore, Vermeulen and Verweel (2009) see participation in a sports club as a way of expressing a sense of belonging to a group. Being a member of a sports club entails both inclusion (feeling welcomed and accepted by the group) and exclusion (being differentiated from those outside the group). This suggests that participation in sports can help people identify with and connect with a specific social group, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity.

SIT conceptualises the self as consisting of two distinct components, 'personal identity' and 'social identity'. SIT analyses more clearly the external groups or social categories from which people get their sense of self. For example, Rumens (2020) refers to sexual identity as both a personal and a social identity, with social identity referring to how our sense of self may be influenced by our participation in social groups (Tajfel, 1979).

Personal identity encompasses personal qualities such as self-meanings and self-categorisation (Stets & Burke, 2000). Similarly, being a volunteer could be understood as a personal and a social identity – either contributing to a sense of worthiness through volunteering (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001) or as a uniting group identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). Further, members of marginalised groups who are unable to escape their grouping often

attempt to alter others' impressions of them, reject unfavourable evaluations, and/or insist on adopting self-evaluation criteria that flatter them (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Key concepts of SIT, such as 'in-group' and 'out-group,' have contributed to comprehending elements of identity work and understanding negotiation of belonging to in-groups and distinctiveness from out-groups in relation to social groups (Caza et al., 2018). In Behrens et al.'s (2018) research on football club volunteers, the football club forms a relevant social category that volunteers feel belonging to because of emotional involvement and cherishing membership in the club as a form of togetherness. Individuals' sense of identity and self-esteem are inextricably linked to the organisations to which they belong. Football club membership not only offers a social environment for volunteers, but also determines their place in society by defining their in-group (the football club) and out-groups (other social categories). The findings also refer to ingroup bias, which is the propensity to prefer and identify with members of one's own group over members of other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Once people have established their in-groups and out-groups, out-group prejudice becomes a prevalent element of intergroup connections. Furthermore, the mere sense of belonging to other groups is enough to cause intergroup prejudice in favour of the in-group (Behrens et al., 2018). Similarly, by building positive self-concepts, stigmatised employees can insulate themselves from unfavourable societal attitudes and ideas about their identities. This can include developing an ideology that confirms and supports their experiences, as well as coping with the stigma through psychological defences such as humour and ambivalence (Kreiner et al., 2006).

SIT minimises agency and personal identity (Brown, 2021) and focuses on collective identities (Caza et al., 2018). Due to an outcome-based approach, there is no focus on a continued development of identity or consideration of intrapersonal dynamics through which identities develop that can impact subjective experiences (Gill, 2023). While the influence of SIT on the development of identity work approaches is acknowledged, there is a need to explore approaches that account for the impact of historical context over



time on the development of social and personal identities beyond reductionist categorisation and social comparison.

### 2.1.2 Role/identity theory

Identity theory (IT) and SIT concentrate on different levels of analysis (Hogg M. A., et al., 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000). IT focuses on the interactions between people that shape role behaviour (Stryker & Serpe, 1982) rather than group memberships or “broader social categories” in defining an individual’s identity (Brown, 2021, p. 19). Both IT and SIT assert that the social roles and group memberships that people have, have a profound impact on how they view and identify themselves. Furthermore, both theories recognise the significance of the social norms and expectations that accompany these positions and memberships (Stets & Burke, 2000). Identity is the meanings people automatically attach to their roles in organisations and society. According to IT, individuals wish to minimise identity conflict and enhance compatibility between their various roles (Roberts & Creary, 2013).

IT has contributed to the development of identity work perspective by establishing the salience of roles and identities as well as role conflict. Identity work is most likely to occur as a result of identity conflict (Järventie-Thesleff & Tienari, 2016) – not being able to maintain a stable role/identity or engaging in role transitions (such as from athlete to volunteer (Cuskelly & O’Brien, 2013) and role exits (quitting volunteering – see for example (Gellweiler et al., 2019). Studies adopting a role identity work perspective are limited. Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari (2016) have used a role identity work perspective, depicting roles as vehicles that mediate and negotiate meanings between actors, while being reconstructed through processes that mediate the identity work of corporate actors. Mitchell (2019), referring to Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari (2016), in a study about volunteers in live-action role playing events, asserts that volunteer roles act as mediators between paid staff and customers – enforcing the hierarchy of paid staff first, volunteers second.

Volunteering studies generally have mostly focused on volunteering as a role identity (Fairley et al., 2014; Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007; Finkelstein et al., 2005; Parris et al., 2015; van Ingen & Wilson, 2017). Volunteering lends itself to being a role identity because it is often a formal and structured activity that takes places within organisations. Role identity is not able to address the personal and subjective perspective of the individual or the contextual changes in personal experiences over time (Brown, 2017). If experiences are determined by the roles individuals inhabit, this neglects the agency and autonomy of individuals: also minimising gender, ethnicity, and personal identities, similar to SIT (Brown, 2021). The intersection of an individual's sexual and volunteer identities should not therefore be reduced to formal roles. Therefore, even though there is congruency between role identity and volunteering, I deemed role identity and sexuality incompatible.

### 2.1.3 Discursive

Identity work can be understood as discursively produced (Simpson & Carroll, 2020). This is rooted in the concept of “discourse” - popularised by Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and social theorist. Foucault (2002) saw discourse as a mode of communication that shapes and is shaped by social practices, institutions, and power relations. More specifically, discourse refers to the ways in which language and symbols are used to produce and reproduce meaning, and to organise and regulate social interactions and relationships. Discourse can be used to create or reinforce social norms, values, and beliefs, and can also play a crucial role in shaping individual and collective identities. Consequently, identity work is a contemporary illustration of the conflicts between control and resistance discourses (Atewologun et al., 2017; Brown, 2015; Caza et al., 2018). Power relations are not just about a static, one-sided display of power and control, but are instead complex, changing and constantly evolving interactions between different social, institutional, cultural, and historical barriers across different identity groups. Individuals play an important role in these power relations as they express their identities, challenge dominant power structures and create alternative

narratives and practices (Foucault, 1986; Roberts & Creary, 2013). Soini and Eräranta (2023) found that some discourses are performed in the workplace and others for example via online forums, allowing gay and lesbian employees support they did not have via their workplaces and to establish understandings of employees' personal and subjective experiences (Roberts & Creary, 2013).

Discourses surrounding LGBT+ identities are often influenced by dominant cultural norms, which can result in limiting and exclusionary representations of these identities. Discourses can also vary depending on the cultural, historical, and geographical context, making it difficult to make generalisations or draw conclusions about the experiences of LGBT+ individuals more broadly. The different ways in which people and groups are marginalised, excluded, or otherwise treated unfairly in sports form the discourses of discrimination in sport (Eng, 2006). This can manifest as bias and prejudice based on gender and sexual orientation. Some common examples include little possibilities for involvement and growth, and the use of gendered or homophobic slurs (Denison, Faulkner, et al., 2020). Discriminatory discourses in sports may have a big influence on the people and communities involved, thus the importance to address and oppose these harmful attitudes and behaviours.

Overall, a discursive approach may overemphasise the prescriptive nature of discourse – how social structures shape individual lives, not recognising a non-discursive, agentic reality (Newton, 1998; O'Mahoney & Marks, 2014). However, without emphasis to discourse, there is a risk of ignoring the very social fabric that frames LGBT+ identities. In relation to LGBT+ lives, Lawrence and Y Taylor (2020) identify discourses of progress in framing LGBT+ lives 'getting better' which they see as a celebratory rhetoric of UK government around the LGBT 2018 Action Plan even though there is evidence to suggest otherwise such as increased hate crime rates towards LGBT+ people (Home Office, 2022). Discourses are usually centred on the acceptance of homosexuality and the rights of LGBT+ individuals. Some discourses are inclusive, supportive, and seek to promote equality and dignity for everyone, while others are exclusive, discriminatory, and seek to marginalise the LGBT+ community (Soini & Eräranta, 2023). In the context

of volunteering, there are discourses of inclusion and exclusion for example – who is considered a volunteer, who gets to volunteer and who is excluded from volunteering (Ganesh & Mcallum, 2009). These discourses will be revisited in Chapter 3 on volunteering.

Contributions of discursive approaches to identity work research include an emphasis on power relations and highlighting socially available discourses in forming identities. Individuals may also resist and challenge discourses to maintain individuality (Roberts & Creary, 2013). Discursive approaches to identity work link self-identities and broader discourses, therefore opening up a realm of possibility for not just focusing on inward facing observations of individual identities but the structures that influence these identities. By being aware of discourses individuals may use them to manage and negotiate their identity positions rather than remaining passive in light of these pressures (Watson, 2008).

Individuals manage complicated networks of power in various contexts and in connection to others, managing intersections with other contemporary identities (Atewologun et al., 2016) and interpreting encounters with individuals and behaviours, as well as the larger historical, institutional, and political forces that form these connections (Watson, 2008). Identity work approaches underpinned by discursive tradition are useful for this thesis because acknowledging the influence of discourse provides opportunities for examining how LGBT+ and sport volunteers resist and are shaped by socially available discourses (Watson, 2008).

#### 2.1.4 Dramaturgical/symbolic

Dramaturgical/symbolic identity approaches have been presented as one intertwined category in organisational and management studies (OMS) due to their many overlaps (Brown, 2021) and are therefore presented together in this literature review. Dramaturgical/symbolic research on identities shaped by influential Canadian

sociologist Erving Goffman (2021) and the symbolic interactionism theory of American sociologist George Herbert Mead (1934), focuses on how people 'announce and enact' who they are in social interactions, as well as the adoption, display, and manipulation of object symbols, i.e., tangible entities that are saturated with meaning (Callero, 2003; Down & Reveley, 2009). *Dramaturgical identity work* takes place via action – or performances of the self. Typically, such performances are intended for an audience to obtain external validation via the execution of activities that mirror the identity in play (Down and Reveley, 2009). Individuals are thus able to experience themselves as an object from the perspective of another (Allen-Collinson et al., 2019; Hockey, 2005). Allen-Collinson et al. (2019) emphasise the relational nature of identity work for community health trainers and their ongoing negotiation of occupational competence in relation to other healthcare professionals. Down and Reveley (2009) emphasise face-to-face interactions and self-narration in identity work, indicating that it is dynamic and continuous. Dramaturgical/symbolic identity work approaches draw heavily on what Goffman terms “the presentation of the self” (Roberts & Creary, 2013).

Impression management is often seen as a form of dramaturgical identity work because it is a way of constructing and maintaining a desired image or self-presentation. In identity work studies, impression management has been viewed as an intentional and strategic behaviour that people engage in to influence how they are perceived by others. It has been studied as a means of shaping and controlling the presentation of oneself to others in order to create a desired impression and achieve desired outcomes – for example that elites or would-be elites wish to be perceived as trustworthy to hold on to their positions of power or seem eligible for those positions (Schwalbe et al., 2000).

Researchers have studied the different techniques people use to manage their impressions. This *symbolic identity work* examines how people assert their identities through their attire, choice of personal possessions, commodities, corporate paraphernalia, anthems, and flags (Brown, 2015; Johansson et al., 2017), nonverbal cues (Waldron, 2016), speaking in a particular style (Fernando & Kenny, 2021),

engaging in sports as showcase of physical prowess to exhibit a particular managerial identity (Johansson et al., 2017), and the use of technology and social media (Dawson, 2015). Symbolic identity work may be of relevance in LGBT+ identity work context due to the presence of LGBT+ symbols such as rainbow laces or pride flags in LGBT+ culture to challenge LGBT+ marginalisation (Energise Me, 2019; Lawley, 2019; Melton & MacCharles, 2021). Overall, impression management is viewed as an important aspect of identity work and self-presentation that helps individuals navigate social interactions and achieve their goals (Schwalbe et al., 2000).

Contributions of dramaturgical and symbolic theories to identity work include emphasis on self-presentation in social interaction and through symbols. Investigating interaction and symbols in shaping identities provides an avenue for exploring how LGBT+ volunteers construct their sense of self in relation to others and how they manage their identities in a sport volunteering context. This provides perspective for identities as inherently social and formed through social interaction (Watson, 2008).

Dramaturgy only examines observable behaviour, the performance of identity and public interactions, ignoring private experiences, emotions, and personal relationships and may reinforce harmful stereotypes and generalisations about LGBT+ individuals such as deviance, assumption of struggling with their identity, and mainly existing in LGBT+ specific contexts (such as Pride parades). Brown (2017) believes certain identity work approaches (discursive, dramaturgical, and symbolic identity work) give individuals more control over their identities, while other approaches (SIT) suggest that a person's psychology can limit their agency and freedom. Consequently, some methods emphasise individual agency, while others emphasise external factors that can limit it. While dramaturgy can provide some insights into LGBT+ volunteers' identities, I argue that it should not be seen as a complete or definitive explanation and should be combined with other approaches to gain a more nuanced understanding.

### 2.1.5 Narrative

Anthony Giddens, a prominent British sociologist, has influenced the development of narrative identity work through his concept of "reflexive modernity" (Giddens, 1991). Giddens (1991) argues that in contemporary societies, people are increasingly required to reflect on their own experiences and identities, and that this requires a heightened degree of self-awareness and self-reflection in multiple environments (family life, job, subcultural groupings). People must engage in continuous narratives of self-construction to manage the risks and uncertainties of modern life while contributing to a personal biography as reflexive project of the self. Giddens' influence on narrative identity work has led to a focus on storytelling in shaping personal identity, and the ways in which individuals can use narratives to construct a coherent sense of self. Giddens (1991) believes that people must continually reflect on their own experiences and make sense of their life stories to develop a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives. Individuals draw on socially available discourses to form self-narratives of their performed selves. Therefore, narratives bear close resemblance to discourses and performances, bringing them close to the discursive and dramaturgical/symbolic approaches introduced in the previous sections as ways in which individuals construct and communicate their identities.

According to Caza et al. (2018, p. 895), "narrative approaches shed light on the historical, personal story of the individual that is told internally and through interactions with others (Beech, 2008; Brown, 2006; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003)". This is similar to Watson's (2009b) conceptualisation of internal and external identities within identity work and to an extent an individual shaping their environment and their environment shaping them. Narrative identity approaches could reach new depths by also considering how these internal self-narratives are performed and how this affects the 'presentation of the self' in everyday life. Authenticity and validation are prerequisites for effective narrative identity work. Equally, role transitions may be explained by narrative processes (Epitropaki et al., 2017). A narrative focus may therefore aid in discovering

turning points and key events in volunteer experiences that might go unnoticed in the absence of a temporal focus.

Narrative identity work is closely related to a discursive approach and includes giving meaning to oneself and others (Weller et al., 2021) by contesting stories about oneself, including “oppression narratives”, “resistance narratives”, and “reimagined personal narratives”. People comprehend themselves via “storied self-understandings” (Roberts & Creary, 2013, p. 5) that link who they were in the past with who they are now and who they could become (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010) which corresponds to a typical life story structure of beginning, middle, end/resolution (Mcadams, 1996; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Internal identity narratives may be both constitutive and expressive of identity (Brown, 2017). External narratives may pertain to dialogue with people, involvement in or adherence to a larger social discourse, or both (Beech, 2008). In their search for meaning, people work on specific identity narratives and use the concept of 'meaningfulness' as a discursive resource to explain and justify their narrative identity work. For example, search and rescue volunteers receive their meaning in life – the feeling of personal purpose and fulfilment – from their narrative identity work (Weller et al., 2021).

Narrative approaches may however exaggerate the significance of narratives on individual identity formation (Brown, 2021) and if they are overused, Phelan (2005) calls this narrative imperialism. The narratives of LGBT+ volunteers may be limited to their own experiences and perspectives, leaving out the experiences and perspectives of other members of the community. Narratives are subjective and may not provide a complete picture of an individual's identity. The stories that individuals choose to share may not be representative of their full experiences and are influenced by their own identity positions and socially available discourses.



## 2.2 Identity work approach of this thesis

Each one of the approaches described above by themselves have usefulness, but none of them singularly can be used to address my research questions. During my exploration of identity work, I came across a body of work by a British organisational ethnographer Tony J Watson. Watson's sociological identity work approach draws on multiple influences, including the work of Foucault on power/knowledge (1980) the work of Giddens on modernity and self-identity (1991) and the work of Goffman (1959) on the presentation of the self.

In this thesis, I regard identity as "the notion of who an individual is, in relation to others" (Watson, 2013b, p. 411) and as the meanings individuals ascribe to self. Self refers to the ability for reflective thought that is related with a personal experience of continuity through time (Brown, 2021). The definitions provided by Snow and Alvesson position identity work as a purely agentic undertaking which Watson (2008, p. 129) develops by including a social, interactive dimension:

"Identity work involves the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives" (Watson, 2008, p. 129).

Watson's (2008) definition of identity work is one of the most cited definitions in the OMS field (Caza et al., 2018) and his work appears in studies that explore occupational identities (Allen-Collinson et al., 2019; Down & Reveley, 2009; Luiz & Terziev, 2022) and organisational identification (Dawson, 2015; Wegner et al., 2019). Watson's conception of identity work (2008) has been applied in doctoral dissertations, such as Gill (2014) in a study of lawyers doing pro bono work in the UK, Ward's (2020) study on board member identities in New Zealand and Kumar's (2012) study of health researchers' lived experiences of interdisciplinarity. This shows the applicability of Watson's identity work approach in various organisational contexts as a generic social

process (Schwalbe et al., 2000). Chiefly, identity work provided a useful lens for understanding how individuals navigated their identities and how these identities were shaped by their experiences and the contexts in which they operated in the doctoral dissertations mentioned above. To date, Watson's identity work approach (and models of identity work) have not been used as a framework to explore identity management of LGBT+ volunteers in sport.

Watson's identity work approach has elements from discursive, narrative and dramaturgical identity approaches. The role of structures and power (Foucault's influence) with emphasis on storied self-understanding (Giddens' influence) yet recognising how identities are formed in social interaction (Goffman's influence), is mediated by identity work. This thesis draws from all three of Watson's influences to examine the identity work of volunteers on three levels (1) socially available discourses shaping the volunteer experience and how volunteers shape these discourses (2) volunteers as agentic identity workers and their self-understandings over time (3) as interaction of volunteers in their social milieux. This thesis applies Watson's model of identity work (2020) in LGBT+ and sport volunteering contexts to highlight the discursive, narrative and performative resources and constraints created by identity work. Watson's (2008, 2009b) identity work approach and his models of identity work (2008, 2020) that emphasised interaction as an identity dimension, made most sense to me in terms of my data as I will now explain.

Watson's (2011, 2013a) assumptions about reality are underpinned by the importance of using empirical evidence and experience to inform perspective on reality (pragmatic realism), therefore allowing him to draw from many philosophical schools of thought to underpin his theorisation of identity work to understand reality as being shaped by practical consequences of beliefs and ideas. This was useful to me because much like Foucault implied, his work could be used as a flexible set of analytical tools to be adapted in different situations and contexts. Watson's approach has similar qualities of adaptability allowing me to understand the lived in LGBT+ experiences in a sport volunteering context to reconstruct how volunteers constructed their identities. Watson's

approach also cuts through the “two classic dualisms of identity work...self versus social, and substance versus context” (Simpson & Carroll, 2020, p. 513). Watson's approach therefore highlights that it is necessary to take both into account in understanding complex social phenomena.

Watson's identity work approach can be applied to LGBT+ volunteers in sport by examining the ways in which they negotiate, manage and shape their sexual and gender identities through their involvement in sport. This approach recognises that identity is not fixed, but rather is a dynamic process that is shaped by individual experiences, social and cultural contexts, and personal goals and aspirations.

Volunteering is a mix of both public and private selves where, to an extent, the volunteer represents the organisation they are part of but also volunteering as a manifestation of their private selves and their favoured leisure pursuits. As Watson (2020) identifies, there is a need to investigate individual identities in multiple contexts due to the multiple discourses that influence identities – for example how volunteers construct their identities as volunteers and in their organisations as well as in their lives outside volunteering.

By applying Watson's identity work approach, this thesis hopes to gain a better understanding of the experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport and develop strategies to support them in their identity work. This may include creating inclusive environments, promoting diversity and inclusion, and offering training and education to help volunteers feel valued and respected.

Watson is particularly useful for looking at participants' narratives and how they form them through identity construction, identity threat and identity management. Watson accounts for identity as a dynamic, emergent, and continuing process of becoming, reflecting the “nascent identity work perspective” (Brown, 2021):

(a) selves are reflexive and identities are actively worked on in both soliloquy and social interaction;

- (b) identities are multiple, fluid, and rarely fully coherent;
- (c) identities are constructed within power relations;
- (d) identities are not helpfully analysed as positive or authentic; and
- (e) identities are both interesting in and of themselves and integral to organising processes.

I will address the elements listed above and how they may be present in Watson's identity work approach in the following sections but first I introduce Watson's conceptual schemes of identity work.

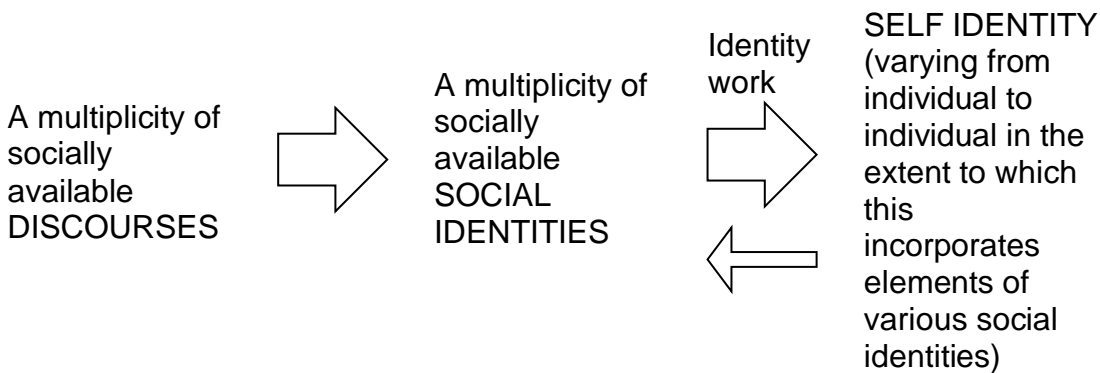


Figure 1. Identity work model (adapted from Watson, 2008, p. 128)

Personal self-identities are an individual's sense of who they are becoming because of their personal experiences, values, and beliefs. Discursive social-identities, on the other hand, are cultural labels that link to diverse social categories such as race, gender, sexuality, and class. Social identities are external inputs into self-identities that are mediated through the process of identity work. Individuals incorporate social identities into their personal self-identities through active participation and negotiation (Corlett & Mavin, 2014). For example, the term volunteer might not represent a person who feels they are merely 'helping out' with an activity. The small arrow in figure 1 acknowledges that people contribute to their social identities: they may interpret or even alter the role assigned to them in the 'script' of any particular social-identity. Theoretically, everyone participates in identity work. In practice, however, there will be substantial variation in

the extent to which people are relatively active or passive in light of the situations in which they find themselves at different phases of their lives. For example, there will be varying levels of identity work needed depending on the level of outness of LGBT+ identifying individuals (Orne, 2011). The level of identity work required depends on the individual's personal context, preferences, and priorities, as well as the level of support and tolerance they experience in their communities, workplaces, and social networks. There is an inclination for individuals to construct their own 'selves' and focusing on the narratives that people construct help us maintain awareness of both the internal and external components of identity formation (Watson, 2008). Individuals must reach a level of coherence and consistency in their understanding of who they are in order to be rational and effective social participants (Watson, 2009a, 2009b).

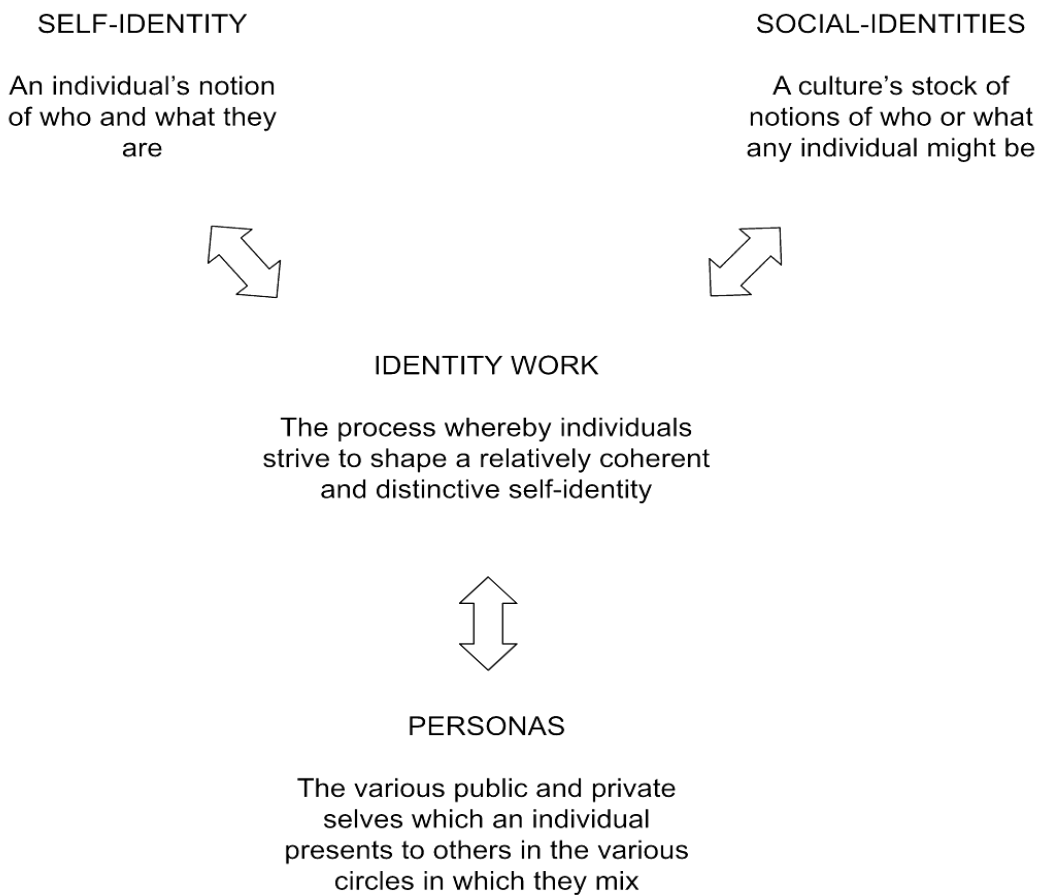


Figure 2. Four dimensions of human identities and identity-making (adapted from Watson, 2020, p. 284).

When I commenced my PhD study in 2017, Watson had not published the model depicted in figure 2 (Watson, 2020). Therefore, the identity work approach when analysing data from 2020 onwards was updated to correspond to the latest model. No studies were identified that adapt Watson's 2020 model depicted in figure 2 even though the book chapter was cited in passing by doctoral dissertations on managerial supervision of teleworking employees (Oldham, 2022) and identity work of board members in New Zealand (Ward, 2020). While these studies seem to focus on occupations, this thesis contributes by applying self-identities, social-identities and personas in the intersection of volunteer identities and LGBT+ identities. Volunteer identities can be understood as work-like careers or leisure identities (Stebbins, 2018), whereas LGBT+ volunteer identities overlap as self-identities, social-identities and personas.

Both of Watson's models (2008 and 2020) include internal (self) and external (social) identities. Whereas the 2008 model refers to discourses, the 2020 model talks about 'culture's stock of notions' which I interpret to replace discourses mentioned in the previous model. If culture's stock of notions refers to the beliefs, attitudes, values and practices widely accepted within a particular culture, culture's stock of notions is a context for discourses. Discourses then help to convey these notions through language. Watson's self-identity appears to draw from Goffman's (1975) "felt identity" – taken for granted internal identity grounded in self-feelings until identity work is needed perhaps due to discourses that have shaped one's social identity. The latest model makes reference to presentation of self (Goffman, 2021) and adds personas as a fourth dimension of identity in the process of identity-making (identity work). Watson had previously explored personas (2008, 2009b) and made it a part of his 2020 model. *Personas* are sometimes very close to social identities: the presentation of selves to others in private and public, however, playing an active role in how you present yourself, rather than simply how the world sees you. Watson (2008) posits identity work as a personal predicament: self-reflective sensemaking that is informed by personal and cultural notions of who an individual is. In figure 2, *self-identity* refers to participants'

telling of who and what they are. Participants in my study usually began the interview by describing their sexual identity, gender, age, and the sport they were involved in. *Social-identities* are outside notions of who or what the participants might be. Watson (2020) also notes that there are social-identities in organisations (e.g., stalwart volunteer) and social-identities in society (e.g., gay men do not play football). Watson (2008, p. 131) distinguishes between five types of social-identities that relate to (1) class, gender, ethnicity (2) occupation/role (3) the location and task definition of (volunteer) role (4) characterisations made by others in certain situations (5) based on socially available discourses. For example:

1. Social-category (e.g., white middle class gay male)
2. Formal-role (e.g., committee member)
3. Local-organisational (e.g., a city Goodgym task force member)
4. Local-personal (LGBT+ activist)
5. Cultural-stereotype (lesbians are good at sport).

There is a constant interplay between social identities, personas and self-identities and an individual journey for coherence and distinctive self-identity known as identity work. A "looking-glass self" with a personal "I" (the viewer) and a social "me" (the watched), the latter of which is acutely aware of the social expectations and judgments of both "significant others" and "generalised other," was how Allen-Collinson (2019), using Cooley (1922), conceptualised the self. This is similar to Watson's (2020) notions of self-identity (the viewer) and social-identity (watched by generalised other) / persona (watched by significant others). Watson's social-identity is subject to culture's stock of notions of who an individual is, therefore, comparable to Cooley's and Allen-Collinson's "me" (the watched) and mostly concerned by the judgment of the "generalised other" - the prevalent cultural beliefs and values in a larger social or organisational setting. Watson's personas are also comparable to Cooley's "me". However, Watson's personas seem to be more concerned with "significant others" - being aware of what people's social expectations and assessments are in the different social circles they mix (Watson, 2020).

Following Watson's conceptualisation of identity work, individuals have agentic power in building their sense of selves and through identity work, to some extent, influencing the institutions around them which are the context for diversity work (Ahmed, 2012).

Diversity work complements identity work: the extent to which volunteers in this thesis feel and act like activists and diversity champions in advancing LGBT+ inclusion.

Similarly, to identity work, diversity work investigates the interplay between (diversity) talk and actions. However, whereas diversity work actions are more significant than diversity talk, identity talk<sup>5</sup> and identity actions are equally important in the self-reflective process of identity work (Watson, 2008). Identity functions in connection with discourses and social identities, as shown by Watson's definition. In this approach, the identity work underlying the identity formation process pulls from a variety of meanings and social identities with which people might identify or oppose. Moreover, as Watson's concept indicates, an individual's identity work may likewise influence societal identities.

Individuals may, for instance, use their volunteer role to develop their sense of self and, by doing so, influence their volunteer experience, within certain constraints. Diversity work in sport volunteering will be explored in more detail in chapter 3.

## 2.3 Limitations of identity work

Alvesson and Blom (2022) explore hegemonic, ambiguous, big concepts in organisational studies that are overused without clearly defining their meanings and thus making it unclear where their limits are. Identity is one such widely used but loosely defined concept. Metaphor-based identity concepts have burgeoned, with the original aim of aiding understanding on identities yet their sheer complexity and indeterminacy may increase misunderstanding (Oswick & Oswick, 2020). With the addition of 'work', 'identity' becomes less ambiguous. There are still questions about the use of identity work, depending on its application. Majority of researchers focus on identity work that occurs in especially challenging contexts or during substantial transitions. If identity work is viewed as episodic as opposed to ongoing and covering virtually every aspect of

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<sup>5</sup> the creation and proclamation of personal identities verbally (Kaufman & Johnson, 2004)



organisational behaviour, including both everyday routine issues and more extraordinary or routine-breaking identity exposures, there is a risk of identity work becoming all-explaining (Alvesson & Blom, 2022).

The general criticisms of identity work address this ambiguity by for example asking that if identity work is considered a metaphor – what would be the opposite of identity work? Oswick and Oswick (2020) offer non-identity work and identity play as the antitheses to identity work. These ideas alternatively frame identity work and downplay the ‘work’ element which can be seen linked with conformity whereas alternative framings can also emphasise exploration and inspiration (Alvesson & Blom, 2022). However, with counter metaphors there is a danger of binary dichotomy that limits how identity might be researched – identity play and identity work may appear simultaneously. The focus in identity work should not be merely about struggle (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Simpson & Carroll, 2020) – as identity work is often understood, nor identity play – playful exploration of identity facets without assuming an identity, such as considering coming out as LGBTQ (Dym et al., 2019) but something in between.

E Clarke and Knights’ (2020, p. 802), discussion about the problems of identity and identity work research posits that it is not “adequate to describe identity antics without interrogating them”. E Clarke and Knights’ (2020) criticism of identity work is centred around the underlying “excessive individualism” (Knights & Clarke, E., 2017, p. 345) and “the somewhat narcissistic need for self-fulfilment” (Lasch, 1979, p. 102) – with a prioritisation of personal goals over common goals. Late-modern individuals build self-identities, reflexively forming the self, amid alternatives and possibilities (Giddens 1991, p.3). This puts the person under continual strain to unify the story of self-identity, safeguarding and recreating it despite extensive and wide-ranging changes.

The proliferation of studies on identity is reflective of the desire for individuals to maintain stability and order in a turbulent world, the expectation being that the harder you work on your identity, the more likely you are to fulfil your “idealised self-image” (Knights & Clarke, E., 2017; Pullen & Rhodes, 2008). Related, overemphasising the

centrality of identity, individual and personal is normalised to an extent that individuals can only settle for perfection (Knights & Clarke, E., 2017). This might lead to an exhausting never-ending cycle of self-improvement (Clarke, E., & Knights, 2020). Most research on identity work has assumed that the end goal is continuity and consistency, where people try to form a coherent and unique idea of who they are (Watson, 2009b, p. 429). This shows a preference for "settled selves," in which subjects give their identity stories a sense of narrative order and cohesion in the past, often in response to what they think the researcher wants to hear; therefore, this is a further limitation of identity work (Knights & Clarke, E., 2020).

## 2.4 Summary of Chapter 2

Identities related research takes many forms and these have been reviewed in the chapter while asserting the identity work approach for the thesis (Watson, 2008, 2009b, 2020). This chapter has reviewed different theoretical views on and approaches to investigating identity work (SIT, IT, discursive, dramaturgical/symbolical and narrative). Identity work is underpinned by all of these research traditions and therefore it is up to the researcher to define the approach taken to avoid the ambiguity associated with the concept of identity and identity work (Alvesson & Blom, 2022).

This thesis uses an identity work perspective to inform understanding on LGBT+ experiences in sport volunteering over time. Identity was defined through how people understand themselves by constructing self-narratives using discursive resources that are readily available to them in order to respond to the questions "who am I" and, in particular, "who do I want to be" (Brown 2015). Discursive resources are concepts, phrases, and other language devices that, when used in conversation, provide explanations for past and/or future behaviour that direct individuals' interpretation of experience – see Kuhn (2006). This term (alongside discourse, as previously mentioned) is similar to Watson (2020's) culture's stock of notions and these terms are used interchangeably. In the past, managerial and professional vocations offered adequate responses to these queries, making them significant sources of identity

(Alvesson & Robertson, 2016). However, civic participation such as volunteering can also be seen as constituting an identity. Individuals are typically aware of a variety of discourses that serve to define them (Warhurst & Black, 2021). Therefore, resistance and agentic choice are possible. Individuals have the ability to generate chosen identity narratives through manoeuvring between discursive regimes and the reflexive appropriation of preferred discourses (Brown & Lewis, 2011; Watson, 2009a).

The potential of identity as a concept that transcends individual agency and social shaping of the self has been noted by Watson (2009b). There is a close relationship between internal and external influences of identity that shape and reshape individuals' lives that do not privilege either experiences posed by the social world on individuals or individuals single-handedly carving their own path to identity (Down & Reveley, 2009; Watson, 2009b). LGBT+ athletes, coaches and people working and volunteering in sport may feel their identities are devalued or respected depending on their environments. This leads to either identity affirmation (Mock et al., 2019) or having to manage one's identity (Cunningham & Melton, 2014). There is reason to believe that sport engagement is greater when an individual develops an identity associated with the activity, for example exercise identity (Strachan et al., 2011; Warhurst & Black, 2021) or identifying with the team they support (Hyatt & Foster, 2015). Therefore, as Wegner et al. (2020, p. 455) suggest, identity is a useful lens in understanding "long-term engagement with sport and physical activity". If an individual feels like there are no other people like them taking part in the sport or physical activity they may be interested in, they might not go along and therefore there is no chance for a meaningful connection that would allow that sport or activity to become part of their identity.

Identity work approaches carry certain limitations which were also noted in the chapter. In addition to the vagueness with which identity (work) may be used in OMS, the main concerns revolve around overly individualistic promotion of self-improvement and striving for coherence and consistency which may restrict identity work inquiry. Identity continues to fascinate scholars yet as Pratt (2020, p. 892) puts it, identity "helps locate

individuals and other entities within a broader collective” making identity ideally a part of an ensemble rather than the star of the show.

# 3 INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEERING AND DIVERSE SPORT VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES

This chapter explores the meaning and conceptualisation of volunteering before examining the experiences of diverse volunteers in sport including LGBT+ volunteers. Sport volunteering and general volunteering literature share common elements and are therefore presented as being interwoven throughout the chapter. Because of the applied nature of the field and the limited peer-reviewed research on diverse sport volunteer experiences, this literature review makes use of academic and practitioner research to relay a multi-faceted understanding of volunteering.

## 3.1 Dimensions of volunteering

Volunteering has been defined by practitioners and academics with the concept also being culturally sensitive. It bears different meanings depending on the country or is not always recognised as a word at all (Hallmann & Fairley, 2018). A range of activities, organisations and sectors are classed under the conceptual umbrella of volunteering which is socially constructed. What volunteering is, is a matter of public perception (Hustinx et al., 2010) and the definition of volunteering remains ambiguous (Dekker & Halman, 2003). In a widely cited study within volunteering research, Cnaan et al. (1996, p. 371) examined 200 definitions of volunteering using content analysis, leading them to conclude that there are four dimensions of volunteering: (i) free choice (ranging from free will to obligation); (ii) remuneration (ranging from none at all to low pay); (iii) structure (ranging from informal groups or get togethers to registered associations and organisations); and (iv) intended beneficiaries (ranging from benefiting others to benefiting oneself). These dimensions will be discussed next.

Free choice

The idea that volunteering must be a voluntary choice made by each individual is central in western definitions of volunteering. However, there are also cases of being told to volunteer ('voluntold') or having to take up a volunteer role such as in roller derby where players are required to take (volunteer) 'jobs' in the league they play in (Pavlidis, 2012). Similarly, there is a strong ethos of obligation to volunteer e.g., the expectation of parents taking up roles in their children's teams (Engelberg et al., 2014; Park & Kim, 2013; Trussell, 2020) or members of sport clubs having to fundraise for a club to keep the costs down (Livingston et al., 2008). With mutual aid organisations there might be a moral obligation to volunteer, however if a volunteer sees their role as purely delivering a service, they might deter from volunteering, because the decision to volunteer is more dependent on their individual preferences rather than feeling responsible for the wider community (Nichols, 2017).

## Remuneration

According to a definition of sport volunteering, individual volunteers help others in sport "in a formal organisation such as clubs or governing bodies, and receive... either no remuneration or only expenses" (Gratton et al., 1997, p. i). Hoeber (2010) makes a similar observation about how sport volunteers in demanding roles such as board and executive members often receive reimbursement for their expenses. Even though there has been discussion about the nature of "pure volunteering" (Cnaan et al., 1996; Nichols, 2017) that involves no reimbursement for voluntary activity, not paying expenses may be a barrier to volunteer retention as showcased by Stirling et al. (2011). Furthermore, Burgham and Downward (2005) surveyed swimming volunteers and proposed tax-incentives to encourage volunteering, still recognising that this might go against the volunteer ethos of no pay. In a paper published the same year, Chang (2005) noted that symbolic payment such as praise or feeling valued for one's contribution worked in building a sense of engagement and personal satisfaction in the absence of remuneration.

## Structure

Sport volunteering literature has many examples of formal volunteering which takes place in a structured way within an organisation (Wicker & Hallmann, 2013). Community sport clubs are often registered associations that come with certain obligations on reporting and board structure which in turn require volunteers (Nichols, 2017).

Volunteers also expect to have clear boundaries for their roles in terms of responsibility and duration with clear breakdown of tasks and having someone to manage the process and offer support (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Taylor, T. & McGraw, 2006). All the same, Wicker and Breuer (2014) argue that formal and informal volunteering can both nest within a structured sport environment with those volunteers holding official positions in sport clubs seen as formal volunteers and those volunteers who help out in club events in a less official capacity seen as informal volunteers.

## Intended beneficiaries

Multiple studies on sport volunteering continue to evidence both altruistic and egoistic motives of volunteers (Koutrou, 2018; Schlesinger & Gubler, 2016). Nichols et al. (2016) reviewed the motivations of sport volunteers in the UK using commercial reports and academic research. Two of the top motives were 'helping friends and family' and 'social benefits', which suggest a mix of altruistic and egoistic motives. A study that focused on volunteering during the life course (Jump Projects, 2019) has also noted the changes in intended beneficiaries during the life course, with younger volunteers usually more interested in volunteering because of what it can do for them (building skills to aid career progression) to older volunteers who might be more inclined to volunteer because they want to give back or see the sport they love continue to flourish.

## 3.2 Definition and meaning of inclusive volunteering

These four dimensions, together with the definition provided by D H Smith, will ground the volunteering definition this thesis adopts. D H Smith (2016, cited in Smith, D. H., & Stebbins, 2017) defines volunteering as:

“any activity of any individual, alone or with others, as a solitary act or as a member of some informal group or formal organisation, that is performed without compulsion/coercion and mainly without direct remuneration/payment that directly or indirectly attempts to improve the satisfactions and quality of life of one or more others outside the boundaries of the immediate family and household” (D H Smith, 2016, p. 1).

DH Smith’s definition reflects the continuums presented by Cnaan et al. (1996) by emphasising individual freedom in making the decision to volunteer. Thus, D H Smith’s definition does not account for the type of volunteering that is borne out of duty towards one’s community (Hoeber, 2010). D H Smith’s definition also does not refer to the benefit of volunteering to oneself (Cnaan et al., 1996) which Sport England Volunteer Strategy 2017-2021 (2016, p. 3) has called “the double benefit” of volunteering, “for those playing (sport) and (volunteers) themselves”. Therefore, it seems that there is merit to extending the definition of volunteering in this thesis to be more inclusive of diverse volunteer experiences (Hoeber, 2010). Kearney (2001; as cited in Rochester et al., 2010, p. 17), on the other hand, lists the basic principles of volunteering which largely involve similar categories as Cnaan et al.’s (1996) dimensions but adds an inclusion principle; there is a right to volunteer regardless of one’s (diverse) personal identity markers such as gender, disability, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Adding inclusion to the dimensions renders this taken-for-granted concept visible. In conclusion, this thesis adopts D H Smith’s (2016) definition and Kearney’s (2001) inclusion principle to understand volunteering.

Inclusive volunteering has more recently been used as a term to describe developing and supporting volunteering by under-represented groups, with diverse backgrounds



(Hoye et al., 2019).<sup>6</sup> Inclusive volunteering is a powerful tool for enhancing the capacity of people, nonprofit organisations, and the larger community in which they are based (Miller et al., 2010) by increasing engagement and the number of diverse perspectives. Schachar, von Essen and Hustinx (2019) note how critical academic discussion that challenges who dictates what volunteering constitutes and how it should be defined or understood, is lacking. There is research to show, despite an idealised image, that volunteering does not welcome all (Meyer & Rameder, 2021). By ensuring that volunteering is open to all and addressing existing barriers, opportunities to participate in volunteering are created, which can also in turn increase the overall number of volunteers (Kappelides & Spoor, 2019) – a step towards enhanced inclusion.

Classic understandings of volunteering focus on care, virtuousness, and service to others. Whereas the welfare state is a system of enforced solidarity, volunteering represents a social solidarity that binds people together voluntarily and collectively in a way that state-prescribed activities cannot (Hustinx et al., 2010). Yet, there has been an evolution toward reflexive volunteering (Hustinx, 2010; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003) and shifting of focus from collective to individual volunteer and their hopes and dreams on what volunteering might constitute for the individual volunteer. Current volunteering seems to constitute a mix of both individual and collective elements (Tomazos & Luke, 2015). Individuals choices to participate in a certain activity, as well as the duration and course of action, are therefore dependent on personal considerations and personal preferences. Reflexive volunteering does not promote conventional motives of volunteering such as solidarity and altruism since reflexive volunteers are motivated by self-actualisation and personal ambitions with Meyer and Rameder (2021) suggesting self-actualisation might soon replace altruism as the dominant motive for volunteering. The development towards reflexive volunteering is due to the increasingly individualistic worldview in Western societies, moving away from collective identities and collective life courses (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Nichols, 2017).

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<sup>6</sup> Inclusive volunteering has also been referred to as supported volunteering, referring to facilitating volunteering for disabled volunteers (Casseus et al., 2022; Miller et al., 2010).

However, the divide between individual and collective styles of volunteering might not be as clear cut as it may first seem. Volunteers serve a variety of purposes and may not always fall along the continuum between altruism and self-interest (Ganesh & Mcallum, 2009; Schlesinger & Gubler, 2016; Weenink & Bridgman, 2017). Rather, volunteers in Tomazos and Luke's study (2015) exhibit reflexivity when placing their volunteer involvement on the altruistic – reciprocal continuum that reflects their personal narrative. The transformational qualities of a volunteer experience for an individual contributing to a cause (Hustinx et al., 2012) challenges the thinking around individual versus collective style of volunteering. Tomazos and Luke observe (2015, p. 1341) how dividing volunteering into two separate camps “neglects the diverse and complex nature of volunteer activities (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003; Hustinx et al. 2012)”. Reflexive volunteering can include what might be deemed as traditional (altruistic) motives, but these can be seen as individuals considering their value fit to the values of a volunteering context.

The individual's life experiences, and cultural context play a significant role in shaping the form of volunteering they choose to participate in. Citing Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003), Tomazos and Luke (2015) claimed that studying the biography of an individual is essential to grasping the nature of emerging types of volunteerism. It is not possible to gain a complete understanding of people's participation in emerging types of volunteering based just on their motivations for doing so and the results they hope to achieve. Instead, understanding about the person's biography is required to grasp the context of their volunteering.

The individual's biography informs reflexive volunteering, making it personal and individual (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003) and can therefore be seen as part of identity work. Reflexive volunteering is connected to identity work due to the wide range of values and identities that may be associated with it. Each volunteer may tailor their volunteer experience to their own requirements. Volunteering is tangible and productive, and it generally involves social relationships and community involvement. These are critical aspects of self-perception (Grönlund, 2011). Therefore, volunteering allows the

volunteer to self-determine the motivations, beliefs, and identities realised in the activity (Grönlund 2011).

Traditionally, volunteering has been associated with long commitment and there has been an increase in shorter volunteering spells and moves from role to role: Dekker and Halman (2003) called this type of volunteering the 'revolving door' approach. With the ongoing scholarly debate whether the national approach to sport volunteering should be about selling or developing volunteering (Nichols et al., 2019), this frames volunteer experience in terms of how volunteer programmes are run and what kind of incentives volunteers are presented with when thinking about engaging in volunteering. Similarly, sport volunteering shifts are influenced by sport participation shifts with volunteering being a part of wider sport engagement. Gratton, Rowe et al. (2011) as well as Harris, S., Nichols, et al. (2017) observed changes in patterns of participation towards more informal involvement in health and fitness with a decline in more traditional team sports.

Whilst the introductory chapter of this thesis introduced the significance and value of volunteering, more attention should be dedicated to the meaning of such a wide-ranging and complex concept. von Essen (2016) describes two different ways of understanding and studying volunteering. The first perspective (cognitive meaning) focuses on how volunteers themselves think about their activities, similarly to Cnaan et al.'s (1996) four dimensions of volunteering as a conceptualisation of volunteering, and the second perspective (existential meaning) looks at the deeper personal meaning and significance that volunteers derive from their work. In particular, the second perspective pays attention to the sense of purpose and identity that volunteers gain from their volunteering experiences. As von Essen (2016) notes, it is still rare to find qualitative research that allows volunteers themselves to describe and elaborate on what they mean by volunteering. The way people dissect their volunteering has significance for how people understand their everyday individual lives in society (von Essen, 2016). Meaning-making refers to the process of how people construct or make sense of relationships, interactions, life events, and the self (Krauss, 2005). This thesis is concerned with "meaningful" (volunteering) experiences of participants that hold

“personal significance” (Kretchmar, 2007, p. 382). Meaning of sport volunteering needs to be investigated through the individual experience of volunteering and how volunteering may constitute a sense of identity. Analogous research will be further dissected in the next section on diverse sport volunteer experiences that highlights the influence of personal identities on volunteer experiences and the ground on which volunteer identities may develop.

### 3.3 Diverse sport volunteer experiences

Sport volunteers have been considered to be a largely homogenous group in the UK. This is also reflected in sport volunteering scholarship which is largely centred around white able-bodied middle class male experiences (Hayton & Blundell, 2021). Exploration of volunteer motivations, benefits, recruitment, and retention has a substantive body of literature behind it (see Nichols et al., 2016; Wicker, 2017). However, a critical examination of traditionally marginalised and under-represented populations in sport volunteering has been largely missing, despite the call to consider the wider social context of marginalised groups’ sport volunteer experiences (Legg & Karner, 2021). Sport volunteer numbers are of concern in many European countries as they are in decline (Wicker, 2017), including the UK (Natale, 2022). As an institution, sport needs to stay relevant for people who might make up volunteer organisations in the future, and in doing so, contribute substantial economic value with their civic service. Sport volunteering must reflect diverse social and cultural groups in order to attract more diverse volunteers (Storr, 2021). Sport England has taken an approach that highlights the value of sport volunteering to the individual, wanting to develop inclusive volunteering and hoping this will result in increased volunteer numbers. Others such as Koutrou & Kohe (2021), along with Jump Projects (2019), have made calls for sport needing a social cause, such as coupling sport with environmentalism. This might attract a new generation to sport volunteering, motivated by not only promoting or enabling sport but also doing good in the process, a form of fitness philanthropy (Tupper et al., 2020). Promoting LGBT+ inclusion in sport volunteering can be an example of combining a social justice cause with sport to enhance the diverse makeup of sport

volunteering. However, so far, LGBT+ people have been given limited attention in sport volunteering research (Hoye et al., 2019; Storr, 2021).

Nichols et al. (2019) note that without socialisation of volunteers into sport, those who get involved will not be much more diverse than the existing sport volunteer population. This would be because those who have the capital and confidence to operate in the existing system that privileges personal networks and volunteers with an existing set of skills will already know how volunteering can benefit their career or studies (Nichols et al., 2019). Hoye et al. (2019) suggest inclusive volunteering yields benefits for both the organisation and the volunteer if there is a willingness from individuals to get involved and in turn for organisations to embody inclusive cultures and support new volunteers to belong. On the other hand, a top-down approach for initiatives that target diverse volunteers might be seen as less effective compared to initiatives led by volunteers from the specific group the initiative is aiming to target such as running community for and by black women (Wegner et al., 2020). This poses a question of authenticity and who can speak for a group of people (Ganesh & Mcallum, 2009; von Essen, 2016).

Hoye et al. (2019) devote a chapter to diverse volunteers and inclusive volunteering in their book on sport volunteering. The review by Hoye et al. (2019) includes research on disabled, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), elderly and LGBTQI populations. This section builds on the review by Hoye et al. (2019) by addressing research on the following characteristics: (i) older age; (ii) disability; (iii) gender; (iv) ethnic and cultural groups; (v) social gradient / social class and (vi) LGBT+ identity. Since literature on LGBT+ volunteer experiences in sport is scarce, this review draws from analogous research: experiences of other diverse volunteer groups in sport as the challenges other diverse groups face may be applicable in the LGBT+ context.

Having established identity work as a theoretical framework for studying diverse sport volunteer experiences in chapter 2, after reviewing the experiences of diverse volunteers, this chapter will explore the influence of volunteers on diversity and inclusion.

## Older volunteers

There is a small body of research that specifically looks at older volunteers in sport. Hamm-Kerwin et al. (2009) used a multidimensional framework to carry out semi-structured interviews with 20 sport volunteers 65 years or older. They organised their data according to the multidimensional framework of structural, cultural, cognitive, and situational dimensions of volunteer behaviour. The volunteers in the study were characterised by their large social networks, male gender and being married (structural factors). Older sport volunteers' involvement was characterised by past involvement in sport and a history of volunteering (cultural factors). Volunteering was an opportunity to showcase existing skills, to be social and to keep active (cognitive factors). Influences on their volunteering included health, being aware of volunteer opportunities and whether their spouse was still employed (situational factors). Even though the multidimensional framework offers neat categories to better frame volunteer behaviour, the model does not account for the intersections or interactions of each category (Hamm-Kerwin et al., 2009). Misener et al.'s findings (2010) on the positive and negative experiences of older sport volunteers and how these could be enhanced, complement earlier findings by the same research team (Hamm-Kerwin et al., 2009) with the added perspective of serious and meaningful leisure pursuits. Positive experiences were closely related to why volunteers decided to stay involved in volunteer roles and correspondingly negative experiences reflected the thoughts to quit volunteering. The findings revealed that participants exhibited characteristics of serious leisure by focusing on organisational improvements rather than personal rewards when discussing what could improve their volunteering experience (Misener et al., 2010). Lee & Kim (2018) similarly highlight the need to strongly identify with the volunteer activity for volunteers to forge a meaningful connection to what they are doing and keep volunteering.

Taking a life course perspective may help in examining the meaningfulness of volunteering in older age. E Hogg's doctoral dissertation (2013) examined volunteering over the life course with 4 out of 26 older volunteers interviewed involved in sport. Volunteering habits varied over the life course and the factors that impacted volunteering in later life with emphasis on the significance of knowing the variety of volunteer experiences and motives in order to effectively engage volunteers of different ages. E Hogg (2013) distinguished three types of volunteers: constant, serial, and trigger volunteers. Constant volunteers were those who volunteered on a regular basis throughout their lives. These people had a constant level of domestic stability that created conditions for enjoyment of volunteering. Serial volunteers, on the other hand, were people who volunteered for a period of time and then took a break or stopped. Unexpected life events drove this set of volunteers to a more episodic involvement. Individuals who began volunteering in older age with retirement as a catalyst to get involved in volunteering were known as trigger volunteers as paid work and domestic commitments had prevented them from volunteering formally before. This research implied that as people got older, their patterns of volunteering shifted between continuous and episodic involvement based on internal reasons such as personal interests and external reasons such as persuasion from others.

## Disabled volunteers

Disabled volunteers in sport have received little attention from researchers (Dickson, et al., 2017). Dickson et al. (2017) note how disabled people are often seen as recipients of volunteer services rather than as a potential volunteer pool. This also means that the voices of disabled people in sport volunteering are missing and their experiences and perceptions of volunteering are not always counted for. Therefore, similarly to this PhD study, Dickson et al. (2017) had to draw from other related fields such as the general sport event volunteer motivation literature to ground their study. The questionnaire-based study consisted of 786 London 2012 volunteers (Games Makers) who self-

identified having a disability. Disabled people were less likely to be in full-time employment, therefore having more time to volunteer. These volunteers were also likely to come from the surrounding areas, be able to stay at home during the Games and thus reduce the barrier to volunteering. Even though people self-identified as having a disability, they did not necessarily claim any access needs. This can be reflective of people with lower access needs applying to volunteer or recruiters favouring people with lower access needs and not needing full-time one to one support. The level of access needs was thought to be a better indicator of a person's disability than simply asking for the type of disability (Darcy et al., 2014; Activity Alliance, 2017). The motivations to volunteer were around once in a lifetime experience which reflects Holmes et al.'s (2018) findings on London 2012 volunteer perceptions. Kappelides and Spoor (2019) took a human resource viewpoint in addressing the management of disabled volunteers in sport and collected the views of disabled volunteers, staff from sport organisations and recipients of volunteer services. Those with physical disabilities praised the role model effect of seeing someone similar to themselves leading a volunteer programme. The volunteer experience's desired outcome was a match between a disabled volunteer's interests and abilities and the needs of the organisation. However, according to Activity Alliance (2017) research, this is a barrier because sports volunteering often requires regular sustained commitment, which some disabled volunteers may be unable to commit to due to their health. The study also discovered that disabled volunteers anticipate barriers to their participation and thus choose not to volunteer. Similarly, according to Cuskelly and O'Brien (2013), disabled volunteers who were already involved in sport were more likely to get involved in sport volunteering.

## Female volunteers

Women are less likely to volunteer in sport than men (Women in Sport, 2017) and this under-representation is also reflected in sport volunteering research where the body of research on female volunteers is small (Stride et al., 2020). Baxter et al. (2021) have



also identified the gap in research on female sport officials that in turn might provide insights into the broader issue of gender disparities in officiating roles. This reflects the wider omission of examining specific volunteer groups in sport that Wicker (2017) also notes in their review of volunteerism in sport. Men are twice as likely to volunteer in sport as women are and more likely to take leadership roles in sport, research by Women in Sport (2017) found. This can also be seen in other parts of the sport workforce (Burton, 2015). These findings are further confirmed by Stride et al. (2020) who looked at the lived experiences of 24 female volunteers in sport through gendered analysis. Stride et al. (2020) encourage sport governing bodies to not only focus on the skills or experiences of female volunteers but also take into consideration the life circumstances of these volunteers such as family commitments and work. Whereas men see sport volunteering as an extension of their other sport involvement, women volunteer to build social networks, advance their careers and support their children (Women in Sport, 2017). Downward et al. (2020) note that men are freer to choose their volunteer activity whereas women are bound by other leisure activities when engaging in sport volunteering. Therefore, it appears that male volunteering corresponds to serious leisure characteristics and volunteer recruitment should according to Downward et al. (2020), be centred around status and career opportunity. Whereas female volunteer recruitment messaging should be more about altruistic motives and benefiting others. This reinforces findings by P J Chen (2010) on the social responsibility that female volunteers felt compared to men who thought of volunteering as necessary for operating a sports club. Stride et al. (2020) point out caring qualities should be requirements for all volunteers, not specifically volunteer roles taken by women.

## Ethnically diverse and cultural groups as volunteers

Sport volunteering research on ethnic and cultural groups comprises studies on indigenous (Hoerber, 2010) and ethnically diverse volunteers (Janssens & Verweel, 2014; Sport England, 2020b; Sported, 2020). Hoerber's (2010) re-analysis of 14 focus

groups of indigenous sport volunteers' experiences in Saskatchewan, Canada revealed that indigenous volunteers preferred more informal volunteering that was relaxed as well as freely chosen. However, due to the specific context of indigenous volunteering, their involvement would not always count as volunteering in Canadian volunteering surveys because of remuneration and informal nature of "helping out" (Hoeber, 2010). Remuneration might be essential to cover the hidden costs of volunteering in order to reach out to indigenous communities. The findings also offer additional insight to the concept of community as main reasons for volunteering were to support the indigenous community. This expands the notion of community beyond merely geographic towards a cultural community. Janssens and Verweel (2014) investigated the separation and integration of ethnic minority migrants in sport clubs (participating in activities and volunteering) in the Netherlands and compared outcomes of belonging to different kinds of clubs either representing a specific cultural group (e.g., Surinamese football club) or clubs with no cultural group focus. Different clubs serve as sites of social capital production with examples of both inclusion and exclusion (e.g., ethnic conflict and racism). From a sport policy perspective, experiences of social integration (bridging) are important measures of inclusion yet in practice bonding might be more important for individual members (Janssens & Verweel, 2014). The discussion on integration/separation of sport clubs to be included is one that has also been noted in a 'gay sport club' (Elling et al., 2003) context – with issues of heteronormativity in 'mainstream' clubs cited as a reason for preference of queer spaces.

More recent research from Sport England and sport for development charity Sported focus on the experiences of ethnically diverse people in sport, including data on volunteering. Sport England (2020a) research used Active Lives data from 2016-2018 in their analysis of volunteering by ethnicity. White British were most likely to volunteer (15.3%, "at least twice in the last year") compared to 14% of the general population, whereas Chinese were least likely to have volunteered (7.5%). This Sport England (2020b) research does not delve deeper into the lived experiences of ethnically diverse volunteers but the small-scale focus group and interview research by Sported (2020) from the same year provides insight. The research established five key themes: (i)

systemic racism; (ii) current approaches to tackling racism; (iii) the Black Lives Matter agenda; (iv) representation in sport; and (v) funding. The first theme established the stigma of being black, having to modify behaviour to fit in or work harder to be credible and presence of white privilege in everyday lives of volunteers. Volunteers felt that current approaches to tackling racism did not address the problem at hand but remained at the surface level, similarly to Bury's (2015) notion of performative diversity that privileged other protected characteristics such as gender before ethnicity. The prominence and increased attention given to the Black Lives Matter movement within the context of sport created additional demands and expectations on volunteers. This may have led to feelings of exhaustion or weariness among volunteers who had to navigate the heightened interest and provide information related to the movement's goals and implications.

Representation in sport seems to be missing on all levels including leadership which reflects the Sporting Equals (2018) research that found only 3% of national sport governing body (NSGB) board members to be black. To add some context, 40% of ethnically diverse sport participants said their experience of local sports or leisure clubs were negative compared to 14% white British population (Sporting Equals, 2018). If grassroots level experiences are negative, people will be less likely to move into other positions in sport (such as volunteering, leadership). Sport structures also need to be more inclusive with participants stating the progress of black leaders was due to their own efforts and setting up their own paths and organisations rather than progressing through existing initiatives because they were 'not the right shade' to be in a decision-making role (Sported, 2020). Lastly, the discrepancies in diversity funding initiative allocation also reflected the deeply seeded systemic racism with participants noting all-white funding panels or funding distribution going more often to white-led organisations. There seems to be a dearth of academic research on ethnically diverse volunteer experiences in sport. The findings from Sported (2020) and Sporting Equals (2018) illustrate that issues are deeply rooted. However, as Sport England (2020b) research states, other factors need also to be considered beyond ethnicity such as social gradient and social class.

## Social gradient

Fujiwara et al. (2018) provide some insight into starting to volunteer in sport for people from lower socioeconomic groups. Those from lower socioeconomic groups saw volunteering as a chance to use existing skills. Whereas people from higher socioeconomic groups cited meeting people and making friends as their main reasons for volunteering. Regardless of socioeconomic status, barriers to sport volunteering included not having more time to give and perceived lack of fitness. Hayton and Blundell (2021) explored the relationship between social class and volunteering in a field hockey context and found the volunteer make up to reflect sport participation (middle class and higher socioeconomic background). They concluded that the possession of social, economic and cultural capital accommodated sport volunteering, therefore potentially excluding potential volunteers from other backgrounds that possess fewer individual resources. The evidence from Jump Projects (2016) research 'A Bit Rich' into the differences in volunteering between higher and lower socioeconomic groups adds detail: lower socioeconomic groups *need* to volunteer for personal reasons (to gain career skills or social networks) whereas *higher* socioeconomic groups *want* to volunteer to help other people. The differences in volunteer motivations need to be accounted for in volunteer recruitment strategies such as the "double benefit" of volunteering advocated by Sport England (2016) (as discussed above).

## Summarising research on diverse volunteer experiences so far

Research involving diverse sport volunteers may have a limited sample size (Englefield et al., 2016) due to the small number of volunteers from these groups, making it difficult to generalise findings. With limited access to diverse research participants in sport volunteering, researchers may find it challenging to gain access to diverse sport volunteers (Darcy et al., 2014). Findings may not be generalisable to other populations, as characteristics and experiences of diverse volunteers can vary depending on the

culture, location, and social gradient. It might also be limiting to narrow a sample to one diverse characteristic without the intersection of other personal characteristics (Kappelides & Spoor, 2019). Standardised measures that account for cultural, language, and socioeconomic differences in sport volunteering may be lacking, which could impact the reliability and validity of the research. These measures could be added to existing measurement scales such as Volunteer Functions Inventory (IVF).<sup>7</sup>

The experience, meaning and challenges of sport volunteering can differ greatly depending on a volunteer's demographic background, including for example older age, disability, gender, ethnic diversity, and social gradient. Mobility issues, physical access, and equipment limitations that limit older or disabled volunteers' ability to participate in specific activities are some of the key issues that may influence their sport volunteering. Availability of transportation may influence access to volunteering for older, disabled or people from lower socioeconomic groups. Older volunteers may have more flexible schedules and be able to volunteer for longer periods of time. Female volunteers may experience gender discrimination issues, such as uneven compensation and restricted opportunity for leadership roles. They may also confront familial and caregiver duties that make it difficult for them to commit to regular volunteering. Ethnically and culturally diverse volunteers may suffer prejudice and marginalisation, as well as linguistic problems that make it difficult to fully participate in volunteer activities. Volunteers from lower socioeconomic groups may experience financial constraints that make it difficult for them to receive volunteer training and gain access to volunteer resources. They may also be less likely to have flexible schedules that allow them to volunteer on a regular basis. All in all, diverse sport volunteers bring unique perspectives and insights to their volunteer work and are able to offer support and guidance by bringing cultural insights and perspectives that can enrich the volunteer experience especially for others with whose circumstances they are familiar.

The examples above on diverse volunteer populations show that meaning, experience, benefits and barriers of sport volunteering vary across population groups. In turn,

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<sup>7</sup> For other measurement scales used in sport volunteering, see for example Kim (2018).

volunteer management cannot simply employ a blanket approach to recruiting and retaining volunteers and expect all to feel included and welcome. Feeling of belonging is the desired outcome of volunteering for all diverse volunteer groups. However, when it comes to barriers to volunteering, the groups differ to a great extent which goes to show the complexity of inclusive volunteering. The end goal is the same (inclusion) but the road to inclusion needs measured and specific actions rather than blanket approaches or “diversity training”, which can be ineffective (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). Diverse volunteers are often seen through their most prominent (protected) characteristic, but a consideration of people with multiple protected characteristics seems to be missing from the sport volunteering literature at large. To conclude, in order to create a more inclusive and inviting atmosphere for all volunteers, it is critical to acknowledge and address the various issues and limitations that diverse groups of sport volunteers may experience due to prejudice, social stigma and physical barriers.

### 3.3.1 Activist roots of LGBT+ volunteerism

This chapter now moves to review the literature on LGBT+ experiences of volunteering. As civil rights activism is at the historical root of LGBT+ volunteering, this literature review will also cover research on LGBT+ activism. Volunteering, if framed only as altruistic or self-interest, de-politicises a concept that has close links to activism: “volunteering targets people, activism targets structures” and activists wish to better a cause that matters to them, be it human, animal or environment related while volunteers maintain the status quo via de-politicised moral and compassionate acts (Musick & Wilson, 2008, p. 18).

As Gates and Lillie (2021) point out, LGBTQ+ volunteer involvement in the civil rights movement sought equal rights for LGBTQ+ people even though this type of organising was not always termed as volunteering, potentially because of the friendship and kinship origins of AIDS volunteering where family members and friends extended these

informal networks of helping into advocacy groups (Gates & Lillie, 2021). Similarly, a UK-based 2019 review on the barriers to general volunteering for disadvantaged groups noted that literature on the impact of relationships focused on heterosexual marriage exclusively. The review did not find any literature on the barriers of volunteering for the LGBT+ population (Southby et al., 2019). However, as noted by Southby et al. (2019), the dearth of literature on LGBT+ volunteers might be because 'volunteering' is not used to describe civic engagement of LGBT+ people in LGBT+ communities.

LGBT+ volunteers for example readily donated their time during the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. To come together with other activists and wanting to connect with others who identify similarly still keeps LGBT+ people involved in their communities (Battle & Harris, A., 2013). There have always been LGBT+ volunteers as there have always been LGBT+ people in societies but as with other areas of LGBT+ lives, lack of attention and lack of in-depth research has persisted. It is notable that of Gates and Lillie's convenience sample of 149 LGBTQ+ identifying volunteers in North American social service organisations, only 17.3% of participants were involved in LGBTQ+ activism. Perhaps because of having secured more equal civil rights with equal marriage coming into force in 2015, LGBT+ volunteers turned their attention to other causes such as education (20.7%) and youth work (19%). However, due to the small sample size, this finding needs further research to be generalisable beyond the study sample.

There is some evidence from a small-scale study in London by the Centred charity (2012) of the effectiveness of (LGBT+) identity affirming volunteering. "Personal experiences of identity-based inequality" is grounds for taking part in voluntary work which the Centred report (2012, p. 38) illustrates. As noted by Centred research (2012), a volunteering and participation pathways research by Brodie et al. (2011) for example did not consider identity-based volunteering as a personal motivation. Even though volunteer attrition might generally be seen negatively (Gates & Lillie, 2021), in the case of LGBT+ volunteers, this might mean they have received the support they needed to move on to other (non-LGBT+) organisations (Centred, 2012). There seems to be a lack of research that looks at the volunteering of the LGBT+ population and what

volunteering means to individual LGBT+ volunteers rather than their involvement in case study organisations (e.g., social service organisations or charities). However, Centred research (2012, p. 37) considers volunteering and activism to be “on the same spectrum” because both involve giving one’s time for free. The Centred research also recognised these terms are contentious and not necessarily what people involved would use to describe their engagement. Because of this potential omission, this literature review includes evidence from a US context into motivations and barriers of LGBTQ+ activism. The findings of a qualitative content analysis of 1360 LGBTQ+ activists by Montagno et al. (2021) align with Gates and Lillie’s review whereby the need for support as well as connecting with others who identify as LGBTQ+ is important for engaging in LGBTQ+ activism. In another large-scale study of 1999 respondents Montagno and Garrett-Walker (2021) concurrently demonstrated that the involvement in LGBTQ+ activist groups led to reported feelings of connectedness to one’s LGBTQ+ community and lessened sense of internalised homophobia (Montagno & Garrett-Walker, 2021). Barriers relate to the lack of resources and lack of opportunity to participate in activism. However, Montagno, Garrett-Walker et al. (2021) point out this may be due to their sample’s young age and income level (not having the financial means to organise transportation or time off work to dedicate time for activism). They also indicated some participants feared being outed if they were to be seen in visible activist roles.

Despite the available evidence on LGBT+ participation in civic society in the US, there is a dearth of research in the UK that comprehensively explores the extent of participation across various activities, such as involvement in local decision-making bodies, community-based volunteering, school governance, local council, and other roles (Musick & Wilson, 2008, p. 18). There is a lack of robust evidence on the patterns of civic participation by sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as barriers to accessing mainstream mechanisms for civic and community engagement at the local and national levels as pointed out by Southby et al. (2019), except for the Active Lives Survey in sports discussed in chapter 1.

Thus, there is a documented lack of evidence into how LGBT+ citizens engage in volunteering or activism and the motivations and barriers LGBT+ citizens face as



volunteers, organisers or activists. The existing body of research on LGBT+ volunteers also identifies a relationship between volunteering and mental health (Gates & Dentato, 2020). Gates and Dentato (2020) analysed the 2018 General Social Survey (GSS) for the impacts of volunteering for LGBTQ+ population's mental health and wellbeing from a sample of 71 individuals. The GSS included sexual orientation identity as an explicit measure. The main findings included a positive association between volunteering and less poor mental health days a month (4 out of 30) compared to non-volunteers' reported poor mental health days (8 out of 30). Lyons et al.'s (2021) study of 754 lesbian and gay volunteers in Australia similarly reported greater positive mental health outcomes than non-volunteers. However, in Gates and Dentato's (2021) study there was no difference in self-reported happiness between volunteers and non-volunteers. It is also worth noting that the GSS defined the minimum requirement for volunteering as at least once a year, which does not communicate how much regular or prolonged volunteering impacts an individual's mental health or that there was a causal relationship between volunteering and positive mental health outcomes.

### 3.3.2 LGBT+ volunteer experiences in sport

The LGBT+ population has been seen as potentially at risk of social exclusion, being one of the nine protected characteristics detailed by the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act provides a legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity while protecting individuals from unfair treatment and promoting a more equal society. The legislation makes discrimination against actual or potential users of services based on sexual orientation or gender identity illegal (NCVO, 2021), and this applies not only to NSGBs, but also to organisations such as (sports) clubs with more than 25 members (Brackenridge et al., 2008). The Equality Act is then further realised through, but not limited, to UK government strategy on sport Sporting Future (DCMS, 2015), UK government LGBT Action Plan (GEO, 2018), Code for Sports

Governance (Sport England & UK Sport, 2021)<sup>8</sup>, Sport England's 10-year vision Uniting the Movement (Sport England & UK Sport, 2021). This further trickles down to Active Partnerships and grassroots sports clubs and programmes and their (volunteer) workforce. Programmes and activities that LGBT+ volunteers might be involved in include both LGBT+ affiliated sport clubs and programmes usually affiliated with Pride Sports UK and/or other sport clubs and programmes associated with their respective NSGB, international sport governing bodies (ISGB), sports events from local to international level and LGBT+ advocacy organisations.

A person's sexual orientation should not be a barrier to them volunteering in sport even though prior research indicates that it is a barrier (Englefield et al., 2016). Sport has a way of acting as an agent of bringing positive social change, however for many LGBT+ individuals, it has also been a site of exclusion. It is not within the scope of this literature review to track this line of research inquiry from its beginnings to present day but to analyse key research that makes direct reference to sport volunteering of LGBT+ people to provide a broader context for the limited research on LGBT+ experiences in sport volunteering. There are a handful of studies that examine LGBT+ volunteering in sport to date either explicitly or implicitly as a part of a wider study. Research includes:

- sports experiences of LGBT people in Victoria, Australia including volunteers (Symons et al., 2010);
- Pride Sports UK research on LGBT+ sport engagement including volunteering (Englefield et al. 2016);
- research into Gay Games stakeholder perceptions including volunteers (Jarvis, 2018);
- volunteering as part of sport club activity and one of the predictors of sport group involvement (Mock et al., 2019);

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<sup>8</sup> which introduced a new requirement for Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan in July 2021 (Sport England & UK Sport, 2021)

- workforce perceptions of LGBT+ involvement in sport and physical activity (Energise Me, 2019);
- involvement of lesbian parents in their children's sport in voluntary roles (Trussell, 2020); and
- experiences of ethnically diverse NSGB volunteers with a smaller subset of LGBTQ volunteers (Legg & Karner, 2021)
- (i) exclusionary practices in Australian sport including a subset of LGBT+ volunteers (Storr, Jeanes et al., 2021) (ii) establishing LGBT+ supporter groups in cricket including volunteers (Storr et al., 2019) and (iii) sexually diverse volunteers' diversity work in Australian rules football (Storr, 2021)

These studies, apart from Legg and Karner (2021) and Storr (2021), have not solely examined the experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport but rather volunteering as an implicit part of wider sport engagement. Closer inspection with volunteering as primary focus is necessary to highlight the efforts of LGBT+ volunteers whose voices are not often heard. To gain understanding of the wider meaning of sport engagement which includes volunteering, there needs to be an in-depth exploration focusing on LGBT+ volunteers' experiences in sport over time.

Symons et al.'s (2010) survey of 307 LGBT identifying sports participants, supporters, workers and volunteers was conducted in Victoria, Australia and was the first comprehensive study of the LGBT experience in sport in Australia. The study utilised a continuum of social climates (i.e., hostile, conditionally tolerant, and open and inclusive) developed by Griffin (1998) to examine the experiences of LGBT sport participants and workers (volunteers, officials, coaches and managers). Every study participant was an active sport participant and 22.7% had also volunteered in sport in their lifetime, however only 9.6% were volunteering at the time of the study. The findings did not specify any aspects directly linked to volunteering but because of the inclusion of people who volunteered in the sample, some findings are of interest and have relevance for this PhD research. Symons et al. (2010) for example separated between "mainstream" and "queer" clubs with differences in how inclusive study participants perceived these

environments to be. 97.3% of queer sport club participants felt their club was welcoming towards non-heterosexual people while 50% of the mainstream club participants felt their club was welcoming.

Queer or LGBT+ focused sport clubs are important arenas of social interaction as people wish to meet people with a shared identity in a health-enhancing environment (Elling et al., 2003; Mock et al., 2019) away from the singularity of the over-sexualised 'gay scene' centred around nightclubs (Gaston & Dixon, 2020). Ceatha et al. (2019) also note the positive impacts of LGBT sporting, creative and social groups on LGBT wellbeing. In sport there might be a presence of minority stress (Sartore & Cunningham, 2009; Zeeman et al., 2019) and therefore it is more likely for some LGBT+ people to feel more at home at LGBT+ focused sport clubs. Mock et al. (2019) associate volunteering with sport participation as a leisure pursuit in an LGBT specific sport club and emphasise the importance of an inclusive environment to individual identity formation. Volunteering, along with attending training and social events, is an important part of the social canvas of club activities. However, the survey results only measured the amount of time spent volunteering which was not affected by changes in the identity-focused predictors such as identity expression and identity affirmation over time. Nonetheless, Mock et al. (2019) found that greater identity affirmation and identity expression predicted increased social event attendance and more frequent practice attendance in LGBT-focused sport groups. In Trussell's (2020) study of lesbian parents' involvement in youth sports, parents emphasised the shared responsibility of both the organisation and the parents (and volunteers) to make sure inclusive community sport cultures emerged and endured. Opportunities to become volunteers fostered this sense of community and heightened parents' sense of belonging.

Even within LGBT+ inclusive environments, exclusive and heteronormative practices are still prevalent. Carter and Baliko (2017) call for a re-conceptualisation of these communities to account for the complexity and struggles of people under the LGBT+ umbrella, rather than assuming unity and sameness of people who come to inhabit these sport and leisure spaces. Findings by Symons et al. (2010) indicate that queer sporting clubs often had policies in place that promoted the safety and inclusion of

LGBT people, however, “mainstream” clubs were less likely to have such policies, or the participants were not aware of them, even though anti-harassment and discrimination laws had been in place in Victoria since 1995. van Ingen (2004) found an LGBT+ running club to be a primarily white space that did not always consider the needs of LGBT+ people who were not affluent, gay or white. Even though members of the club were inclusive by language use, this did not always happen in practice. Similarly to van Ingen (2004), Knee (2019) noted the importance of neoliberal LGBTQ prototype for inhabiting LGBTQ leisure spaces because exhibiting white upper-middle class values brought LGBTQ spaces closer to the heterosexual ideal, therefore normalising LGBTQ spaces for non-LGBTQ audiences. Even though LGBT+ spaces are often classed as inclusive, there is still work to be done to include LGBT+ individuals with intersecting vulnerabilities that result in discrimination not just because someone identifies as LGBT+ but for example because of their gender identity, social class, disability, ethnicity or homelessness (Knee, 2019).

LGBT+ sport volunteers have usually been involved in sport in other ways than just volunteering (Englefield et al., 2016) and therefore these sport participation experiences may have contributed to the development of LGBT+ sport volunteers' identity as well as shaped their volunteer involvement (Mock et al., 2019). A 10-week study by Pride Sports UK (Englefield et al., 2016) with volunteering as part of wider sport engagement assumed volunteering levels being lower if physical activity levels were lower. Pride Sports UK findings are confirmed by Energise Me<sup>9</sup> (2019) mixed methods study (353 questionnaire participants and additionally focus groups and 4 one-to-one interviews) according to which LGBT+ people were less likely to volunteer as part of the sport and physical activity workforce. Indeed, there are some documented patterns in how LGBT+ population takes part in physical activity. Men in LGBT population are more active participants than women (Bourne et al., 2016; Herrick & Duncan, 2018a). Therefore, it could be theorised that men would also be more active volunteers. Englefield et al. (2016) employed focus groups with LGBT+ people involved in sport volunteering.

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<sup>9</sup> Energise Me is an Active Partnership and charity in Hampshire and Isle of Wight (Energise Me, 2023).

These LGBT+ volunteers engaged in volunteer activities as members of sports clubs and events such as parkrun or major events such as the London 2012 Olympic Games. LGBT+ volunteers experience anxiety especially when working in youth sports due to “conflation of sexual orientation and sexual predation” (Brackenridge et al., 2008, p. 41). Other challenges of LGBT+ volunteers are in line with challenges of other volunteer groups, that is, recruiting and retaining volunteers, burnout and exhaustion, as well as volunteer management and development. Englefield et al. (2016) propose that LGBT+ people are less likely to volunteer by providing support on activities undertaken by their children because early experiences of homo- and transphobia in their own participation in sport. And, this might further decrease motivation to encourage their children to take part in sport. When it comes to the older LGBT population volunteering in sport, Englefield et al. (2016) also hold the view that earlier negative experiences of sport might hinder their willingness to volunteer in sport. The report (Englefield et al., 2016, p. 35) advocates for more widespread inclusive education on creating LGBT inclusive spaces in sport clubs to “create real opportunities for LGBT people to volunteer in sport”. The research conducted by Englefield et al. (2016) is not peer-reviewed and does not state detailed information on research design (chosen methodology or sample size) but shines light on a unique set of data from a minority group within sport volunteering whose experiences have barely been documented by research before and acted as a starting point for future studies.

The value of role models or *identity models* as Wegner et al. (2020) term them might also have an empowering effect on someone considering joining an organisation as a participant or a volunteer. The Energise Me (2019) study highlighted the impact of role models for LGBT+ volunteers in sport: recruiting LGBTQ+ volunteers who get involved in leadership roles can help shape the culture of a workforce. Englefield et al. (2016) emphasises the importance of volunteers as role models for LGBT+ people looking to get involved in sport. Morgenroth et al. (2015) uncovered the importance of role models for motivating action from individuals in stigmatised groups (Legg & Karner, 2021). By being out and being visible, LGBT+ volunteers may act as diversity champions. This shows the importance for LGBT+ people to have role models to help navigate their way

as sport volunteers. Further, the impact of out professional athletes on participation has been examined (Lenskyj, 2013). In Gaston and Dixon's (2020) study of a gay rugby team, the participants were inspired to play rugby partly because of high profile out athletes in professional rugby. With the established links between volunteering and participating, this thesis cannot overstate the importance of role models. Having role model volunteers can encourage volunteering the same way as seeing role model athletes might positively influence sport participation (Wicker & Frick, 2016).

Jarvis (2018) examined the legacy of Gay Games from the perspective of stakeholders including volunteers at the event and local residents. Volunteer recruitment agencies benefitted from the games as increased training opportunities and the sense of community the Games created in Akron, Ohio. Volunteering at the Gay Games provided LGBT+ individuals with opportunities to enhance their social connections, increase their understanding of political issues related to the LGBT+ community, and develop their skills and knowledge in sports.

In Legg and Karner's (2021) interview study of 29 diverse volunteers, 97% were people of colour and 7% identified as LGBTQI+ at US NSGBs. The study by Legg and Karner (2021) is included in this section of the literature review rather than in the section about ethnically and culturally diverse volunteers due to the specific LGBT+ focus of this thesis. Given the scarcity of studies specifically focusing on LGBT+ volunteers in sport, it is relevant to draw upon studies that include a smaller proportion of LGBT+ participants but still provide valuable insights into their experiences within the broader context of diversity and inclusion. Based on the data collected, Legg and Karner (2021) devised a model that highlights actionable areas to further equality, diversity and inclusion within sport organisations. Legg and Karner (2021, p.6, see figure 3) use this type of model to explore diverse experiences in sport volunteering to uncover the influences on the complexity of one's volunteer context that shape one's identity in sport, as a volunteer and as ethnically diverse / LGBT+. They base their model on a socio-ecological tradition (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), therefore including the layers of community, organisational, interpersonal and individual. Even though Legg and Karner

have called their model ‘experiences of diverse volunteers’, their emphasis is on the meaning of inclusion for these volunteers. Legg & Karner (2021) argue that the benefits experienced through sport volunteering (development of volunteer capital as per Nichols et al., 2016) are likely to increase equity outside of sport for volunteers involved. Yet, clearly, we know little about how this applies to LGBTQI+ experiences (being only 2 participants of the study sample).

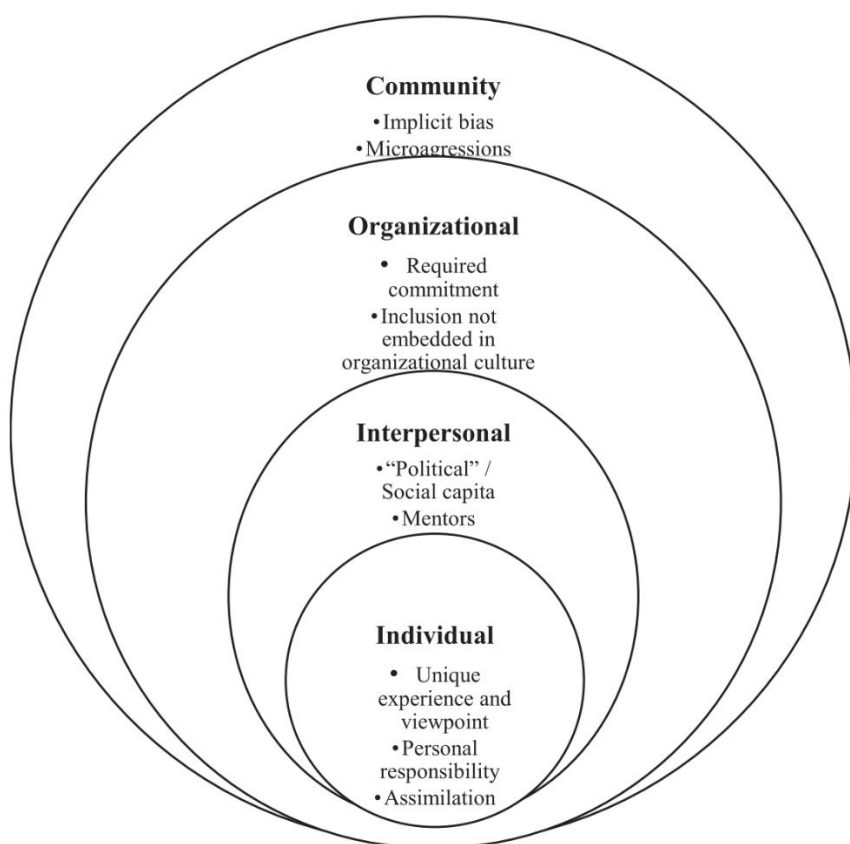


Figure 3. Model of experiences of diverse volunteers (Legg & Karner, 2021, p. 6).

Three studies by Storr and colleagues address issues related to LGBT+ inclusion in the context of sport with volunteers included (Storr, Jeanes et al., 2021; Storr et al. (2019) and volunteers as the main focus (Storr, 2021). They highlight the challenges, barriers, and the need for improved understanding, education, and support within sports communities with the need for institutional support, clear policies, and behaviour change



to foster LGBT+ inclusion. Storr et al. (2019) indicate that volunteers involved in establishing LGBT+ supporter groups may face challenges related to understanding, education, and institutional support. Further, Storr, Jeanes et al. (2021) suggest that the experiences of volunteers involved in diversity work or inclusion initiatives may be influenced by barriers to inclusion and discrimination in sport. Storr (2021) highlights the positive impact of volunteers in creating safe and affirming environments for LGBT+ individuals and suggests that they may encounter challenges related to addressing negative attitudes and fostering inclusivity. These volunteers came together to establish fan/supporter groups as a response to acts of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in AFL spectators. The three studies appear to present snapshots of the current state of LGBT+ inclusion in sport. However, these studies could benefit from a more nuanced understanding of individual experiences. This includes exploring the challenges, growth, and personal development of LGBT+ volunteers. By doing so, we can shed light on how LGBT+ involvement in sport volunteering influences identities over time.

The next section provides a brief overview of the how volunteers influence inclusion through diversity work. Just as individuals engage in identity work to better understand and express their own identities, individuals, organisations and communities can engage in diversity work to create inclusive environments. I delve into why and how such an approach is important, furthering the research reviewed in this chapter so far.

### 3.3.3 Diversity work

Sport volunteers are anticipated to play an important role in encouraging diversity and inclusion in sport (Spaaij et al., 2014) but there is still limited attention paid to how commitment to diversity translates to activism in sport volunteering (Spaaij et al., 2018). More research is required to understand the unique contributions that sport volunteers may provide, as well as the barriers they may experience in doing so. As stated in this chapter, there is a small body of scholarship on the experiences of diverse sport volunteers, which may have implications for diversity work of sport volunteers.

Diversity work, according to Ahmed (2012), can be understood in two ways. The first approach is to foster a culture that values diversity and challenges practises and attitudes that exclude or marginalise particular groups. LGBT+ communities have largely driven the engagement and increased awareness of the need for LGBT+ focused diversity work within sport due to ongoing experiences of homophobia/transphobia and discrimination (Spaaij et al., 2018; Storr, 2020). For example, LGBT+ volunteers may find their sexual orientation and gender identity do not align with the dominant culture and values of sport organisations (Trussell et al., 2018). This may result in tension between their LGBT+ identity and their sport identity.

Diversity work involves creating a culture that recognises and values difference. It involves actively challenging and changing the practices and attitudes that exclude or marginalise certain groups. Diversity work requires a commitment to creating a more inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome, respected, and valued. The second approach is to use diversity work as a transformative tool to broaden participation opportunities within an institution for those who are not currently a part of it (Ahmed, 2012): LGBT+ communities in sport have a desire to broaden sports participation opportunities within their communities. LGBT+ diversity work can take a toll on the LGBT+ diversity worker if homophobic or transphobic language use persists. The significance of investigating the nuances of inclusion and how it manifests itself in language, attitudes, behaviours, and opportunities is emphasised. (Spaaij et al., 2019; Storr, Jeanes, et al., 2021).

In the context of sport volunteering, diversity work can be applied by actively seeking out and including individuals from diverse backgrounds in volunteer positions. This can involve reaching out to communities that may not have traditionally been involved in sports and creating an environment where volunteers from diverse backgrounds feel welcome and valued, and where their contributions are recognised and celebrated. Prioritising diversity work in sport volunteering may lead to a more equitable and inclusive culture that benefits everyone involved.

Identity work (Watson, 2008) mirrors the central assumption of diversity work: micro-processes influence macro phenomena (Ahmed, 2012). Thus, diversity understood only in terms of individual characteristics may not be a useful framework for non-profit and volunteer management practice (Weisinger et al., 2016). There is a need to consider the wider context in which diversity work occurs.

Sports organisations claim to support diversity in their policies, statements, and leadership, but their actions do not reflect a genuine commitment to diversity. Ahmed (2012) terms these efforts "non-performative speech acts" where the organisations make verbal claims but fail to take concrete steps to promote diversity and inclusion. Spaaij et al. (2019) propose that this happens in community sports settings, with many sports providers professing to be open and inclusive yet refusing to alter behaviours that might result in othering and exclusion of specific groups. Even highly publicised commitments to eliminate discrimination against certain groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, may still be non-performative if they are not followed up by actions and genuine change. Additionally, Storr et al. (2018) argue there is little evidence of subsequent action or change in the discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals in sport. Sport organisations should provide leadership and accountability in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion through their volunteer programmes. Setting goals for diversity and inclusion, tracking progress, and holding leaders accountable for creating and maintaining inclusive environments are all examples of this.

### 3.4 Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter has examined the definition and conceptualisations of volunteering and the extent to which diverse volunteers are included within these frames of volunteering. Volunteering consists of any unpaid activity that entails spending time doing anything to improve the environment or someone's life (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives. Volunteering is helpfully conceptualised through four dimensions (1) free choice (from free will to duty) (2) payment (from none to low pay) (3) structure (from informal gatherings or get-togethers to registered associations and

organisations) and (4) intended beneficiaries (ranging from benefiting others to benefiting oneself).

Inclusion does not widely feature in the definition or conceptualisations of volunteering, perhaps because of its taken-for-granted nature. The inclusion principle in volunteering (Kearney, 2001) makes the invisible visible, highlighting the personal characteristics and backgrounds of volunteers. Although a growing body of studies in inclusive volunteering is emerging (Weisinger et al., 2016), a consideration of identity development in volunteering remains a less researched area (Grönlund, 2011) with potential to uncover the experiences of diverse volunteers in sport. Inclusive volunteering and biographically rooted reflexive volunteering are presented as the gateways to framing diverse sport volunteer experiences. Individuals engaging in reflective volunteering may have conventional (altruistic) motives, but they may also be seen as a reflection on how well their own values align with those of the volunteer setting. von Essen (2016) observes that qualitative research rarely lets volunteers express their own definitions of volunteering. This is important because people's understanding of their individual lives in society can be influenced by how they describe their experiences with volunteering.

Hoye et al. (2019) argue inclusive volunteering improves organisations and volunteers if individuals are motivated to join and organisations establish inclusive settings and help new volunteers fit in. Due to limited research on LGBT+ volunteers (in sport), this literature review also included research on other marginalised and minoritised groups. The experience, meaning, and challenges of sport volunteering can vary substantially based on a volunteer's demographic background, which includes age, disability, gender, ethnicity, and social gradient. Experiencing isolation is common for all diverse volunteer groups. The fight to be included for civil rights has been a significant motivator for LGBT+ activists, and many continue to volunteer in their communities today. In sport, despite the substantial evidence of consistent levels of homophobia and transphobia towards LGBT+ athletes, coaches and administrators and subsequent research on the experiences of these groups, LGBT+ volunteers in sport have received less attention. Studies that cover LGBT+ volunteers in sport do so in a limited manner with volunteers

often being a part of a larger subset rather than the main focus. What is known is that the prevailing heteronormative structures in sport result in direct and indirect experiences of discrimination whereas identity-affirming environments might help in offsetting this influence.

Volunteers in sports are expected to play an important role in fostering diversity and inclusion in sports. Diversity work includes developing a culture that recognises and promotes diversity, as well as confronting and altering behaviours and attitudes that exclude, minoritise or marginalise specific groups. Sport organisations frequently comply to mainstream diversity expectations, with little evidence of following action or improvement in prejudice faced by minority groups. Prioritising diversity efforts in sport volunteering may result in a more equal and inclusive culture that benefits everyone involved in sport.

With the help of these conceptualisations, this chapter has grounded the understanding of volunteering in this thesis while interweaving sport and general volunteering literature with experiences of diverse volunteers including LGBT+ volunteers in sport.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology and methods used within this research and to justify their selection. The chapter begins by considering the research philosophy and reflecting upon the interpretivist ontological and weak social constructionist epistemological underpinnings. Next, this chapter continues by describing the life history approach (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Plummer, 2001) that provided the basis for the interviewing approach of the study. An in-depth rationale is provided for the selection of the timeline tool (Adriansen, 2012) and topical life history interviews (Plummer, 2001). Then, an approach to data analysis is outlined with the adaptation of constructivist grounded theory analysis principles (Charmaz, 2006) with considerations for trustworthiness, ethics and limitations of the qualitative research design.

### 4.1 Research design

#### 4.1.1 Ontology and epistemology

In this research, I adopt Guba & Lincoln's (1985) three-fold approach in determining my philosophical standpoint: ontology is concerned with the philosophical underpinnings of the nature of reality (*being*), whereas epistemology considers the foundations of *knowing* about the nature of reality and the role of individuals within it. Methodology considers *the ways of finding out* about what can be known about the nature of reality and the methods used to generate and comprehend knowledge about the world.

Ontology, epistemology, and methodology – crucial components relating to research design – are addressed by the paradigm (worldview) which frames a study (Weenink & Bridgman, 2017). These concepts need to be explained to comprehend the procedures and environments used for data collection and the instruments chosen for analysis.

*Interpretivism* is a subjectivist paradigm that is enveloped by relativist assumptions on the nature of reality (Burrell & Morgan, 2016) and uses inductive reasoning, (building knowledge from the ground up) rather than deductive reasoning where existing knowledge is used to test empirical observations. The interpretivist approach is intersubjective or subjective, presuming that each person independently or via co-creation creates reality. The primary objective of interpretivism is to offer thorough explanations of human phenomena whereas a positivist ontology might overlook the complexity and diversity of social phenomena and the context in which they occur. Interpretivism and inductive technique use a variety of approaches, including those present in the humanities, while rejecting the scientific method's requirement for objectivity. It is essential to remember that interpretivists may apply knowledge to many contexts, but they take care not to assert generalisability. Instead of narrowing their conceptual emphasis or units, interpretivists enlarge them to preserve the complexity of the phenomenon (Nicotera, 2017). In other words, interpretivists prioritise a comprehensive and holistic approach, recognising the multifaceted nature of social phenomena and the need to consider various factors and perspectives to gain a deeper understanding. In the context of LGBT+ volunteers in sport, adopting an interpretivist ontology involves understanding that the meaning of being an LGBT+ volunteer is influenced by personal perspectives, identities, and social interactions. On this basis, I adopt an interpretivist ontology.

These ontological views have significant ramifications for epistemological assumptions and the nature of knowing. According to sociology of scientific knowledge (Restivo & Croissant, 2008; Turner, 1991), the social and cultural context in which knowledge is formed (built through social interactions, power dynamics, cultural ideas and values), impact how scientists formulate research questions, gather data, and interpret their findings. As a result, based on their respective paradigms and worldviews, different scientific communities may develop alternative knowledge and understandings of the same phenomenon.

*Social constructionism* has questioned reality, objectivity, and impartiality, as well as the idea that the person is the most important unit of analysis when creating new knowledge (Weenink & Bridgman, 2017). Conversely, positivism assumes a single objective reality advocating the scientific method to produce generalisable knowledge about the 'real world'. Social constructionism on the other hand employs a relativist ontology, which holds that there are several realities as distinct shared social creations. In other words, both the context and the researcher will influence the research. A methodological approach that acknowledges and permits reflection on this connection results from the radical subjectivist epistemological viewpoint, which holds that knowledge is formed in the interaction between the inquirer and the questioned (Weenink & Bridgman, 2017, p. 94).

This PhD study was conducted within a framework of the meaning that people ascribe to people, places, and activities and is shaped, according to social constructionists, by social factors (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism is distinct from constructivism. In its most basic distinction, social constructionism has a social focus whereas constructivism has an individual focus. Constructivism deals with the internal, cognitive processes involved in the individual's construction of knowledge and of the world of experience.

Constructivism's epistemological approach is concerned with how people know and, by extension, find meaning in what they learn and experience. Although these processes clearly have a social component, they are essentially psychological and individual in nature. Whereas in social constructionism, the social part of the process prevails, and historical and cultural location of the construction become important (Hoye et al., 2019; Shachar et al., 2019). For example, I consider the stigma associated with being LGBT+ to be a social construction as well as the cultural norms that influence how LGBT+ individuals are perceived in society.

I am using social constructivist methods (constructivist grounded theory analysis) to explore how individuals construct their own understanding of the world, while also examining the ways in which social reality is constructed through communication and discourse. This aligns with a weak form of social constructionist epistemology, which



emphasises the role of communication and discourse in the construction of knowledge. This perspective acknowledges that knowledge is not a fixed and objective reality, but rather a product of social processes and interactions. Similarly, interpretivist ontology emphasises the subjective nature of reality, and the ways in which social actors actively construct and interpret their experiences. This is reflected in the constructivist grounded theory approach, which emphasises the importance of the researcher's understanding of the experiences and interpretations of the participants. I will return to constructivist grounded theory later in this chapter.

I adopt a 'weak' form of social constructionist (Burr, 2015) epistemology, which views the social environment as highly subjective and continually constructed. This differs from 'strong' social constructionism, which suggests that knowledge cannot be obtained through empirical observation, making it challenging to establish a shared understanding of the world. By embracing a weak version of social constructionism, I recognise the influence of social factors on human experience, rather than subscribing to the notion that all knowledge and reality are solely socially constructed (Burr, 2015). While there are social and cultural influences on the experiences and identities of LGBT+ volunteers, there are also some aspects of their experiences that can be objectively observed or measured such as the physical environment in which they volunteer.

By subscribing to interpretivist/weak social constructionist paradigm, I prioritise subjective experiences and construction in understanding reality and creating knowledge. The paradigm I adopted presumes similar notions with the sociological concepts of identity work that I apply as the theoretical framework. This study is driven by ontological interpretivism combined with epistemological weak social constructionism that asserts knowledge as relational, theory-laden and fallible (Burr, 2016). Through their agency, volunteers provide meaning to their experiences by negotiating dominant cultural narratives. This is not a deterministic process because volunteers can negotiate and change these narratives. Simultaneously, social structures and interactions offer a backdrop for the volunteers' experiences and identities (Spaaij et al., 2019) To borrow

Kanter's (1977) terminology of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processes, the structures of society, organisations and interactions shape the volunteer, and the volunteer shapes these structures (see figure 4).

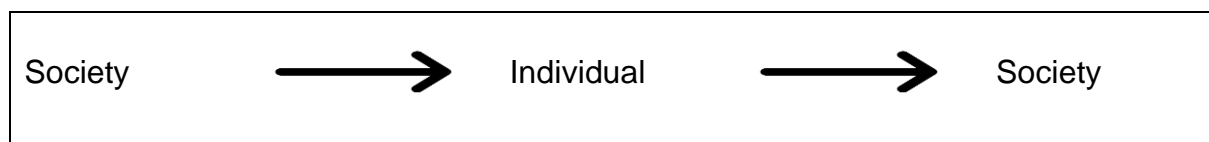


Figure 4. The dialectical relationship between individual and society (adapted from Berger & Luckmann, 1990).

As discussed, ontological inquiries investigate the nature and shape of reality. Burrell and Morgan (2016) see ontology as a continuum having objective and subjective goals. The social environment is not totally objective, but rather highly subjective and continually being constructed. Because social and cultural factors shape our understanding of reality, social constructionism relies on inductive reasoning to make sense of the world. Social constructionism seeks to comprehend broader social and cultural patterns through the examination of specific instances or cases rather than relying on pre-existing assumptions or generalisations. As a result, this PhD research necessitates the use of inductive reasoning, in which the researcher may build or establish a common pattern of meaning among participants (Pathirage et al., 2008). To explore these meanings, an in-depth understanding is needed: a qualitative inquiry with a design that enables a context-specific exploration of LGBT+ volunteers in sport.

#### 4.1.2 Qualitative inquiry

Qualitative inquiry is considered a viable strategy that can be applied inductively to investigate social phenomena when little is known (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), qualitative research methods are advantageous for exploratory and descriptive studies that emphasise the significance of context, setting, and participants' frames of reference (p. 58).

The goal of qualitative research is to understand the distinctive traits of the participants — their values, beliefs, and emotions — to better understand how people and institutions behave. Qualitative research acknowledges the necessity of involving study participants by hearing their opinions, the necessity of asking open-ended questions outside of formal research settings, in locations where people live and work, and the necessity of contributing to the improvement and transformation of people's lives. A naturalistic methodology with room for interpretation is used in qualitative research to build understanding of current issues for which there are no simple solutions. This might result in naturalistic generalisations, where information based on personal experience allows listeners or readers to identify with that experience. For the audience to think on the findings and draw analogies (naturalistic generalisations) to their own lives, the researcher must provide readers detailed descriptions of the study participants' lives. In qualitative research, naturalistic generalisability entails creating content that resonates with the audience and inspires action or inquiry (Smith B., & Caddick, 2012). Often, qualitative research results in the development of ideas that explain certain events (Sparkes, 2013). According to Maxwell (2010), when researchers attempt to quantify textual data, they may lose sight of the unique perspectives and contextual factors that shape the data. This may result in a superficial or incomplete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. It is critical to approach qualitative data with sensitivity to the social and institutional context in which it was produced to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Assumptions underpinning this study lend themselves to qualitative research, and academics exploring similar themes (identity, sexual diversity and sport volunteering) have adopted qualitative research methods (Legg & Karner, 2021; Trussell, 2020). Qualitative methods can be used to build interpretive descriptions of sport volunteering. The literature on identity work is also filled with instances of qualitative research methods. Creed et al. (2010), for instance, analysed the identity work of GLBT priests using extensive interview and observation data (see also Watson, 2009). The complexities in meaning-making through identity work result in identity work not lending

itself to measurement or quantification (Harding, 2008). Therefore, I employ a qualitative framework, as it is appropriate for the research questions.

#### 4.1.3 Life history

While long-standing and nationwide surveys on sport volunteering gather information about shifting priorities, values, norms and volunteer roles, there is less understanding of why these changes occur and how they impact sport volunteer experiences in the long-term. Therefore, exploring volunteer histories of people has merit to understand the social and leisure locations of their experiences and how they are situated in their wider environments.

There has also been interest in the concept of volunteer lifecycle in sport (Jump Projects, 2019) and its relevance to recruiting and retaining volunteers. Brodie et al. (2011) conceptualised pathways into volunteering. Their research focused on the perspectives of individuals and examining participation throughout people's lives. People participate because they give special meaning to the activities they engage in, and these meanings are very individual. Patterns of participation are dynamic and changing and rarely linear or deepening over time. People's individual life cycles are affected by the enabling factors and barriers to participation to a different extent, however participation remains a valuable contribution to society whether it is more sporadic or long term.

Exploring volunteer histories will reveal something about the social context of the participant and provide the researcher with an opportunity to share the experiences of the participant. Subsequently, the life course perspective assumes that current behaviours and attitudes have their roots in the past but that they change across the life course with a certain level of predictability (Wilson, 2012). Consequently, everyday experiences have a chance of rendering structures visible that are not usually visible (Scott, 2018).

As discussed in chapter 3, since emergent volunteer forms are understood to be rooted in the biography of the individual (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003), researchers should focus not only on factors such as motives and expectations. Understanding the individual's background and life history is crucial for understanding why they choose to volunteer in certain ways. (Tomazos & Luke, 2015).

Goodson (2001) traces the roots of life history research to American anthropologists' autobiographies of indigenous leaders in America, Thomas and Znaniecki's *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918) as well as the pioneering work by Chicago School sociologists. According to Wahl-Jorgensen (2018), these researchers were seeking to understand experiences of migrants and other marginalised groups. Goodson (2001, p. 131) calls this emphasis the "messy confrontation with human subjectivity" – an everyday lived experience:

"which may often be unglamorous and unworthy of note, but is intrinsically tied to broader social, political, economical, and technological transformations".

Life history sits within a wider research family that considers how individual lives are lived and told: the subjective experiences of the past. Life stories and biographical research have been used to explore retrospective personal narratives that people tell about their lives – understanding life backwards, while living life forwards as per Danish philosopher Kierkegaard (Germeten, 2013).

Life history interviews are an example of longitudinal data. Longitudinal data is gathered on individual life events and observing changes over time as opposed to cross-sectional data that may only provide a snapshot of a single point in time (Taris, 2000). The relation between life history and life story is a close one, albeit sometimes a blurred line. Goodson (2001) treats life stories as the starting point for life histories that have been removed from life experiences by ways of interpretation and making them textual. Life history adds another interpretive layer to the life story: the historical context (Germeten, 2013). Goodson (2001) notes that by considering the broader context of individuals' lives, such as the social, historical, and spatial factors that shape their experiences, we

can better interpret and analyse their testimonies and actions. The shared principles of biographical research in which life history research also belongs to, are discussed next. According to Caetano and Nico (2019, p. 374)

“there are different ways of doing biographical research, according to diverse paradigms, approaches, disciplines and techniques. However, there are shared principles of giving voice to people, analysing singularity in the face of historical and social processes, and thus connecting macro and micro levels of analysis. This gives us the privilege of not having to choose between agency and structure, objectivity and subjectivity, individual and society because the central goal is to analyse the links between them”.

Giving voice refers to platforming

“voices that are normally silenced, arenas in which they can be heard by a range of audiences that might not otherwise hear them” (Caetano & Nico, 2019, p. 372).

Tomlinson and Schwabenland (2010, p. 118) also note giving voice has “moral desirability” which refers to the oppression expressed by those belonging to minoritised groups whose voices may not be heard. This is why qualitative approach to research is able to account for complex life worlds of individuals (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). The notion of ‘giving voice’ is important when researching LGBT+ populations since LGBT+ people may have been historically under-represented in research (Ceatha et al., 2019; Henrickson et al., 2020). As Caetano and Nico (2019) note, researchers give people voice when there is no better way to understand their lives or certain facets of their social existence than by hearing about their first-hand, subjectively and objectively framed, unique experiences. However, giving voice on its own without considering the wider context is not enough to transform life story to life history, as Squires and Sparkes (1996) express. Therefore, a life history needs to analyse change in the face of historical and social processes - material, social, economic and/or cultural conditions which is a core mission in biographical research (Ceatha et al., 2019).

Individual life histories may show how an individual behaves within the community and how the social norms of the population affect an individual's behaviour even if they cannot be considered typical of the whole population (Costello, 2019). LGBT communities' contribution is needed to advance the understanding of social justice, identity and recognition in promoting social wellbeing (Ceatha et al., 2019).

Life history research is especially significant to the study of identity formation over time, since it enables many facets of human experience to emerge and places the individual's life experiences into a particular historical, cultural, and socio-political context. Understanding the participant's identity via the interactions between self, space, and structural/institutional influences help to make sense of the individual in the context of a larger shared experience (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Monakali, 2018).

This PhD study has elements of both biographical and life course research as recognised by Caetano and Nico (2019, p. 365), however, I align this study with life history particularly. Life history (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Plummer, 2001) is used in conjunction with CGT's analytical process (Charmaz, 2006) to explore the experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport. Other authors have combined life history approach with constructivist grounded theory (see for example Bainbridge et al., 2013) and grounded theory has been proposed as a lens to explore individuals' identity work (Gill, 2020).

#### 4.1.4 Constructivist grounded theory

Grounded theory, a research method influenced by the Pragmatist school of thought – originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) – “comprises a systematic, inductive, and comparative approach for conducting inquiry for the purpose of constructing theory” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1) with multiple evolutions since its inception. Timonen, Foley & Conlon (2018) divide the versions of grounded theory into *classical* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), *Straussian* (Strauss, 1990), *situational analysis* (Clarke, A., 2005), *critical* (Oliver, 2012), and *constructivist grounded theory* (Charmaz, 2006). It is beyond

the scope of this PhD thesis to paint a complete picture of the different iterations; therefore, brief descriptions are offered for the first four approaches and more in-depth focus on constructivist grounded theory which is the analysis approach adopted in this thesis.<sup>10</sup>

*Classical* grounded theory was based on the concerns of Glaser and Strauss (1967) that social science neglected theorising in the post-Second World War era. This led Glaser and Strauss to advocate for a data-driven approach which would result in building a theory that had a practical application and the ability to predict future phenomena. The emphasis was on building a theory while casting aside the need for rigorous rules for data collection. The *Straussian* (Strauss, 1990) version of grounded theory deviated from the classical version. Rather than building theory strictly emerging from data, a combination of deduction and induction was preferred, by testing and modifying theories first and then moving into drawing from the data, and with stricter application of technical procedures used in the analysis. *Situational analysis* (Clarke, A., 2005) placed the emphasis on the social world rather than agentic behaviour and the social process of an individual, highlighting the importance of understanding the various elements and contexts that contribute to a particular situation in order to analyse it effectively. Situational analysis makes use of situational maps that address the major human, nonhuman and discursive elements, social worlds/arenas and positional maps (including missing or silenced positionalities). *Critical* grounded theory aligns with critical realism (Oliver, 2012), acknowledging both human influence and the “structures, processes and social relations that shape events and outcomes” (Bainbridge et al., 2013). Therefore, critical grounded theory sits between positivist and constructivist traditions of grounded theory. Critical grounded theory engages with the process of retroduction, utilising existing ideas and knowledge to get from description to causal inference (Bhaskar, 1986) with an emancipatory outcome (Timonen et al., 2018, p. 3).

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<sup>10</sup> For a more comprehensive account of the different grounded theory traditions, refer to Bryant (2017) for example.



Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) puts the researcher on centre stage as co-producing knowledge with the participant rather than being a distant scientific observer proposed by classical grounded theory. CGT encourages reflection by researchers on their own positionality, where the resulting theory is an interpretation in and of itself (Berdychevsky et al., 2013). The subjectivity of constructivist grounded theory is both its greatest asset and liability. Where a level of objectivity and practical research addressing societal challenges is required, the relativist stance of constructivist grounded theory does not necessarily fill the brief of generating objective results (Timonen et al., 2018). In summary, the similarities between grounded theory versions (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020) can be grouped as follows:

1. Conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process.
2. Analyse actions and processes rather than themes and structure.
3. Use comparative methods.
4. Draw on data (e.g., narratives and descriptions) in service of developing new conceptual categories.
5. Develop inductive categories through systematic data analysis.
6. Emphasise theory construction rather than description or application of current theories.
7. Engage in theoretical sampling.
8. Search for variation in the studied categories or process.
9. Pursue developing a category rather than covering a specific empirical topic.

Given the lack of research on LGBT+ volunteers in sport, it was justifiable to ground this thesis within a robust theoretical context to guide data analysis while preserving freedom to explore emergent concepts. Consequently, constructivist approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) was chosen because of its affordance to inductive logic (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006, p. 155) described CGT as

“inductive, indeterminate, and open-ended. An emergent method begins with the empirical world and builds an inductive understanding of it as events unfold and knowledge accrues”.

The function of existing theories has been a long-standing point of contention for grounded theorists, according to Charmaz (2006). CGT permits new evidence to be interpreted through existing concepts and, where warranted by new evidence, inform adaptation and development of existing theories, concepts and models, which in this thesis included investigating identity work of LGBT+ volunteers in sport and developing a model of understanding LGBT+ volunteer engagement (see figure 7) based on the research findings. Charmaz (2006) indicates that preconceived theoretical conceptualisations may provide starting points for examining data, but they do not provide automatic codes for interpreting constructions. A researcher uses a combination of both inductive and deductive logics in a grounded theory study to undertake a constant comparative method. When employing this inductive-deductive strategy, a grounded theory researcher does not, contrary to deductive reasoning, develop and then test hypotheses derived from existing theories. Instead, a researcher uses the theories that already exist to clarify concepts, offer interesting analogies, invite readers to start a theoretical conversation, and indicate the fit and place of the present work according to Charmaz (2006).

Grounded theory which aims to direct a researcher to explain a social process by going back and forth between the data collection and data analysis is well suited to studies into these internal and external processes of identity development (Charmaz, 2006). This PhD study uses grounded theory as its method to theorise "how - and sometimes why - participants construct meaning and actions in specific situations," (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130), given the shortage of empirical investigations into (and with the aim of improving understanding of the experiences among) LGBT+ volunteers' identity work in sport. Due to the nature of gender and sexual diversity, each individual develops their unique perspectives about the self, others, and the world around them via personal experience. Depending personal experiences, research questions will convey differently to different people (Henrickson, et al., 2020).

Different types of grounded theory have unique objectives. These objectives are a reflection of epistemological and ontological presuppositions. For instance, conventional grounded theory looks for theoretical justifications. According to constructivist grounded theorists, researchers should develop "a" theory rather than "the theory" by working with participants and using researcher interpretations (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014, p. 155). Therefore, constructivism encourages researchers to reflect on their own perceptions and the views of the research participants. This may also be seen through memo writing, which is described by Charmaz (2006, p. 172) as adopting rhetorical strategies to simulate the process of constructing theories (Gill, 2020).

Thornberg and Charmaz's (2014, p. 14) more social (and less conventional) conceptualisations of constructivism, (which emphasise social circumstances, engagement, sharing opinions, and interpretive understandings) are in line with a constructionist framework. A constructionist worldview and (social) CGT methods (Charmaz, 2006) underlined this thesis since identity is shaped by individual meaning-making, making sense of others, and volunteer environment. In addition to being moulded by social interactions, participants' meanings of phenomena are also contextual and evolve through time. This is consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of CGT. The interpretive nature of social interactions has a significant impact on how meaning is socially constructed (Charmaz, 2006).

## 4.2 Data collection process

Interviews were conducted and a pre-interview timeline tool introduced to aid recollection of volunteer histories to gather primary qualitative data. Reports, social media, presentations, and knowledge exchange activities will be used to disseminate the findings to academics and relevant stakeholders (see table 6).

When the research planning phase commenced in October 2017, key parameters were established after confirming the topic choice in November 2017: LGBT+ volunteers in

sport. The early choices involved decisions between narrative inquiry and life history and floating the possibility of using an identity lens through which the volunteer experiences could be studied. Since there was no precedent for the in-depth exploration of LGBT+ volunteers' experiences in sport and physical activity settings at the time, constructivist grounded theory principles were adopted in the beginning. After the decision to adopt a life history focus to examine experiences over time and deciding on interviews as the main data collection tool, an interview guide (appendix 9) was designed according to Cole and Knowles' (2001) and Atkinson's (1998) guidelines for life (hi)story research. However, topical or edited life histories (Plummer, 2001) were later chosen as the focus so that the research would focus specifically on experiences of volunteering and being LGBT+ in sport. The interview guide was set as a general guide to invite the participants to recall their volunteering from when they began volunteering to present day as well as enquiring about future volunteer intentions. This approach allowed for the participants' life histories to dictate what concepts and theories were suitable when adopting a theoretical framework for the study. The desire to relate personal struggles and lives of individuals to their wider social context and structures stems from Mills' (1959) notion of sociological imagination. This concept guides the positioning of individual volunteer experience and accompanying identity work in the structural and sociological context in which this process takes place. The following section sheds light on how I accomplished this without risking a detailed and deep analysis of the sport volunteering life history stories and specific social locations of the participants.

#### 4.2.1 Participants, access, and ethical considerations

The techniques of theoretical sampling were applied to choose participants for this research. Theoretical sampling is frequently connected with grounded theory, although it is also used by qualitative researchers using life history methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Plummer, 2001). According to Dowsett (1998, p. 15), theoretical sampling is:

"a systematic process of selection developed from an understanding of the theoretical field, a recognition of the social circumstances surrounding the issue to be researched, and an initial estimation of which populations might best provide useful data on the particular research questions".

In other words, theoretical sampling instructs the researcher to move between data and emergent theory to uncover empirical examples that may enhance insights into theoretical constructs that have developed from data or pre-date the inquiry (Conlon et al., 2020). Use of specific criteria was justified due to the small pool of candidates who could fill the eligibility criteria based on their identity, knowledge and prolonged engagement with sport volunteering. This criterion was chosen because of the need to have regularly volunteered over a longer period to understand how volunteering had shaped the individual and how the individual had shaped their volunteer environment. I set out to recruit LGBT+ identifying volunteers to take part either currently volunteering in sport and physical activity or having volunteered in sport regularly (at least once a month) during a 12-month period in the last five years. As such, volunteers who had at least a year of experience within volunteering had sufficient lived experience and knowledge of volunteering to take part. Research participants were also invited to nominate other volunteers as participants, therefore extending the sampling approach to snowballing. Creed et al. (2010) justify using snowballing as frequently necessary methods for collecting data on populations with stigmatised, invisible identities due to apprehensions about prejudice about their participation in research.

Ideal sample size varies for qualitative research approaches. Since I employ topical life history interviews that are analysed with CGT principles, I looked to life history research for reference points. Goodson and Sikes (2001) note that life history research projects are often small scale and personal and this reflects the sample size of the studies. More importantly, life history research values subjective and emic position and therefore a large sample size might be unnecessary or inappropriate due to not aiming for objective, etic generalisation (Goodson & Sikes, 2001) but to be "information rich" (Patton, 2014, p. 76).

When the study planning phase of this PhD began, I aimed to recruit an equal number of volunteers who were involved in LGBT+ specific sport clubs and other sport clubs to account for whether the experiences and meaning attributed to volunteering, identity construction and inclusive practises differed in these environments. Theoretical memo-writing helped to record ideas and lead data collecting until theoretical sufficiency (Plummer, 2001, p. 133). Theoretical sufficiency is a concept introduced by Dey (1999) to emphasise that categories are developed based on the theoretical insights gained from the data rather than exhaustively coding all the available information (Conlon et al., 2020). The concept of theoretical sufficiency suggests that through thorough data collection and analysis, researchers have gathered enough information to sufficiently address the research questions. This is also in line with Charmaz's (2006) perspective, which reflects the active role of researchers in constructing knowledge and relying on their personal judgement about the properties of the category to decide when to conclude the coding process. Shifting the focus from data saturation (primarily emphasising data quantity as a guiding principle for stopping data collection, i.e. all data has been exhaustively examined and no new information can be gained), theoretical sufficiency aims for theoretical completeness, with greater emphasis on conceptual depth and richness of the data analysis to produce a grounded theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (Charmaz, 2006).

Participants were recruited through a variety of ways. Firstly, by emailing known personal network contacts and sport clubs (through personal network contacts). Secondly, via targeted emails to LGBT+ focused sport clubs. Thirdly, by emails to LGBT+ sport umbrella organisations, LGBTQ staff networks and regional volunteer coordinators. And lastly, by advertising and sharing the participant recruitment poster (and encouraging participants to share the participant recruitment poster) on social media.

Out of the 23 people that were invited to be interviewed, 7 (2 trans men, 3 lesbians, 3 no-label women) declined to take part. Among the reasons given include those based upon a perceived disconnect, with some stating that they 'did not consider themselves

to be LGBT+'. The total retention rate of research participants is perhaps even lower, given that there were five sport clubs that never answered initial, or follow-up contact attempts. There might be other reasons why participants seemed difficult to engage with, such as the fact that participants were not compensated or simply that the topic of research was not of interest or relevant to potential participants (Henrickson et al., 2020). van Overbeeke et al. (2022) noted how changing terminology and not talking about 'volunteering' might be a strategy for more inclusive volunteering. This poses questions on whether volunteering should have been replaced with 'organising' or 'helping out' when recruiting for this study, given how reticent some participants were to call themselves volunteers or what they were doing, volunteering. The terms "organising sport" and "helping out" were subsequently added to the recruitment posters after the pilot interviews.

All participants were required to live in the UK and originally the study aimed for a North East of England focus, but due to issues in recruitment the search was widened to cover the rest of the UK. Research participants lived in England (London, North of England and Midlands) and Scotland. There were 5 participants that were born in the 1960s, 2 participants born in the 1970s, 4 participants that were born in the 1980s and 5 participants that were born in the 1990s. 6 participants self-identified as cis-men and 10 participants as cis-women. Self-identification dignifies participants and shows respect for their freedom to self-determination to speak in the language of the participant community regardless of whether the researcher is part of the community they are researching or not (Henrickson et al., 2020). Of the participant pool, 7 identified as lesbian, 4 identified as gay, 1 identified as bisexual, 2 identified as asexual and 2 had no label. The highest level of education was university for 14 people and 2 people did not disclose their education level. The employment status of the participants was as follows: 1 participant was retired, 10 people were in full time employment, 3 were in part-time employment and 2 were full-time students at the time of the study. Among the participants interviewed there were both experienced volunteers with a long history of volunteering (for example, of over 35 years) and newcomers (volunteering for at least a year). Research participants' main volunteer involvement was either in ball hockey,

basketball, cricket, football, Goodgym, horse riding, lacrosse, orienteering, roller derby, running, sailing, softball and swimming. Volunteer roles included event organising (inc. Goodgym missions), coaching (inc. running leaders and sailing instructors), being a board member (inc. chairs, treasurers, other committee positions) and referees.<sup>11</sup>

Ethical approval (ref. 13450) for this study was granted by Northumbria University in February 2019. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities, and references to specific sports, locations, or persons were anonymised when needed. Since face-to-face and video interviews were conducted, the risk to both the participant and the researcher was deemed to be medium to moderate. Interviews were conducted at a place and time convenient for the interviewees. Face-to-face interviews took place on Northumbria University campus which was the location participants preferred over being interviewed at home, place of work or any other public or private space and remotely via video calls when face to face interviewing was unavailable due to physical distancing safety measures during the height of Covid-19.

Before beginning face-to-face interviews, participants were given consent forms to sign and return to the researcher. This verified that they had given their informed consent. In the case of online interviews, consent was gained either orally before the interview started or by receiving a signed consent form via email ahead of time. I consulted Mason's questions (2005) of ethics and consent prior to the interviews and specifically considered:

- What criteria am I using to determine what is ethical and what is not?
- What reasons can I provide for the ethics of my interview practice and style?
- On what basis are they acceptable, and to whom?

These questions covered to what extent my interview practice and style was ethical (Mason, 2005, p.79). I considered the following issues in relation to the issue of

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<sup>11</sup> Appendix 4 also includes a breakdown of participant demographics.



obtaining informed consent: have I obtained the "informed consent" of my respondents for their participation; whose consent should I seek; and how can I be sure that the consent is sincerely informed? (Mason 2005, p.80).

When dealing with potentially sensitive topics, there is a possibility of causing participants (Henrickson et al., 2020) and the researcher (Corbin & Morse, 2003) emotional distress even though evidence points to interviews being “more beneficial than harmful” when researching sexuality (Nelson, 2020). Therefore, it is important to point out opportunities for pastoral post-interview care. Following Nelson (2020) similar support should also exist for LGBT+ identifying researchers whose own identity might evoke emotions in response to their personal experiences. After the interviews, participants received debrief forms that contained details for Samaritans and Switchboard LGBT+, should the interviews elicit stress or emotions that participants wanted to talk about. That said, it seemed though that participation was considered valuable to the research participants (described as ‘exciting’ by one participant), and even prompted a renewed sense of purpose to volunteer. According to Corbin and Morse (2003, p. 346), a person can become personally empowered through involvement in a research project: by helping to bring attention to a social issue; by having the opportunity to reflect on and reassess their experience while being interviewed; and by the blending of the above.

#### 4.2.2 Pre-interview timeline tool

Qualitative research with both prospective and retrospective elements is a valuable method of inquiry, especially where the use of interviews is supplemented by other tools such as visual methods (McIntosh & Wright, 2019). In this thesis, interviews were augmented by a timeline tool<sup>12</sup> (Opie, 1992, p. 64), a participatory diagrammatic method (Bremner, 2020) that enhances the extraction of life events and behaviours by employing a chronology of personal dates and events to elicit information recollection of

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<sup>12</sup> Timeline tool is also known as life diagram (Söderström, 2020) and life grid matrix (Barker-Ruchti et al., 2014).

critical periods in an individual's life (Jackson, 2013). For example, Barker-Ruchti et al. (2014) examined the career paths of top-level female football coaches using life grid matrices, a type of the timeline tool, in sport career research. Using a timeline tool has been found to boost participant recollection and depth of participant voice during the research process, as well as contrasting events amongst participant narratives during the analytic phase (Adriansen, 2012). Timelines pay specific attention to the temporal component of life, reflecting the distinctive feature of events and allowing participants to examine change and continuity (Vandenbussche et al., 2019).

Participants were introduced to the timeline tool via email and asked to complete the timeline and return it to the researcher before the interview or alternatively in face to face interviews some participants completed the timeline tool in the beginning of the interview. The timeline was discussed at various points in the interview. Participants were given instructions on how to complete the timeline tool and prompted to ask questions if they were unclear on how to fill in their timelines. The timeline tool was piloted before final form was reached. As Vandenbussche et al. (2019) note, it is advisable to provide clear guidelines or 'scaffolding' instructions to give participants confidence, whilst being careful to avoid being overly prescriptive.

Vandenbussche et al. (2019) used a diagram as a graphic elicitation tool *after* interviewing stakeholders about their relational experiences in collaborative planning processes. However, I flipped the approach because the timeline tool was seen as a good entry point to recollecting the previous experience before going into interviewing. The timeline tool invites linearity (journey) which was pointed out by one participant to not be the accurate metaphor of their volunteer history. In response to this, it was agreed the participant completed their timeline in a list format to give them another option to express their experiences. However, other participants found the timeline exercise helpful despite the length of volunteer history spanning years or decades. Hence, combining a volunteer history interview approach with the timeline as a way to recall experiences invited a more well-rounded outlook of volunteer experiences. Discussing the participant-produced timeline with participants also prompted them to

reflect upon their volunteer history and to expand and modify their version as they saw fit. Examples of participant timelines are available in appendices 6A and 6B.

#### 4.2.3 Topical life history interviews

In one of the earliest definitions of the concept, Dollard (1935, p. 1) defines life history “as an attempt to define the growth of a person in a cultural milieu and to make theoretical sense of it”. Alleyne (2015) calls this an induced narrative – a narrative produced in response to a researcher. Life history is an academic form of personal narrative based on the life story. Life history takes into account the social, cultural and historical context of the life story. A topical life history interview takes the form of a narrative semi-structured interview (Alleyne, 2015, p. 137). Even if a person was diligent enough to keep daily journal and a record of all their correspondences in various formats, this would still only form a part of that person’s life (Alleyne, 2015), justifying the use of topical life histories. For this study, topical life history interviews provide evidence about participants’ past and present volunteer experiences, future volunteer intentions and meanings of volunteering.

Bauman (1988; cited in Kehily, 2009) reminds us that identity is created within temporal connections in the social domain; the past, present, and future identity work centred round three fundamental questions on who we are, what we do and who we become. In response to the first question “Who are we?”, participants were prompted to “tell about themselves” where they had the chance to identify identity markers that were meaningful. ‘Run leader,’ ‘bisexual woman,’ and ‘marketer’, the labels participants attached to themselves, functioned as both ascriptions (attributed to individuals by others) and assertions (made by participants themselves) that summarise the self. The second question “What do we do?” refers to the present, evoking the routines and practises that determine ways of being in the world including volunteering. The third question, “Who do we become?” oriented toward the future and tapped into the aspirational process of constructing a future volunteer self. In the ongoing process of building an identity, the connections between the past, present, and future show that

who we are, what we do, and who we become change over time. Also, the process of building an identity is so fragile and unstable that it is impossible to reach a stable state. (Kehily, 2009).

Topical life history interviews are storied interviews where the participant presents a specific experience, practice or event with which they are involved. Interviews were considered particularly appropriate for the purpose of this thesis, as they allow participants to retrospectively reflect on the topic at hand (Kehily, 2009). Moreover, interviews are commonly used to collect data when researching the subject of identity in sport and physical activity research concerning LGBT+ participants (Kavoura & Kokkonen, 2020). As life history interviews are in-depth personal interactions that delve into other people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours, an effective strategy for encouraging participation is to connect with respondents from a social constructionist standpoint. In this manner, a co-constructed voyage of investigation reveals fresh meaning and understanding (Alleyne, 2015). Organising and carrying out life history interviews involve four interrelated activities:

- being well-prepared throughout the research process;
- using unstructured, open-ended interview procedures;
- using active listening techniques; and
- communicating an understanding of the respondent's experience (Labaree, 2006).

Since no two people experience events or interpret meaning in precisely the same way, several questions in life history interviews must be modified to each respondent's actual experiences (Labaree, 2006; Plummer, 2001). According to Cole and Knowles (2001), topical life history interviews are guided conversations that centre on specific lived experiences (such as volunteering) rather than attempting to create a comprehensive biographical profile of the individual. However, Labaree (2006) notes that participants may still share experiences outside of the topic, whether or not prompted by the researcher.

The study had 16 participants of which 14 were interviewed individually. A couple (Gwen and Julie) requested to be interviewed jointly (Heaphy & Einarsdottir, 2013, p. 60) and this request was granted in an attempt to not alienate the participants (Bjørnholt & Farstad, 2014; Heaphy & Einarsdottir, 2013). The benefits of interviewing couples include capturing insight into the dynamic interplay between two people and relational understanding of their context (Dempsey, 2006) to “enhance the link between the story told and the experiences addressed” (Bjørnholt & Farstad, 2014, p. 15). Gwen and Julie met in the orienteering club in which they then volunteered together.

There might be some sensitivity in how couples might present themselves when being interviewed together versus being interviewed as individuals (Bjørnholt & Farstad, 2014). This may lead to couples wanting to present themselves in a favourable light to each other: hold back on sensitive issues that would result in loss of face for them or their partner or present as a unified front to the researcher (Heaphy & Einarsdottir, 2013). Gwen and Julie emphasised the ability to aid recollection of their time together by being interviewed jointly.

The study used an interview guide to keep track of the interview and to make sure there were prompts in case participants needed encouragement to speak. An indicative interview guide was developed and revised for clarity after two pilot interviews. The interview guide and timeline task were piloted with participants who fit the study criteria. The interview guide and pre-interview timeline task were revised after feedback received from the two pilot interviews. Pilot interviews may iron out methodological issues that occur in qualitative research and ensure that interview questions generate data that can answer the research questions (Dempsey, 2006). The pilot interviews delivered useful information about the rephrasing of interview questions to improve their clarity of meaning, the rephrasing of prompt questions to assist the development of answers, and the identification of conceptual categories. The pilot interviews were included in the main study data analysis sample.

Most interview themes and questions were shared across interviews, but with minor adjustments for interviewees with different volunteer roles or the extent of volunteer history. The guide was drawn from the existing literature on sports volunteering and life course approach to (sport) volunteering as well as life history and timeline interviewing with the addition of future volunteering intentions. The interview guide was also informed by studies of individual LGBT+ experiences of sport, with focus on identity and strategies for social change (Kavoura & Kokkonen, 2020) as well as resilience and resistance of LGBT+ communities (Sandler, 2022; Wong, 2015). However, the indicativity of the interview guide allowed me to change focus as the responses from interviewees consistently pointed toward the importance of identity work strategies for understanding the experience of volunteering for LGBT+ people in the UK. As a result, the interview guide included:

- (1) volunteer path overview and meaning of volunteering;
- (2) future in volunteering;
- (3) LGBT+ identity in sport volunteering and;
- (4) considerations for inclusion and understanding of individual and organisational attempts to challenge LGBT+ inequalities within sport volunteering and society at large.

Participants were also asked to elaborate on any further information they felt was relevant during the interview. The interview started with a grand tour question (Kuhn, 2006; Chen L et al., 2020): 'tell me about your volunteer experience'. When the participants had finished their "grand tour," the interview moved on to more specific questions about the different aspects of their volunteer experience. Henrickson et al. (2020) observe that researchers should not 'pathologise' gender and sexually diverse participants but to also account for resilience and resourcefulness in navigating stigma, minority stress or micro aggressions. Therefore, the interviews did not specifically ask about discrimination but about the volunteer experience overall. My interview questions were designed to probe the meaning that participants gave to volunteering over time (e.g., what has it meant to volunteer overall during your lifetime?), the varied experiences of sport volunteering (e.g. 'can you describe your challenges and

successes as a sport volunteer?') and identity construction over time (how openly have you expressed your sexual identity when volunteering?').

#### 4.2.4 Data analysis and presentation

According to CGT, data and analysis are social creations that have been placed in historical, geographic, and cultural contexts (Berdychevsky et al., 2013). Akin to life history research (Labaree, 2006), and qualitative research more generally, CGT analysis pertains that data collection and analysis happen simultaneously due to data being co-constructed by the participant and the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). According to Charmaz, "objectivist grounded theorists remain distinct and remote from study participants and their circumstances" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 132). This is an essential difference because it explains why traditional grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory produce different theoretical outputs.

The interviews and timelines were analysed using CGT principles. The study of the data progressed via a series of stages that included initial, focused, and theoretical coding respectively. The purpose of the coding was to identify participants' explicit statements and implicit concerns from the data (Berdychevsky et al., 2013).

Information was organised into preliminary themes by using initial coding on an incident-by-incident basis. This step led to the generation of initial codes (appendix 1). This stage allowed for a deep immersion in the data rather than proceeding with all initial codes from the beginning of the analysis. As Charmaz (2006) points out, this stage facilitates the achievement of two criteria for completing a grounded theory analysis: fit and relevance. After having built codes and evolved them into categories that encapsulate participants' experiences, the study corresponds to the empirical world. Relevance is achieved by providing an insightful analytic framework that interprets what is occurring and reveals the relationships between implicit processes and structures. I also encountered the dilemma of analysing versus summarising (Charmaz, 2006). The first codes I produced were a summary of the data I had at the time, rather than an analysis of the data. Going back to Charmaz's text on initial codes being 'actions' rather

than necessarily relating to existing theories was a helpful distinction that I applied in further rounds of initial coding. These initial codes served as points around which the other initial codes could be organised and explained. Early data analysis exposed the navigation of challenges and barriers LGBT+ volunteers face in terms of acceptance, belonging and representation within the sport community. This included issues such as stigma, discrimination, and the lack of visible role models.

The qualitative data analysis programme NVivo 12 was used after trialling a Microsoft Excel-based approach to organising data (Osborg Ose, 2016). However, I found NVivo to be more intuitive and having many of the features built-in that the Excel-based approach required creating from scratch such as coding and categorising, data queries and searching for patterns across interview transcripts. I went through several rounds of 'initial coding' in Excel (after 2 pilot interviews, again after 7 interviews) before I moved on to NVivo for focused and theoretical coding (after 13 interviews and after 16 interviews). The suitability of NVivo 12 for qualitative research has been called into question. Life history interviews often involve complex narratives that may not neatly fit into predefined codes or categories for which NVivo is particularly suited. The use of NVivo can potentially lead to oversimplification or the loss of nuanced information (Sotiriadou et al., 2014). A coding framework was established based on key issues related to participants' volunteer trajectories, experiences, and identities to categorise and organise data. I also employed systematic CGT analysis alongside NVivo to deepen understanding of participants' stories and experiences. Applying a CGT lens to operating NVivo facilitated flexibility in coding, multiple rounds of coding, memoing, and triangulation of data over time.

Furthermore, focused coding (see appendix 2) centred on the initial codes that were the most important, relevant, and frequent before developing these by engaging in an iterative process of reading existing literature and analysing data. Focused coding was employed to identify significant aspects, and the remaining interview material was coded with more context for each initial code. This was done so that focused coding could be performed with a greater degree of precision. Following Charmaz (2006) in



focused coding, the most significant codes in the data were selected. After this phase was finished, the next step, known as theoretical coding, began. This method concentrated on the semantic relationships that existed between the fundamental codes and bridged the gap between CGT, Plummer's life story (2001) and Dollard's Criteria for the Life History (1935). Coding families (appendix 3) established by Glaser (1978) were also used as part of the theoretical coding phase to ensure a deep engagement with the possibilities of the data.

Interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 2 hours and resulted in 23 hours of interview data, 250 pages of transcriptions and a reflective research diary. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed fully before moving on to the next interview, allowing me to include any new concepts into later stages of the data collection. Constant comparison which combines data collection, coding, analysis and theoretical sampling (Dowsett et al., 1998) was used to analyse the findings to extract and exhibit the links between the most significant aspects of data.

In parallel, memos help researchers turn focused codes into tentative conceptual categories. During theoretical coding, researchers compare, sort, and integrate memos. Memo sorting helps create and enhance theoretical connections. There is an evaluation of similarities and differences between categories, identifying connections between categories, and thinking about how memo categorisation and grounded theory categorisation match the topic under inquiry (Charmaz, 2006). Memo-writing was utilised in this thesis to record analytical thoughts generated throughout both the initial and focused coding processes. Memos were used for creating working definitions of categories, noting questions about the data that needed further checking, picking codes to be categorised, constructing links between categories and comparing categories to existing research (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014).

## Data presentation

To ensure that the development of each conceptual category remained grounded in the participants' voices and actions, contextual composite vignette, individual topical life history stories, case and cross-case analysis were used to both highlight the commonality of the UK socio-cultural context and the differences in individual life history stories. A cross-case analysis was done so that comparisons could be made between life histories. Analysing only across cases rather than analysing within cases would have made it more difficult to understand each participant as an entity. Combining cross-case analysis with case analysis, the use of topical life history stories lets each participants' views and experiences stand on their own (Bussell & Forbes, 2006; Flick, 2014).

The context of life histories is presented as a first-person composite vignette. The writer, researcher, and interpreter behind the writing are shown through vignettes (Spalding & Phillips, 2007) – reflecting the choice of what to include and what to leave out. The idea to present life histories as stories was an early one that stayed with me while other elements of the study were revised and changed. The composite vignette is a homage to the storied form of life story that becomes life history when accounting for historical changes that occurred during an individual's life (Plummer, 2001). Composite vignettes combine the perspectives of various actors and their unique life experiences into a unified whole (Spalding & Phillips, 2007) into a creative nonfiction (Ekengren et al., 2020). The composite vignette in this PhD study was created using participants' own words and by joining sentences made into a coherent narrative. Creating a composite vignette helped me to see the commonality in the wider socio-cultural and local environment to each participant and this further informed the analysis of sport volunteering life history stories.

As I alluded to earlier in this chapter, life story and life history are sometimes used interchangeably. Life story tends to emphasise the storied nature of life whereas life history emphasises the context. I use the terms interchangeably and sometimes

differently depending on whether I am emphasising the story or the context. Topical life histories narrow the focus to a specific experience or area of an individual's life. The term 'topical life history story', which combines topical life history and life story, appeared in Pissanos and Allison's study of an experienced PE teacher's ongoing professional development (Pissanos & Allison, 1996). Topical life history stories are stories told of lives lived (Wengraf, 2001). Pissanos and Allison talk about 'giving voice' to teachers while recognising individual and contextual realities in attempting to construct meaning from teaching experiences. This PhD study uses topical life history stories to understand individual LGBT+ volunteer life stories in their socio-historical context. The topical life history stories are presented in third person, paraphrased from participants' interview transcripts – constructed by me and placed in a story structure with support from participant voices.

Having presented the context of life histories and topical life histories, I then made comparisons between the participants' topical life history stories to produce conceptual categories that are based on how significant and frequent commonalities and differences were. Concepts were constructed from memo writing and raised into categories. Researchers must make numerous constant comparisons in order to generate and refine categories (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014, p. 159):

- “(1) comparing and grouping codes, and comparing codes with emerging categories;
- (2) comparing different incidents (e.g. social situations, actions, social processes, or interaction patterns);
- (3) comparing data from the same or similar phenomenon, action or process in different situations and contexts (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2012: 50);
- (4) comparing different people (their beliefs, situations, actions or experiences);
- (5) comparing data from the same individuals at different points in time;
- (6) comparing specific data with the criteria for the category; and
- (7) comparing categories in the analysis with other categories (Charmaz, 2003: 101)“.

In addition to focused codes, Appendix 2 includes both core conceptual categories and conceptual categories. Focused codes serve as building blocks for the development of

conceptual categories and are mapped onto the conceptual categories, providing a hierarchical structure to the analysis. I distinguish between the two categories: core conceptual categories represent the central phenomena of primary interest in the grounded theory, while conceptual categories are the broader groupings that arise from the analysis of the data. The core conceptual categories (meaning-making through volunteering, constructing personas through identity work and influencing inclusion through diversity work) provide the theoretical focus and direction and are grounded in the research questions, while conceptual categories (becoming, belonging, being, advocate persona, community-minded persona, sportsperson persona, calling for diversity work, engaging in diversity work) deepen the understanding and interpretation of the core conceptual categories.

Through this iterative process of constant comparison, theoretical sampling, and theoretical coding, a grounded theoretical understanding of LGBT+ volunteer engagement in sport (figure 7) was developed. The conceptual categories and core conceptual categories served as building blocks that contributed to the development of the model that aimed to capture the complexity of LGBT+ volunteer engagement (including volunteer journey, meaning of volunteering, identity work and influencing inclusion) in sport. The constructed grounded theory model provides a framework of new insights and understanding that remains grounded in the data.

### 4.3 Trustworthiness

I used existing theory and the input of research participants to inform the data collection, analysis and interpretation, to strengthen credibility and interpretive rigour. The use of topical life history interviews with CGT analysis made me explore CGT, life story and life history specific quality criteria which have been combined to account for both cross-case analysis *in between* and case analysis *within* topical life history stories (Flick, 2014, p. 283).

Concerns, if not outright complaints, have been expressed about the validity of qualitative research methods, such as narratives. Atkinson (1998), for example,

acknowledges the value-laden nature of life stories, the human construction they reflect, and indicates that their credibility may be more important than what we may term their validity. However, he emphasises the need for considering their internal coherence (Atkinson, 1998). Although individuals may sometimes respond differently to the discrepancies they encounter in life, their stories of what occurred and what they did should be internally consistent (Atkinson, 1998).

Guba and Lincoln (1985) argue that when using an interpretivist paradigm, trustworthiness – which encompasses a different set of assumptions from positivist research – is a better way to gauge the level of confidence in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Similarly, Charmaz's (2006) four criteria to judge the quality of CGT research ((1) credibility, (2) originality, (3) resonance and (4) usefulness) somewhat condensed quality criteria from those of other grounded theory traditions. Dollard's Criteria for the Life History (1935) is often referenced by scholars that have since contributed to the development of life history and narrative research such as Hatch and Wisniewski (1995)<sup>13</sup>, Polkinghorne (1995), Goodson and Sikes (2001), Plummer (2001) and Alleyne (2015). Dollard's (1935) Criteria for the Life History was one of the earliest analyses of the methodological foundation of the life history technique. Plummer (1999; 2001, p. 251-2), whose concept of topical life document I adopted as a basis for in-depth interviews, evaluates life stories by posing questions around the morality of life stories and encouraging researcher reflexivity.

To evaluate the trustworthiness of topical life history stories, the following guidelines are combined: CGT quality criteria (Charmaz, 2006); and Criteria for the Life History (Dollard, 1935) and life story criteria (Plummer, 1999; 2001). The resulting criteria of credibility, originality, resonance, usefulness and reflexivity will be used for case analysis, cross-case analysis and exercising researcher reflexivity. Please see the full quality criteria in appendix 7.

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<sup>13</sup> See Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) for a comprehensive list of criteria for quality in narrative and life history research with references to sources beyond Dollard (1935).

The first criteria, **credibility**, encompasses issues of systematic, argumentative approach to data analysis, allowing the reader to form an independent opinion of whether to agree with my claims. I have collected theoretically sufficient (Dey, 1999) in-depth data to present evidence on sport volunteer experiences and there is sufficient evidence to support my ideas. I have also generated life history stories with a beginning, middle and an end, keeping with the life story tradition of telling (Atkinson, 1998).

Secondly, **originality**, refers to gaining new insights about sexually diverse volunteers' experiences in sport. I shine a light on experiences of those within a group whose voices are largely missing from sport volunteering research and produce new theoretical insights. Research participants' life histories are referred to through topical life history stories as well as cross-case analysis to allow the reader to make their own judgment about the analysis of presented life histories. The patterns of volunteering situated in the UK socio-historical context of LGBT+ lives emerge over time inform research participants' identity work strategies and inclusive practices.

Thirdly, **resonance** refers to challenging taken-for-granted meanings in participants' topical life history stories and the implications of the cultural context to their volunteer experience. The grounded theoretical understanding generated (see figure 7) was member checked with two participants that confirmed the relatedness to their experience. The study as a whole provides insights about LGBT+ identities in the context of sport volunteering and their experience of (non-)belonging in LGBT+ specific and other sporting environments. Research participants spoke of not only how they thought, felt and acted but also how their bodily experiences shaped their identity work as sexually diverse individuals.

The fourth criteria, **usefulness**, includes a chance for the reader to find reference points in the participants' lives to their own lives. The research provides a reference point for the in-depth exploration of diverse sport volunteer experiences over time and has the potential to be methodologically applied to a another under-represented and minoritised

group in sport volunteering. Sport can still be a harsh environment for someone who is different despite the perception of sport as an inclusive environment.

The fifth criteria, **reflexivity**, is about the moral dimensions of life histories; the understanding of volunteering as a form of self-actualisation but also a form of altruism. Interpretivist/weak social constructionist paradigm underpins the research design and the analysis of data. Participant voice is left untampered in direct quotes, however there is researcher involvement in shortening and clarifying participants' words to produce topical life history stories. Research participants did not have a tendency to 'other' people, perhaps in relation to their personal experiences of being 'othered'. Cutcher (2020) refers to research as a relational process that involved reflexive identity work. This may cause self-doubt, irritation and uncertainty when trying to connect with participants, collecting appropriate data and dealing with ethical concerns of research. There might be instances of biographical disruption when inner self and social self are in conflict and the researcher might attempt to reconcile between inner and social self (Watson, 2008). These moments inspired more active and intense reflexive identity work on my behalf. Insider/outsider status determines the type and degree of identity work the researcher must engage in throughout the research process (Duffy et al., 2021).

#### 4.4 Limitations of qualitative research design

Qualitative research, particularly life histories, requires a significant investment of time and resources, which can limit sample size and the study's scope to explore a broader range of experiences. Each participant's lived experiences are unique, making it challenging to draw broad conclusions from a small sample size that apply to a larger population or in different contexts to make precise numerical claims about the phenomena under study (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Furthermore, the experiences and perspectives of the participants in the study do not fully represent the diversity and complexity of the entire LGBT+ volunteer population in sport. Nonetheless, qualitative

research proved invaluable in for this research's purpose of uncovering the perspectives, experiences, and identity work of LGBT+ volunteers in sport through topical life history interviews.

Participants were asked to recall and reflect upon past experiences, which may have been subject to memory biases, remembering events selectively or interpreting them differently over time, potentially leading to inaccuracies or incomplete recall of experiences (Calzo et al., 2011). The accuracy and reliability of the information provided by participants may have varied, but this is regarded as a positive for a study set to gain insight into how individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences over time. The timeline tool was introduced to help participants to recall information.

Similarly, my preconceived notions, worldview and personal beliefs as a researcher influenced the interpretation and analysis of the findings (Yuval-Davis, 2010) – I addressed these through memo writing to engage in critical self-reflection and a documented research audit trail (see appendices). My thesis supervisors also provided valuable perspectives and critical feedback during the research process. These discussions helped me challenge and question my interpretations, leading to a more rigorous analysis.

## 4.5 Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter has given an overview on the ontological and epistemological position of the study, adopting ontological interpretivism and epistemological weak social constructionism. Norman (2012) notes that when analysing individual existence from a sociological perspective, it is essential to start with an understanding of everyday life experiences. By examining the routine experiences of people, we can better understand the small, often unnoticed practices that contribute to everyday injustices. These injustices can erode personal experiences and connect to broader societal structures. Essed (2002) also suggests that experiences are a valid source of knowledge because prejudices are often conveyed in subtle ways.



Life histories are reflective windows to the past. Therefore, and also because of the study design, a chronological and linear narrative appears that attempts to explain complex lived lives for narrative purposes rather than attending to the causes behind the life history story. The analysis of life histories, hence, needs to account for the particular nature, incompleteness, spatiality and temporality (Waitt & Gorman-Murray, 2011).

When life history is conducted appropriately, it can disrupt commonly held beliefs that are considered to be "the truth" about a group of people. The process of recognising and acknowledging subjective perceptions and discourses that may characterise LGBT+ individuals is also emphasised as an essential part of this process. Essentially, life history can help challenge stereotypes and biases about LGBT+ individuals and promote a more nuanced and accurate understanding of their experiences.

Research focus on volunteers' experiences included both a retrospective element (i.e., gathering data on past experiences by asking participants to look back on their volunteer histories to the date of their interview), and a prospective element asking them about views on their future in volunteering. To study how LGBT+ people live through their volunteer experiences and how these lived experiences evolve over time, I employed topical life history interviews.

I employed in-depth topical life history interviews with 16 adults living in London, the North of England, Midlands and Scotland using purposive sampling. It should be noted that the sample is non-representative. This is typical for an exploratory study, the studies that follow should have a better idea on what criteria to include. In-depth interviews were appropriate given the exploratory nature of the study and the lack of theoretical explanation and research to hash out the general picture on LGBT+ volunteers in sport. Data was collected utilising one-to-one in-depth semi-structured interviews in order to achieve a greater understanding of subjective experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and to elevate the participant as the authority of their own experiences. Interviews were approached as a temporal process that combines

experiences from the past, notions of the present, and expectations for the future, therefore reflecting the antecedents, experience, and consequences of the volunteer cube (Skirstad & Kristiansen, 2017).

## 5 CHANGING CULTURAL NOTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF LGBT+ LIVES

This chapter presents an overall picture of the socio-historical events related to LGBT+ lives through a composite vignette. The speed of social change in UK society over the lifetime of the participants has been significant. The oldest interviewee was born in the 1960's and the youngest in the 1990's. This composite vignette has been made using participants' own words (Ekengren et al., 2020) where possible. It touches on significant personal moments for participants that also have socio-cultural significance. The composite vignette follows the structure of "where are we coming from" (to reflect on the changes during their lives) "where are we now" (the experiences of being LGBT+ in the UK) and finally "where are we going" (addressing some emerging trends in LGBT+ lives that have relevance to the participants). A more comprehensive timeline of significant national events relating to LGBT+ (sporting) lives in the UK can be found in appendix 4.

As discussed in chapter 2, Watson's identity work approach (2008, 2020) informs the discussion in this chapter and subsequent findings chapters. Since identity work exists "at the intersection of the person and their external environment" (Caza et al., 2018, p. 891) humans are *makers* of their social locations such as organisations and societies but also *made by* their social surroundings (Watson, 2020, p.8). Therefore, it is necessary to start by exploring the social context of research participants' LGBT+ identities.

### 5.1 Where are we coming from

We grew up at a time when gays were referred to as poofers. It was very negative and offensive to be called gay and really bad if you were called queer.

Queer was like a slang term to call somebody that was gay, and we had never heard anybody identify as queer before. There was this statistic, when we were at school, that one in 10 people was gay. And nobody knew who the gay people were. We remember in primary school people calling each other gays as an insult. We think the first time we ever came across anything that wasn't straight down the middle with somebody at work, who was transgender. And we were in our 20s. So that would have been, the late 70s or early 80s. So long time ago, but that was very unusual. Things didn't really change very much for a very, very long time. We can't imagine even coming out as gay when we started our volunteering journey. We suppose in the 80s when we started coming out and kind of going out it was very much that women go over here and do this and men have got their own pubs and clubs here. And if you're a woman you had to dress this way if you're a lesbian, you're either butch or femme, if you were a man you had the muscle guys or camp guys and that left us cold. There weren't really...the only gay role models we could think of were very stereotypical, like there was John Inman on 'Are You Being Served' and he was very effeminate. And there were very few role models for lesbians. And our view of gay men were, they were really effeminate. We didn't know there were also what we would call now very straight acting or people who you couldn't tell from any mannerisms were gay. We didn't know that, so we wouldn't have been comfortable coming out sooner because at that time it appeared all of the society looked down on LGBT+ people, that they were weak, effeminate, no good for society. Eventually it just became normal and no longer offensive if that makes sense. We wouldn't have been identified as LGBT+ openly until probably a couple years ago. It takes a while to accept it yourself and then be open to say it to other people and it kind of takes those steps to be able to find out who you can say it to and be able to progress further. So we know for ourselves when we finally figured it out, we went, you know what, we don't care. We're gonna say it.

## 5.2 Where are we now

We're in a very, very different world than the world that we grew up in. We were fighting for equality during the AIDS crisis. And basically, where we wanted to be, we got what we wanted. The landscape has changed a lot – a seismic change in being gay during our lifetime. Rights that we have now, as LGBT+ people are completely different. So much easier, much more equal. There have been a lot of positive changes. Even saying 'oh that's gay' you don't really say that anymore. People are accepting being LGBT+ more and realising that it's not a choice or lifestyle. It's how people are, how they're made up. However, it's definitely still commented on if someone is gay. But it's not so much of a scandal as it was, but it's still something that people feel they need to pass a comment about. The statistics of people identifying outside of being straight are greater. Legislation like the Equality Act has helped that. A lot more protection in the workplace. We've also had civil partnerships and gay marriage. When we were teenagers we would have never thought we were going to get married one day, because it was not an option really. We never had a dream wedding. Recently, we had a very interesting conversation with our sons. One's 25 and one's 22 and we did ask them how did you experience being part of a lesbian and gay kind of parenthood and they said our friends didn't care about it. They just talked about us as if we were their parents, like mum and dad, it wasn't anything different because we were like that. They were all pretty cool about it, their cousins are their friends, or brothers and sisters. What struck us was, we would have never spoken that way when we were their age at school or kind of would not have had that experience. And our sister's kids they're younger. They talk in school with their teachers about trans and gender identity and all the rest of it and we just think oh god that is the distance we've come in kind of one or two generations.

When you're coming out now, you're coming out into a very different world. The connections are all done on phones and internet dating and all of that, which is great but it's very different. Because you met people in bars and clubs, and they're just not there anymore. And we think that's really sad... It comes down to

resources, partly, doesn't it, but anything that's sort of a space that has a lot of cost attached to it is vulnerable within our community. And it's really difficult, we think, to meet the needs of the community, and engage the community to keep attending and to be sustainable. It's really significant particularly keeping lesbian venues alive.

There is so much diversity within the LGBTQIAP+ umbrella. When we then met our partners on a dating app, like the bit where it had sexual identity. There were options we had never heard of. We're just getting in grips with all of that. We think there is, there is a generation now that thinks that gay is kind of normal-ish but isn't quite so comfortable. In *Girl, Woman, Other*, there's a character in there who refers to themselves as they. And we think that is something that bothers a lot of people. But we don't know whether it bothers them because it's grammatically weird, rather than because you say well, I don't know if I feel like a girl or I don't feel like a boy. I don't actually sit and think: I don't feel I'm in the right body. You know, what are you actually describing? So unless you're actually physically in that situation, we don't think you can judge. The biggest change now is people understanding the subdivisions within the LGBT+ world. Whereas ten years ago, it was very gay lesbian and bisexual. Transgender wasn't much on the agenda. The T got added a bit later. All the issues were around which toilets you use, which changing rooms you use, can trans people run in male races or female races and Caster Semenya having high levels of testosterone, higher than a woman would normally have and then competing against women. Society is realising now that there aren't just three...well there isn't just gay, straight, lesbian and bisexual. There are all kinds of sub-divisions within that and then there are people who are not cisgendered and that's new. How can you not have a gender? You must feel female or male – well no. When you look through gay history, LGBT+ history, trans rights has always been very intertwined with it. And you can't really say we're not for trans rights and not be for gay rights at the same time, because they are so alike. So then you see now not just the non-binary flag but asexual, pansexual and other flags that five years ago we didn't

know that those flags existed. There's lots of smaller identities within the main umbrella now and that's the next challenge for people to understand all those smaller identities within the main LGBT+ umbrella. That's new and society is just starting to get its head around that. Us included.

### 5.3 Where are we going

There is a long way to go in elite sport, especially men's. Gay footballers are there, but nobody knows they're there. In women's sports, there are lots of people who are out. Still 10-15 years ago, it would have been unimaginable for a player to come out as gay. So the debate around the top level is something that puts people off when you're in a voluntary sports group, you've got to work all that much harder to say to people: it's not just about elite sport. Don't know how we address that apart from being visible and you've got to make that kind of... Some people have to be brave and say I'll be a role model. For us as a club to take part in the Pride parade, we now think nothing of it. It's almost we're surprised if anyone in the club doesn't want to go in the parade because it's such a positive thing and we get such great feedback from people but 10 years ago we bet half the members of our club...if we'd said we're going to take part in Pride parade, at least half of them would have said no, we're not comfortable, we don't mind being in the club but we don't want the public to see us and associate us with a gay sports club. So even within 10 years there has been quite a change. Any sports club can do something like celebrate Pride or do fundraising or just acknowledge that the sport doesn't exist in a vacuum and that we are in a diverse community. We've also taken a team to the Gay Games and that was a really big moment for our team.

However, we can't ignore the fact that homophobia is still incredibly rife, and dangerous to our community. Someone might still kill someone else because they're gay. Only we know what it feels like to go through those things and experience that discrimination and be afraid for our lives because of our sexual orientation. And hate crime is still there, and all of that, nothing's gone away. In

fact, there's been a rise in hate crimes recently. We're hoping things are not going to regress. And the problem with this current government is that you start to feel like it's gonna go backwards again and start to slip into...not necessarily having laws changed. Not obviously saying, you know, gay marriage can be banned, but some of the attitudes they have, and some of the people in those positions, some of the people who supposedly... ministers for equality and stuff, have very dubious views. Why don't you just ban conversion therapy? You think to yourself, how is that not illegal already? So that's why in the next few years we might go back a bit in terms of LGBT rights.

It's important to understand to see if there is a general consensus among a group who have been widely discriminated against. Yes, it's a broad spectrum and broad church of people to try and find data from. Equally, the LGBT+ community recognise often more so than other communities each other's struggles, or the discrimination it's not just our battle that we need to address, we also need to support them with. We know there is a long history of that in the LGBT+ community. Even if you were to speak to the cross section of society within volunteers of sport, you'd find a lot of different challenges. That might be based on physical ability if someone has a minority sexual identity and whether that has held them back. To see if there is any commonality between volunteer experiences.

## 5.4 Discussion and summary of Chapter 5

Overall, there has been a shift from socio-legal marginality to mainstreaming LGBT+ identities. Older participants had lived through the AIDS epidemic, Section 28 coming into law and other grave inequalities such as homosexuality being a crime. Younger participants recounted how same sex marriage was legalised and their experiences of "gay" and "queer" being dirty words (Lalor & Rendle-Short, 2007). The composite vignette describes how participants' sexual citizenship (Taylor, Y., 2018) transformed



from outcast to accepted. However, questions remain whether participants feel included. There is a clear progress narrative through recognition, protections and legislation that gave the participants confidence in their LGBT+ lives. Participants proudly refer to “the world we have won” (Weeks, 2007) that they now “fit in” but still show concern for other ‘queer citizens’ who have not yet won. Participants make sense of their lives by discursive constructions of progression (Lawrence & Taylor Y., 2020): normative thresholds (civil partnerships, same sex marriage, starting a family); lifecourse (“we fought for equality and won”) (Browne & Nash, 2014); temporality (“10 years ago” or “in my lifetime”); and geo-politics (taking part in Gay Games for example). What was different from Lawrence and Y Taylor’s (2020) conceptualisation of policy progress narratives for the participants in this PhD study was a quiet reserve about the future of LGBT+ rights and maintaining the rights won.

Legislative changes and protections in employment law seemed like important milestones for participants as normative thresholds of progress. Equally, participants were keen on showing gratefulness towards the changes that had happened during their life course by for example referring to their children’s nonchalant attitude to a gay and lesbian parented family. There was a progress of place, talking about taking part in a Pride parade or taking a team to the Gay Games. To combat the pathologising of LGBT+ sexualities, Gay Games mobilise dominant sport concepts that view the body in sport as both normal and healthy (Symons, 2010). Overall, the composite vignette shows how sexually diverse identities became normalised from being public enemy number 1 to a more normative existence. It is clear to see that both cultural notions/discourses of LGBT+ people and historical, literary and media depictions have shaped participants’ identities as LGBT+ people (see also Watson, 2020). Participants recognised their own limits in understanding the diversity under LGBT+ umbrella and coming into terms with different identities and sensitivities around identities.

All participants saw advances in cultural and media depictions of LGBT+ life, while there was worry about trans individuals being vilified in sports. Similarly, while most participants regarded things as “generally getting better” for LGBT+ people, there was a

sense that more progress was needed, as well as a rising concern about rights sliding, reaction against existing rights, and the present trend toward populism in international politics. Despite these concerns, the composite vignette merged experiences from multiple timeframes and (sporting) contexts into one progress narrative, and this best mirrored the participants' sense of the LGBT+ context of their lives. All participants' views were represented as accurately and fairly as possible. This involved prioritising certain perspectives over others in order to create a cohesive narrative. Finally, the process of creating a composite vignette is inherently subjective. My goal was to create a narrative that accurately and respectfully represented the experiences of all participants involved.

## 6 TOPICAL LIFE HISTORY STORIES OF SPORT VOLUNTEERING

This chapter introduces the topical life history stories of participants based on the interviews between the researcher and the participants. They are written from the third person to signal my involvement in bringing participants' telling into life, however as Spalding and Phillips (2007, p. 958) note, writing in first or third person is "equally subjective". This chapter presents a summarised chronological understanding of key moments and turning points with a topical sport volunteering focus. There are 16 life histories to individually represent 16 participants. I have reconstructed each life history divided into three main sections adopting a story structure by Atkinson (1998, p. 19): (1) *beginning* (how they came into volunteering); (2) *middle* (what was their volunteer experience like) and (3) *resolution* (how did they come to terms with their volunteering and if they would have done anything differently).

Identity work (Watson, 2008) considers the level of agency individuals have in their identity construction. Therefore, this chapter introduces the agentic identity work of research participants: how they navigate their identities, how they strive for a coherent sense of identity and how they respond to identity threats from their environment (Roberts & Creary, 2013). I will return to the identity work strategies of research participants in chapter 7 when I compare categories across interviews.

## 6.1 Colin

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1960s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis man
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Gay
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Employed
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	20-30 years
<b><i>Sport involved in</i></b>	Running and County Sport Organisation

### **Beginning**

Colin's parents migrated to the UK from Ireland and were a visible minority with prejudice targeted towards them. Colin joined an LGBT+ running club five years ago to socialise with like-minded people in a health enhancing environment after his relationship ended. The gay club scene did not feel appropriate since he wanted to meet people like him doing something he loved, running. Less than a year after starting to take part, he was involved in organising club events and going on a course to become a run leader. In addition to volunteering in the running club he was also asked to be a part of a county sport organisation. This opportunity came up because of his professional background in healthcare.

### **Middle**

His connections to the local LGBT+ community organisations has brought new members to the club which otherwise that used to be mostly gay men. His volunteering is influenced by his upbringing: if you can possibly help someone, why wouldn't you?

On the other hand, he likes to see those people who join get active, grow in confidence and learn to lead healthier lives. Balancing his professional and personal life is his main challenge when it comes to finding time for volunteering. He recognises financial barriers for other club members who might not be in a similarly stable financial situation as he is.

## **Resolution**

Volunteering offered Colin an environment where he felt like he could belong and have the support network he was lacking when he was younger. Colin also wants to facilitate other people's belonging by being the face of the club as well as being the person to welcome new members to the club. He is planning to dedicate more of his time to volunteering when he retires in a few years' time.

Colin wishes he would have stepped in more when the club needed him as he did not always agree with the actions of the chairperson at the time. He would have also liked to bring in more inclusive policies and procedures around code of conduct at the club to not unintentionally exclude people from participating.

*In summary*, Colin's story shows how his family values continue to influence his present-day involvement and the passion for inclusion and diversity in his running club membership. Colin's heightened sense of empathy towards others translates across his work life and volunteering as he has taken an active role to improve access to services LGBT+ people may need or providing an alternative to meeting like-minded people outside the club scene.

## 6.2 David

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1960s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis man
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Gay
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Unknown
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	30+ years
<b><i>Sport involved in</i></b>	Running

### **Beginning**

David's first volunteer experience was being a swimming coach in his teens. He continued to volunteer through school but took a break in university and early adult life to do what young people do, establish themselves in the world. He came back to volunteering in midlife, volunteering in running events, as a trustee and at an LGBT+ running club. David progressed through the ranks in each role he took before exiting the role at a point where he felt like he could not contribute more. In short: trial the role, grow in the role and step down when the time comes. He separates his volunteering into roles that were about him being LGBT+ (for example at the running club) he needed to be visible. On the other hand being a trustee for a leisure centre did not require him to foreground his LGBT identity. Rather the latter was a career supporting role or using his professional marketing expertise to contribute to the running of a facility.

## **Middle**

His joy of volunteering comes from seeing people reach their goals and feeling good about having contributed to their progress. He was influenced by his mother to take on his first volunteering role in a swimming club, having seen his mother progress into a swimming coach and followed in her footsteps. This helped him to seek volunteering opportunities later in his life and develop a positive outlook on how volunteer organisations wanted to support him to succeed in the roles he was.

## **Resolution**

He feels very confident in his sexual identity and therefore feels like he is able to support other people to belong in the running club. He also finds that volunteering is meaningful to him because it is not a job: volunteering is like having the nice parts of a job without the difficult parts. He sees his future in one-to-one volunteering as a coach after doing his shift organising big events. His sexuality stays in the background unless he wants to bring it up.

David wishes he would have involved relevant authorities when he and the club committee dealt with bad behaviour from a member rather than trying to investigate themselves what had happened and why. It went beyond their remit as a committee and resulted in some distrust from members towards the committee.

*In summary*, David's story shows how he sees volunteering in a mostly positive force that offers him opportunities to show his prowess as a marketing professional and LGBT+ role model for others. The double benefit of volunteering for him is clear: his devotion to coaching and managing the club in the committee allow for satisfaction in moments of success and finding inclusive ways to engage new members or seeing existing members achieve their goals.

## 6.3 Joan

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1970s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis woman
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Lesbian
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Unknown
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	30+ years
<b><i>Sport involved in</i></b>	Swimming, LGBT+ sport organisation

### **Beginning**

Joan became a sports volunteer when she started swimming in her teenage years. To have a club, everyone had to pitch in to keep it going. Later in her life, she was asked to run high profile LGBT+ sports events after previously participating in such events herself.

### **Middle**

The challenges of being a volunteer are to do with the small volunteer pool to draw from and having responsibilities pile on a few selected people. Joan had been an activist for LGBT+ rights since the AIDS epidemic of the 1980's. The rights she and others fought for made life better for LGBT+ people in the UK. This presented opportunities for her to combine her activism with organising sport and becoming more embedded in the surrounding LGBT+ community.



## Resolution

Joan would work even harder to recruit volunteers to build more teams in her club. Not only does there need to be more volunteers but volunteers who are engaged beyond nominal involvement. To do this, she would focus on creating a clear strategy much earlier and put work in to establish a structure for doing things.

*In summary*, Joan's story shows how she was looking for people with shared identity at the time of her coming out as lesbian which coincided with the historic upheaval of the AIDS epidemic whereby becoming connected to the LGBT+ community prompted her activism. This then continued into her involvement with LGBT+ sport organisations and initiatives.

## 6.4 Peter

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1970s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis man
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Gay
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Employed
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	10-20 years
<b><i>Sport involved in</i></b>	Cricket

## Beginning

For the first couple of years at the cricket club he was a player and only got involved in volunteering when he got asked to do social media. He soon found himself being part of

the management committee of the club. At the time he struggled to say no to things, taking on more responsibility as the years went by. He then took on more responsibility in the LGBT+ club and had parallel roles in both clubs before deciding to focus on the LGBT+ club.

## **Middle**

It was important to set up an LGBT+ cricket club because of the lack of role models in cricket for LGBT+ players. The demand was there for a new LGBT+ club from day one. The cricket infrastructure makes it harder to introduce the sport to complete beginners, with the cost of cricket and the middle classness of the sport also seen as a barrier by Peter.

## **Resolution**

Peter describes his belonging at the non-LGBT+ cricket club on two levels. On one hand everything was fine, people were friendly but on another level he felt like an outsider, finding it hard to connect with people on a more personal level. Whereas within the LGBT+ club, he felt immediately at ease and not having to manage his identity to the extent he did at the other club.

Peter is using his experience with the non-LGBT+ club in establishing his LGBT+ club, knowing when to speak up and proactively planning the club operations instead of reactively addressing issues at the club.

*In summary*, Peter's story shows a journey from feeling as though he did not belong to finding his place within LGBT+ cricket club which allowed for a space where he could relax and be himself without fear of repercussions because of his LGBT+ identity. Peter's conceptualisation of inclusion and diversity extends beyond welcoming LGBT+ players and volunteers into the sport, to combat structural issues such as the cost of the sport that may deter people from participating.

## 6.5 Niamh

<i>Birth cohort</i>	1980s
<i>Gender identity</i>	Cis woman
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	Lesbian
<i>Occupation</i>	Employed
<i>Length of volunteering</i>	5-10 years
<i>Sport involved in</i>	Roller derby

### **Beginning**

Niamh grew up in Northern Ireland and started volunteering for the Catholic church in her teens. These years were formative but not always in a good way as she struggled with her identity due to the conservative outlook on sexual minorities within the church. Niamh started playing roller derby in her early twenties and started volunteering in the sport around the same time.

### **Middle**

Roller derby culture requires people to take on jobs in the league (club) with the mentality that everyone must chip in to be able to play for the league. This necessitates involvement beyond participation and something Niamh accepted from the start, getting involved in several different roles from sitting on committees to coaching junior teams.

## Resolution

Niamh emphasises the inclusive atmosphere in roller derby and how everyone is made to feel welcome regardless of background or characteristics. She credits experience of roller derby for accepting and coming to terms with her identity, something she had to hide growing up in Northern Ireland.

She would have liked to achieve better results as a junior team coach but recognises the realities of being understaffed and doing everything she could to maintain the programme rather than grow the club and come up with new ideas for the club.

*In summary*, Niamh's story shows the influence of growing up in Northern Ireland and going through a journey of self-discovery in her thirties closely linked to her sporting and volunteer involvement with roller derby. Whereas other participants in the study may have been hindered by their sporting environment to be themselves, Niamh's roller derby environment allowed her to accept who she was and how she wanted to express her sexuality.

## 6.6 George

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1980s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis man
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Gay
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Employed
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	10-20 years
<b><i>Sport involved in</i></b>	Football

## **Beginning**

Moving to a different city to study at university made George seek out an LGBT+ football club to make friends and meet like-minded people. George had played in an LGBT+ football team before moving cities but it was at his new hometown where he also got involved in organising team events and activities.

## **Middle**

George wanted to volunteer to develop the team from having kickabouts in the park to taking part in tournaments and joining a league, as well as getting sponsorships and money into the club to make it run more smoothly.

Having been involved in the club for over 10 years George considers the team family. He formed some of his closest friendships in the club. George is disappointed in the way football governing bodies handle LGBT+ initiatives and sees that prejudice is still very much there even in grassroots football.

## **Resolution**

George felt that he and another volunteer took too much responsibility at the club in the early days. If he would have had other people involved earlier it would have allowed him to take a step back and relinquish some of the responsibility he had accumulated.

*In summary*, George's story shows how locating to a new city as an adult brings the dilemma of finding new social circles to find belonging in a new hometown. Having had negative experiences of other types of sporting environments growing up, George wanted to join an LGBT+ football club. He had a vision to push the club forward, closer to a managed club than an informal social group. George felt the need to manage a lot by himself which has left the club in a good position to face the future but has piled responsibility on him as a leader.

## 6.7 Sophie

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1980s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis woman
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Lesbian
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Employed and part-time student
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	10-20 years
<b><i>Sport involved in</i></b>	Softball

### **Beginning**

Sophie joined an LGBT+ softball team when she moved back to her hometown with the aim to find an LGBT+ community which had more to it than just socialising. Her volunteer journey has been varied and her current role is on a national level, looking into LGBTIQ+ inclusion and any related issues in the governing body of softball.

### **Middle**

Having been a softball player for over 10 years Sophie felt she had the experience needed to take on more strategic volunteering roles in her sport. There are lots of issues to resolve for softball as a sport. She aims to create an inclusive environment for LGBT+ people whilst also continuing to take part as a player.

Volunteering gives Sophie something she does not get elsewhere. It is a different kind of leadership role as managing volunteers does not correspond to managing staff at work. It gives her a unique sense of satisfaction and joy. It keeps her connected to

playing but also allows her to rally people to have the same positive experience she has had with the sport. Sophie's lesbian identity is rooted in activism. She had for example run her own lesbian 'by-women for-women' platform, as well as done campaigning work to further lesbian visibility.

## **Resolution**

Sophie recognises the challenges she had as a team leader and how she needed to manage people to be able to field a team but there is nothing she would do differently. Covid-19 pandemic was challenging to her mentally and she felt the separation from her teammates. However, being able to continue with the network has offered a needed distraction.

*In summary*, Sophie's story shows her search for a place to belong with people that shared an identity with her and do so in a sporting environment. She transitioned from playing to volunteering on different levels with the mission of making softball as LGBT+ inclusive as possible. Being part of LGBT+ network in sport is an extension of her activist work in other areas of her life.

## 6.8 Liam

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1990s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis man
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Gay
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Employed
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	5-10 years
<b><i>Sport involved in</i></b>	Running

### **Beginning**

Liam was a keen sports person growing up but this changed at university when he didn't feel like he was not welcomed as a gay man. Liam joined an LGBT+ running club after moving into a new city in his early twenties as a way to be more social in an LGBT+ environment: to meet like-minded people and get fitter in the process. The club was an inclusive and welcoming place from the start and Liam found himself getting more and more involved. Less than a year after joining, he started volunteering as a committee member having been approached by two committee members about the role.

### **Middle**

Having funding from the club to attend a coaching course and becoming a run leader made Liam's volunteering more public facing, moving from behind the scenes event organising to leading runs. He progressed into a vice chair position within the club and had a challenging year with complaints launched against members of his club that were



investigated and finally handed to the police. The stress of it all made him want to step down as vice chair and focus on being a coach instead.

Volunteering gave Liam confidence in his own abilities. Having other people tell him he would be good in certain roles spurred him on. The welcoming ethos of the club and being able to help other runners realise their goals made Liam feel more connected to the club and what he was doing to help the club succeed. It was important for Liam to be in an LGBT+ environment to grow in confidence and not feel like he had to come out in a new environment but rather that he was able to do it on his own terms.

## **Resolution**

Liam would reassure his past self to not stress so much about doing a good job as a volunteer and recognising certain events were beyond his control. The expectation that is put on him and others as volunteers should remain reasonable because after all, they are all volunteers.

*In summary*, Liam's story shows that his involvement was about finding like-minded people and establishing social circles after moving into a new city. He volunteered following an invitation from a club committee member and having been showed confidence, his confidence grew in the process. This helped Liam to become more comfortable in his (LGBT+) skin and also helped in overcoming the pressure to perform as a volunteer, helping him distinguish between volunteer work and paid work.

## 6.9 Gwen & Julie

<i>Birth cohort</i>	1960s
<i>Gender identity</i>	Cis women
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	No label
<i>Occupation</i>	Retired, employed
<i>Length of volunteering</i>	30+ years
<i>Sport involved in</i>	Orienteering

### **Beginning**

Gwen and Julie have volunteered all their adult lives long before they became a couple. They both joined an orienteering club around the same time and were then assigned to work teams after finding their feet within the first six months. Julie has been an orienteer since childhood whereas Gwen only started orienteering when she joined their current club. Gwen then retired at 50 but Julie is working full time towards her planned retirement (at 65).

### **Middle**

They feel like a big part in their overly positive experience as volunteers in the orienteering club is because people knew them before they became a couple, therefore forming opinions of them as people first, not just based on their sexuality. Also the environment they volunteer in which they describe white, middle class and liberal makes them think that has protected them from experiencing prejudice to an extent. For Gwen and Julie, volunteering is a way of being. Gwen does not understand how someone

would not want to volunteer if they had a chance. Julie adds that volunteering is just worth doing: for the person you are doing it for and what she gets out of it herself.

## **Resolution**

Volunteering makes Gwen and Julie feel more invested in their club. As they dedicate so much time working behind the scenes, they feel more connected to the club and whether it succeeds or fails. They also appreciate the effort that goes into organising orienteering events. Gwen does not feel she will ever be chair because, even with 10 years' experience orienteering, she feels like she is not well versed enough in the sport to take on the 'top job'. Gwen and Julie are also considering volunteering with refugees in order to do volunteering that feels more meaningful outside of their white middle class environment.

At times, Gwen and Julie feel they would not have wanted to do as much volunteering as they have done. However, that has been more of a passing. Rather, they are in fact considering doing more volunteering even when Julie retires and they have the opportunity to go travelling together.

*In summary*, Gwen and Julies' story shows they came into their LGBT+ identities in midlife after developing feelings for one another. Their paths crossed at an orienteering club and together they represent examples of both a long involvement with the sport prior to volunteering (Julie) and being a volunteer that is new to the sport (Gwen). For Gwen and Julie, volunteering has been a way of life and a way of being. They hold no doubts over the meaning of volunteering but they are still coming to terms with their LGBT+ identities or not adopting a label altogether. Their lives were brought together by volunteering and their continued commitment to their community is high on the list in their retirement planning.

## 6.10 Frida

<i>Birth cohort</i>	1960s
<i>Gender identity</i>	Cis woman
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	Lesbian
<i>Occupation</i>	Employed
<i>Length of volunteering</i>	30+ years
<i>Sport involved in</i>	Lacrosse

### **Beginning**

Frida got her start in volunteering because it was the way her family spent most of their leisure time: helping out in different capacities. This led to continued commitment throughout her teenage years to adulthood. She does not remember a time when she did not volunteer.

### **Middle**

Volunteering and work are somewhat interchangeable in her life. Prioritising one over the other merely depends on what needs doing first on a daily basis. Frida would not call her volunteering a journey that has progressed linearly towards more responsibility but rather different roles have come up as well as her personal interest have driven her involvement in roles from grassroots to boards of sport governing bodies. Volunteering is about getting more people to do things she likes doing in her free time. Sexuality has not been mentioned during her time as a volunteer because she has not been forthcoming with her identity. She considers her partnership and identity as something

that is not in the public sphere, therefore not hiding it on purpose but equally not wanting to volunteer for LGBT+ interest groups either.

## **Resolution**

Frida's most significant negative experience in volunteering occurred when she was ousted from her board level position without previous knowledge that this was going to happen and felt publicly humiliated because she was moved to the side without learning why she was replaced. This experience put Frida off volunteering and since then she has dedicated her time to other types of volunteering in lacrosse. Her future in volunteering will probably involve sports or roles that she has not tried yet.

There are things that sport organisations at all levels could do better in terms of volunteer recruitment, planning, and player development to name a few according to Frida but she would not change anything in her time spent volunteering.

*In summary*, Frida's story shows how her sport, volunteer and LGBT+ identities are all intertwined even though Frida has actively separated and not mentioned her same-sex relationship. Her journey into volunteering is through family socialisation and what was expected of her as part of the family which she then has carried on staying involved on multiple levels of sport in different roles.

## 6.11 Gemma

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1980s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis woman
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Lesbian
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Employed
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	1-5 years
<b><i>Activity involved in</i></b>	Goodgym

### **Beginning**

Gemma started volunteering for Goodgym<sup>14</sup> when she was on leave from work due to mental health reasons. She liked the idea of combining sport and doing something for a cause and also it felt like a good way to get out of the house again after spending a period at home looking after her mental health. She saw an advertisement on Facebook about Goodgym coming to her city and after some consideration, she decided to go along.

### **Middle**

Regularly attending Goodgym sessions helped Gemma to come off antidepressants and gave her a renewed sense of purpose. She met people who were in the same boat in that they had also struggled with their mental health and gone along to Goodgym.

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<sup>14</sup> Goodgym is a movement volunteering programme (Tupper et al., 2020) where participants run, walk or cycle to help local organisations or isolated older people by doing practical tasks such as helping out with gardening.

Goodgym felt like an inclusive environment from the start where getting involved was made accessible starting from providing conversation topics for Goodgym sessions.

## **Resolution**

Gemma felt like she has established a good group with other Goodgym volunteers as well as working with different projects with local parks and charities. However, she sometimes feels like there is an awkwardness around people assuming her to be straight and her not feeling like she can always correct them. As she has become involved in Goodgym more regularly, the time she has been able to spend with her partner has decreased. Gemma is not sure how her volunteering might impact the relationship in the long run.

Gemma wishes she had done more volunteering in the beginning and been more consistent with group runs to achieve 100 Goodgym deeds in a quicker succession. However, she had trouble keeping up with time in the beginning but equally not wanting to attend sessions late. She would also familiarise herself more with how she could cheer other Goodgym people on and receive recognition for her own task completion in return.

*In summary*, Gemma's story shows how volunteering can be seen as a mood booster to combat low mood and mental health issues, to provide meaning in one's life by helping others and gaining perspective on her own life in the process. Because of the social mission that guided the Goodgym taskforce, Gemma found it easier to keep volunteering. Gemma did not feel at home doing sport in a traditional club setting but the combination of gamifying volunteering, incorporating physical activity, and emphasising a social mission made volunteering a logical choice for her.

## 6.12 Beth

<i>Birth cohort</i>	1990s
<i>Gender identity</i>	Cis woman
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	Asexual
<i>Occupation</i>	Student
<i>Length of volunteering</i>	5-10 years
<i>Sport involved in</i>	Basketball

### **Beginning**

Beth was asked to coach a junior team by her club president and coach when she was in her teens. She also had the chance to go on referee courses and volunteered in that capacity as well. For Beth, volunteering was a way to do more in a sport for which she already dedicated most of her time. She had always had an interest in teaching and thought coaching could be a way to gain more relevant experience. Her coach was a role model for her in what a good coach looked like and she wanted to resemble him as a coach.

### **Middle**

Beth was keen to observe the dynamics of coaching a girls' team and see the different motivations for getting involved: to develop into elite players or play sport for fun. She was keen to develop working relationships with the players and be a big sister figure on their basketball journey. She stopped volunteering because of university commitments



but envisages returning volunteering at a later point, perhaps when she is finished with playing basketball.

## **Resolution**

Beth felt at home in her club but sexuality was something that was not talked about beyond expressing general statements about respecting everyone as individuals. Also being asexual might have meant that the absence of a partner was not interpreted as anything other than that and therefore it did not come up. Regardless Beth never felt isolated and therefore did not seek others in the club or elsewhere with whom she shared an identity.

*In summary*, Beth's story shows that volunteering was a natural fit for her abilities and aspirations of seeing players grow in their abilities and learn goal setting. The style her coach used gave her a blueprint to follow before developing her own coaching style. Returning to volunteering remains at the back of her mind when she is at a point in her life where she feels like she can devote the time needed to coach. Although she recognised her asexuality as a minority within a minority, the basketball community provided her with a sense of belonging that made her feel included.

## 6.13 Kath

<i>Birth cohort</i>	1990s
<i>Gender identity</i>	Cis woman
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	Bisexual
<i>Occupation</i>	Employed
<i>Length of volunteering</i>	1-5 years
<i>Sport involved in</i>	Ball hockey

### **Beginning**

It was the curiosity to go behind the scenes and see how a sports club operated that made Kath want to volunteer in her ball hockey club in the first place. She had a very good experience starting to play as an adult and she wanted to help other people experience something similar. Early on, she also started thinking about ways the sport itself could develop in her region and attract more female players in a male-majority mixed team.

### **Middle**

Her first year as a volunteer was about learning the ropes and documenting how things had been done previously in order to learn about her volunteer role as treasurer of the hockey club. She did not have the easiest start to the role as the person previously in the role had to step down, leaving Kath a mountain to climb in assuming the role and the responsibilities of a treasurer.

Kath is an open book when it comes to her sexuality, however as a volunteer she feels like sexuality is not really talked about. People tend to focus on sport and personal relations play less of a role in conversations between volunteers.

## Resolution

A year into her role as treasurer, Kath has managed to mould the role more to her liking with regard to deadlines and a timescale put in place for the upcoming season. This means she will be able to carry out her duties more efficiently to make sure everything that is needed gets done on time in order to field a team for the upcoming season.

*In summary*, Kath's story shows how she developed a love for ball hockey that she then extended into getting involved as a volunteer to make sure her sport continued to develop. Kath came in at a time of change but with tenacity she was able to shape the role to suit her. Kath does not intentionally hide her sexuality in the club but she noted how the topic of sexuality was not mentioned often, perhaps suggesting some sensitivity around the topic.

## 6.14 Lucy

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1990s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis woman
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Asexual
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Student
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	1-5 years
<b><i>Sport involved in</i></b>	Sailing

## **Beginning**

Lucy's sailing club always struggled to get volunteers so when she heard of an instructor course they were putting on she asked to go along. In sailing, adult members were also put on a duty roster which meant members would have a volunteer role (or roles) at the club. Lucy felt there was an obligation to help out with the club and to give back what she had 'taken' from the club as a participant. During university, she has volunteered less regularly because of study commitments.

## **Middle**

Lucy enjoyed teaching people to sail, especially younger age groups and teaching them about the duties of sailors. Lucy has also quietly worked to change things to be more inclusive at her sailing club by adding more than two gender options on registration forms for example. She feels like asexuality is a somewhat misunderstood and to an extent a forgotten letter in the LGBT+ acronym and therefore an identity that people don't readily expect or think about. Although how she identifies makes sense to her, she has accepted it will not necessarily make sense to everyone else.

## **Resolution**

She found it difficult at times to manage her instructor course commitments with other responsibilities in her private life. However, having been in Covid-19 lockdown and not being able to partake in a similar course, she would like to do more volunteering in the near future.

*In summary*, Lucy's story shows how volunteering can be a duty that is embedded into the sport or club culture, therefore shaping her role as giving back to the club. Having an invisible identity within the LGBT+ umbrella, Lucy's actions for inclusion backstage enable her to achieve change in her own terms. Transitioning from school to university

and Covid-19 meant her involvement became more sporadic yet she did not lose sight of the sense of duty that was instilled in her from early on.

## 6.15 Sarah

<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	1990s
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>	Cis woman
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>	Lesbian
<b><i>Occupation</i></b>	Student
<b><i>Length of volunteering</i></b>	5-10 years
<b><i>Sport involved in</i></b>	Horse riding

### **Beginning**

Sarah started helping out at the stables soon after she got her first horse. Not having previous exposure to the sport, she was grateful for help she received. Therefore, she felt it was appropriate to give back some of her time. Sarah was 14 when she first started helping out and quickly learnt about the hierarchy at the stables. Because of her age, she feels she was made well aware of her place in the hierarchy and often belittled for personal characteristics like hair colour.

### **Middle**

Sarah was given more responsibility in putting events together when she got older. Because of the responsibilities involved in owning a horse, she was required to be at the stables every day, and she helped out whenever she was not competing herself. Volunteering was something that needed doing so that events could go ahead but

Sarah felt like she did not always get much enjoyment out of it herself. When she felt like she was able to say no to some events, she started enjoying helping out more.

Volunteering became too big for Sarah and put her off from participating for a time. Growing up, she did not have positive female LGBT+ role models in her sport but rather LGBT+ women were mostly referred to in a derogatory manner. Sarah thought this was because of the elitism in horse riding that did not welcome sexual diversity.

## **Resolution**

Looking back, Sarah would be braver in seeking a less judgmental environment. When she was nearing 18, Sarah went along to a rugby club but did not feel confident enough to keep playing the sport. In hindsight, she thinks it would have been an easier experience coming out to rugby teammates than it was at the stables since she had friends who played rugby and were out.

*In summary*, Sarah's story shows how she needed others' help in starting out in horse riding but quickly discovered there was a hierarchy to how the 'horse world' ran and she ought to know her place. She felt exclusion made her feel isolated and not able to bring her whole self to the stables/her sport.

## **6.16 Summary of Chapter 6**

Topical life histories are mostly confined to observations about the topic in question, volunteering. Even though gathering "whole" life histories (Plummer, 2001) might be an impossible task, it means that topical life histories leave room for interpretation that is shaped by the reader's own experiences and worldview. These life histories have provided a summary of key events that in turn inform the constant comparison of data in the following findings chapters.

A pathway into volunteering, through volunteering and sometimes out of volunteering starts to emerge through these topical life history stories. They provide a starting point to probe further into the experiences and meaning of volunteering to participants' identities as outlined by identity work (Watson, 2020). We are starting to see the influence of early life experiences in the construction of a volunteer identity in Frida, Colin and David's accounts, how volunteering developed Gemma, Liam and Peter's confidence, engaging others in taking up sport or volunteering as an important source of motivation for Beth, Kath, Lucy, Gwen, Julie, and George; Sophie wanting to meet people in a shared identity environment as a catalyst for joining a sport club in the first place and how volunteering sometimes "became too big": having a negative effect on personal relationships, career or enjoyment of sport for Sarah, Niamh and Joan. These emerging insights will further be explored in chapter 7 and 8.

The significance of sexual identity is present in the life histories explicitly and implicitly. The level of openness in expressing LGBT+ identities guided participants' choices of volunteering environments, whether they felt the need to join LGBT+ sports club or not and how that shaped their meaning-making as volunteers and as LGBT+. These choices and influences will also be explored in more detail in chapter 7.

Commitment to inclusion and understanding of diversity differed depending on how participants saw their own identities. For some participants, being LGBT+ was a major aspect of their identity, while for others, it was just one among many characteristics that defined them. Individuals may personally identify as LGBT+ or may have others identify them as such.

# 7 CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF LGBT+ VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Having covered the changing cultural notions and context of being LGBT+ and the individual sport volunteering topical life history stories of the research participants I continue to explore the meaning the participants gave to their volunteering and the ways in which they constructed their identities over time. First, I explore the discourses surrounding the volunteer experience and identity work through notions of inclusion and heteronormativity. After setting the scene of these contrasting discourses present in participants' lives, I conduct cross-case analysis on how participants became involved in volunteering, what their volunteering is like currently and what their future intentions are for volunteering.

This thesis evolved from an interest in appraising how LGBT+ inclusion could be enhanced in sport volunteering contexts. The first step in that process is to understand the experiences of, and how and why, people engage in sport volunteering. Understanding identity dynamics and individual volunteer experiences in different sporting contexts can then help organisations become better places to volunteer. Research into identity work of LGBT+ volunteers may help make volunteering easier for other diverse groups.

## 7.1 Discourses of inclusion/exclusion

Roller derby, Goodgym and softball were deemed welcoming and inclusive by participants who represented said sports. Football had a mixed response: the inconsistent approach to LGBT+ diversity on governing body level was criticised but the role model effect of out female players was seen as a positive. Moreover, cricket and horse riding were perceived to have underlying class issues that made them (more)



exclusive. The level of inclusion in other sports, such as running, was reflective of the club culture rather than perceptions of the sport. A sentiment of “sport for all”<sup>15</sup> in softball, roller derby as well as LGBT+ running clubs contributed to the discourse of inclusion:

“I think roller derby is a really, really interesting example in that sense, because it doesn't have those perhaps traditional norms that so many other sports have, they have these structures in place and perhaps roller derby has been, I guess, more agile in a way that I think it's very accepting... You can be old or young, you can be fit as a fiddle, you can be completely overweight. You can be any of the LGBTQ+ spectrum. And, you know, it's just, do you like skating? Are you a good laugh? Come on over, you know, there's obviously other things that go into that. But it's one of those sports where you know, you have so many different body sizes on skates, nobody looks the same.” (Niamh)

Niamh talked about roller derby resisting traditional sport norms in order to be an inclusive space. This is in line with Donnelly's (2011) study where roller derby offered an alternative environment to other types of organised sport. Therefore, roller derby reinforced a discourse of inclusion, and constructed and maintained an inclusive alternative “counterspace” (Lawley, 2019) to what Birrell and Richter (1987, p. 395) term “male preserve of sport”. According to Sophie, softball is similar in a sense that softball can be played by people of all ages and abilities. Further, Sophie believed this contributed to why people tended to stick around with the sport. Therefore, softball can also be seen as an alternative counterspace because people that came to softball had not necessarily played another sport or had unpleasant experiences with sport in the past.

“It's very rare you get a sport where on the same pitch, you could have an 18-year-old and the 60-year-old, yeah, playing the same game at potentially the same level of, you know, standard of play as well, which is fantastic. Because you could be technically good, you don't have to be as fit if you're technically very good. So it kind of can bring people together on so many different levels which is interesting.” (Sophie)

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<sup>15</sup> Participants referred to sport for all as being able to take part no matter shape, size or form (skill set).

Sophie and Niamh share the sentiment of accessibility which they equate with resisting a discourse of pure physicality to be able to take part in sport. Here being LGBT+ is grouped together with other identity dimensions that may cause feelings of insecurity. They open a door for participation either through downplaying the competitive element of the game (roller derby) or emphasising the technical prowess (softball). In Niamh and Sophie's view, exclusionary practices may thus be present in traditional sporting environments with discourses of masculinity.

Sometimes exclusion might also come from a perception of social class attached to a sport or activity. Colin addressed the 'middle ground' position of his running club in regard to class discourse.

"Actually this running club is a real mixture of people who are doctors and lawyers and people like me who get paid quite well in the NHS and people who are unemployed and people who've kind of got mental health problems and they've not been able to work because of that and I think you get something unique out of that everytime I go and I talk to somebody different and we do mix up groups because when you do volunteering you might be in the 3 mile group or the 6 mile group so you're meeting all those different groups of people. But I learn something new about me and my response to things as well as learning something from another experience. I think that's just what keeps me engaged and it interests me." (Colin)

Colin emphasises how his running club is a cross-section of society and the different social gradients within it. Colin takes the role of an interested observer who, through a dialogue about the different experiences, also becomes aware of the underlying power relations in society and his running club as a meeting place. Colin appraises running in between what he calls "*working class football*" and "*middle class tennis*". This posits his running club as a kind of heterotopia (Foucault, 1991, p. 252, cited in Walseth, 2006, p. 457) that is in opposition to a heteronormative environment that does not support/encourage people with different backgrounds to participate. It is not clear however, whether there is social gradient diversity in the committee of the club, or

whether diversity is simply achieved through diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, this finding is inconclusive in regard to Vantilborgh et al.'s (2011) argument on board positions falling to those with the highest status.

Peter suggested status as a barrier to sport participation distinct from a perceived barrier due to (sexual) identity. Peter unpacked what he saw as the barrier and considered how, and what needed to happen, to combat this barrier to participation.

"If you don't have money, then you can't participate. So we're trying to break that down. You know, enable people, don't have to buy all their own kit in an expensive sport. We're having some club kit that people can use and all this kind of stuff. But that's slightly separate from sexuality and LGBTQ+, but it can be another barrier, it's in the way to participation and volunteering or whatever it might be. So I think it's just about being a little bit more, a little bit more visible. There's probably other stuff too, but certainly being more visible makes a huge difference and just being proactive about, you know, acknowledging that it's worth engaging with a whole range of communities. Otherwise, you're actually missing out on a huge talent pool." (Peter)

Peter notes how cricket appeared to be segregated, with not much crossover between clubs with predominantly white middle class members and clubs with predominantly British Asian members. The wider context being in Peter's view that there are relatively low levels of participation of minority ethnic cricketers. While there was work around integration and inclusion, to Peter cricket presented as "*quite an exclusive middle class sport*" lacking spaces where people were comfortable to express their identities and where wealth and class dictated whether one could participate. Access to resources, such as money, is crucial in determining who can participate. This exclusion perpetuates the existing power structures, which favour wealthier individuals. By recognising and actively engaging with a wide variety of communities, Peter aims to challenge these power structures and establish a more equitable sport club.

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<sup>16</sup> Occupational prestige was associated with volunteers in sport leadership positions (Meyer & Rameder, 2021). 'The long arm of the job' (Wilson & Musick, 1997) frames involvement in sport volunteering.

By being more visible and proactive in recognising the need for inclusivity and diversity, Peter challenges the dominant power structures and disrupts the normalisation of exclusionary practises. In addition to furthering LGBT+ inclusion in cricket, Peter was determined to address other inequalities that he identified as root causes of multiplicative barriers to widen participation. Buying equipment facilitates a form of symbolic identity work: buying equipment can be seen as a symbolic representation of their commitment to helping members to establish cricket-related identities.<sup>17</sup>.

Some of the research participants chose to volunteer in LGBT+ specific or other sport organisations. LGBT+ specific spaces were recognised as having the mission of bringing LGBT+ people together in a health-enhancing environment. Even though the changing nature of LGBT+ (entertainment) spaces was inevitable, David explained why there was still a need for LGBT+ spaces in sport. He acknowledged how open and welcoming clubs were these days with large numbers of LGBT+ people taking part in non-LGBT+ specific running clubs but also stated there were still people *“who need and want that support. While that need is there, there are specific organisations to support.”*

Overall, this section demonstrated how individuals engaged in ongoing identity work to navigate and negotiate their identities. While some sporting contexts may be more inclusive and accepting, there is still a need for greater awareness and understanding of diverse identities to ensure that everyone can fully participate and engage in these activities.

## 7.2 Cultural-stereotypes

The research participants also identified types of social-identities that were influenced by institutional, cultural, and discursive pressures (Watson, 2008). These discursive pressures may lead LGBT+ individuals to “internalise negative self-images” (Kivel et al., 2000, p. 217).

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<sup>17</sup> See in comparison Vermeulen and Verweel's (2009) work on sport participant identity work.

“I play football with work, as well. The assumption would be, you know, when I played with players at work oh I didn't know you were gay. Why not? Because you play football.” (George)

“There's a lot of stereotypes around like lesbians being good at sport which sometimes makes me feel bad 'cause I'm not very good. I think I'm quite strong. Like I'm really good at cutting down a tree, but I'm not good at sports. I'm not like fast or... Sometimes I feel like, people think because I'm gay I should be better at football or whatever whereas I feel like men would feel like they would be worse. I guess that would play a part in sport volunteering, like you kind of expect a stereotype of like lesbian PE teachers, compared to stereotype of like a gay man who can barely kick up a ball.” (Gemma)

“Some of our players have gone off to play for GB actually started at the club, but left wanting a more competitive experience or a different experience, but it's created a very positive response to having gay players in the sport, that we can be both great athletes and a lot of fun.” (Sophie)

Gemma identified harmful stereotypes that were supposed to be seen in a positive light like being good at sport, however this turned into an unrealistic expectation from which she suffered. This internalised frame (Goffman, 1975) about gay people shaped Gemma's stigmatised perception of herself. Similarly to George, Gemma highlighted a persisting view of gay men as weak and effeminate and therefore not good at sports (Elling & Janssens, 2009). Sophie however noted the need for gay players to prove themselves as easy-going or competitive to be included in a heteronormative environment.

There have been studies that explore the intersection of gender and sexuality in sport (see for example McGannon et al., 2019) as well as gender, sexuality and ethnicity in sport volunteering (Legg & Karner, 2021). These studies show that an individual experience cannot be limited to a single dimension of one's identity but a more nuanced understanding is needed (Legg & Karner, 2021; Simien et al., 2019). If potential volunteers see sport as enforcing harmful stereotypes they might not think sport is for them. Sophie made the parallel between 'being able to do both' having fun and being competitive, unearthing the cultural notions and stereotypes of being/not being good at

sport because of sexuality. Kath on the other hand felt like there was a sensitivity around a sporting space because of her sexuality. This refers to harmful 'lesbians preying on straight women in sports' discourses that Kath had internalised.

“If you're on a women's team. If you're bisexual or even a identify as a lesbian... It does then... If people know they then feel a bit more uncomfortable when it comes to, I guess, changing areas. There's a lot of people who have absolutely no problem. But you could always tell if there's ones that do find out, they're a little bit like, oh, I'm not as comfortable with this now. And it is something that's quite big that I don't say, oh no, I'm not bisexual to make someone feel more comfortable. But I feel that by saying I am that there's potentially a lot more chance that someone's going to be a little bit more uncomfortable with it. And it's just that sort of, I guess, stigma, still that people don't know how to react with it. Whereas you can be around your friends and you can kind of say everything there.” (Kath)

Kath must negotiate a complex social dynamic in which the benefits of being true to her identity are weighed against the potential consequences of social discomfort or exclusion. This demonstrates how identity work encompasses not only individual self-conception, but also the complex social and cultural contexts within which those identities are expressed and interpreted.

### 7.3 LGBT+ or sexually diverse self-identities?

This section highlights the complexity and diversity of experiences related to sexuality and identity, and the different ways in which individuals may choose to express or not express their sexuality. The ways in which individuals express their identities and the extent to which they feel part of LGBT+ communities frames how they got involved in volunteering, the successes and challenges they faced as volunteers, how they influenced level of inclusion and future volunteering involvement, all of which will be discussed in more detail in sections 7.4-7.6.

### 7.3.1 Rejecting the LGBT+ label

“I think I'm a lesbian woman, maybe I'm not in any particular interest groups that would help me to define myself, amongst others, as it were. And I was one of those people probably who were don't ask don't tell, didn't discuss or disclose necessarily, my sexuality, although it would have been obvious, and it wasn't hidden in the sense of pretending to be not a lesbian. But a lot of the time that I've been in volunteering and lacrosse, for example, I had a female partner who was also in lacrosse, and the one that is my partner now, who's my civil partner, she and I both played lacrosse. We just portray ourselves as individuals, but obviously we were living together. So in a kind of not mentioned sort of way. And so as I say everybody else would have known what was happening. Yeah, and I don't see that identity as a person any different to my identity as a volunteer really. Because I'm not separating that volunteer, really, from that person.” (Frida)

Frida managed her lesbian identity by discretion - leaving information out about her partner or not foregrounding her lesbian relationship or identity. Instead, she normalised her non-identity to a point where it did not make sense for her to mention it. Discretion and normalising are examples of passing and concealment tactics to manage invisible identities (Clair, Beatty & Maclean, 2005). Frida distances herself from membership of LGBT+ community/communities by referring to being a lesbian as “*that identity*” and LGBT+ as an “*interest group*”. She views LGBT+ as ‘a group’ rather than ‘a community’: she feels like she does not belong under the LGBT+ umbrella. Terming LGBT+ community/communities interest groups also refers to her hesitation of wanting to socially congregate with LGBT+ identity as the common denominator. In Frida’s words, she was not part of any groups that would “*advertise her identity*”. Earlier research has found that adopting a group identity such as being LGBT leads to an acceptance of group stigma (homophobia) and collective action against that stigma (Ng et al., 2012). Because Frida did not want to “advertise” her identity, she did not want to promote LGBT+ group interest either. In Frida’s view, there was no need to advocate for a marginalised identity as a means to increase visibility.

Frida is aware of the risks of openly identifying as a lesbian woman and has built her identity in a way that avoids clear classification. Her sexuality was not concealed, but

rather avoided, implying that she was deliberately managing her identity to avoid classification as a reaction to a stigmatised identity (Goffman, 1963). Despite the fact that she and her partner were living together and everyone knew about their relationship, Frida's statement of presenting as individuals shows that she considers the image she puts out to others – creating a separation between private and public self. She understands the social standards that govern proper behaviour in various circumstances (for example, being an athlete versus volunteering) and adjusts her presentation accordingly.

“I was speaking to the person who is the director of the group that I volunteered for. We played a very nice game of golf, and we're chatting away. And I was absolutely shocked when he said to me what does your husband do? I was surprised when he asked that question. I mean, not surprised when lots of people ask the question, because it's obviously assumed that you will have a husband, especially when you have a child. So it wasn't meaning I was offended but it was just surprising because he was in the sports area. And I just thought that everybody that I'd come across in sport now would know.” (Frida)

The meeting involves Frida's identities as a woman, a volunteer, and being involved in sport, and her response to the director's inquiry shows her efforts to negotiate these many elements of her identity. She is actively creating her identity in respect to the norms and expectations of her social milieu through her astonishment at the question and her response to it. Frida seems to inhabit a liminal space of not being out and loud but not closeted either, making her sexual orientation a non-identity (Scott, 2018). This may be related to Frida's long-term involvement in sport volunteering and her expectation that people would know and be accepting.

Gwen and Julie differed from other participants in that they redefined their sexuality by becoming a couple in midlife and identifying with 'no label'. They compared their experiences in sport before they became a couple and when they were together. When asked about how Gwen and Julie defined their sexuality, their refusal to take on a label under the LGBT+ umbrella of even a “technical” term such as bi (their words) is



reflective of their attempt to keep the status quo, stay within the heteronormative frame of reference, just changing the term 'husband' to 'wife'.

“We generally don't do. Technically you should be bi. We've always been about not having a box. I have a wife and that's it. We don't like to be defined by that. Yes, no disrespect to anybody that is, obviously, their issues. People feel that they have to define you by that. Whereas if you're a heterosexual nobody would come out as so and so. They would just say she's got a husband.” (Julie)

There seems to be no epiphany of adopting a new identity that those coming out in midlife sometimes describe when moving from heterosexual relationships to same sex relationships (Larson, 2006). This might refer to what Duggan (2003) terms “homonormativity”, relaying heteronormative constructs on LGBT+ people whereas human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell (2019) calls this the mindset of “hetero homos”<sup>18</sup>, having a straight mind in a queer body. More broadly, Bawer (1993, cited in Waitt & Gorman-Murray, 2011, p. 1248) observes the “politics of normalisation” of gay life where heterosexual ideals are imposed on gay lives.

Gwen and Julie thought acceptance towards them was gendered when their desired gender in a relationship changed. Han and O'Mahoney (2014) relatedly noted that internationally criminalised sodomy more often concerns homosexual acts “between two men” than “between two women”, therefore, for a long-time, shaping people's perceptions of male homosexuality as punishable but women's homosexuality as invisible. In the UK, legislation historically only directly criminalised men's homosexuality while choosing to forego criminalising lesbianism and therefore silence lesbianism to not draw attention to the possibility of relationships between women (Derry, 2021). It was clear that even though Gwen and Julie had found each other and settled into their life as a couple, as described by Rickards and Wuest's (2006) stages of coming out at midlife, their family members were still processing Gwen and Julie's coming out.

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<sup>18</sup> Tatchell (2019) talks about LGBT+ people becoming “carbon copies of heterosexuality”, the LGBT+ psyche having been “colonised by a heteronormative mentality.”

“My ex-husband asked me, he said, how long have you known you're a lesbian? Couldn't you have told me before we got married, and I said, I don't feel as if I'm a lesbian. I feel as if I'm a person who's fallen in love with another woman. Falling in love with the person and she happens to be a woman. Now. I, you know, I didn't have this lightbulb moment in my head where I thought, well, last week, I thought I was heterosexual. And now I'm not. That just never happened.” (Gwen)

”I think it is kind of different from us if you're a teenager growing up. And then kind of knowing that...we all have a different route, haven't we.” (Julie)

What Gwen and Julie seem to describe here is that they expected to receive backlash for being together. This happened within family rather than facing open hostility in their community. Gwen describes her ex-husband's reaction which refers to the idea of essentialised sexuality – as something set in stone that never changes. Therefore, he felt disappointed marrying someone who he thought was heterosexual. In Gwen ex-husband's eyes, sexuality can only be revealed. Gwen protests this idea, for her sexuality is a fluid spectrum that might change during an individual's lifetime. Because they got together in late midlife, there is a long line of identity stability, being perceived as heterosexual and therefore Gwen and Julie emphasise being like any heterosexual couple because they do not want to give up or change what has constituted their sense of self over a long period of time.

### 7.3.2 Asexuality and bisexuality – on the margins of LGBT+?

Whereas Frida was surprised by being faced with enduring perpetual outing (having to come out more than once) (Rickards & Wuest, 2006), Lucy felt surprised people assumed her sexuality to be gay and talked about the invisibility of asexuality within the LGBT+ umbrella.

“I was always shocked when people used to ask me a lot of time...I've always been very confusing to people. And so people would always, I'd always get asked all the time if I was gay. So I'd always be shocked by that. Because, I guess I guess it's the same if you're in the closet, and you've not figured it out yourself. My first year at uni, I figured out the whole ace thing existed. And then a week later, I went home and I went to a friend's party. She tried to set me up with

a friend. And it was weird and very confusing. And then she was like, are you ace? Generally at uni I figured out a lot more of the smaller minorities within LGBT. But basically, it was mainly about gay, lesbian, bi, and trans, and then it was everyone else.” (Lucy)

Individuals are continually thinking about and re-evaluating their identities in light of shifting social structures and cultural norms (Giddens, 1991). This reflexivity may be seen in Lucy’s experience of learning the notion of asexuality in her first year of university. She is re-evaluating her identity and examining the potential of a previously undisclosed sexual orientation.

Similarly to Lucy, as discussed above, Beth expressed a view that being asexual was considered an invisible identity. Both Lucy and Beth shared their experiences on not talking about asexuality at their respective sport clubs. Whilst Lucy had had conversations outside sport with her friends about being ace<sup>19</sup> Beth backgrounded her asexuality because it appeared she did not want others to define her by her sexuality. Asexuality appears as a non-identity that remains out of the public’s radar (Scott et al., 2016). Thus, asexuality seemed to have added layer of invisibility within the invisible LGBT+ identity:

“It doesn't come up really. It's funny sometimes, if you had to fill in a form, but it's very rare. People just ask, like, are you in a relationship? But if you just say no, it's not really asked about. I just don't say anything.” (Lucy)

“With asexuality it’s kind of different because you don’t really, well, it’s different in a way that, it’s not like you have a girlfriend or a boyfriend of the same sex and people see that. It’s just that people see you’re not committed to anybody and say like, okay, you’re not interested and nobody actually asks about things like that. I don’t remember talking about it to anyone but then again nobody ever asked anything. I never expressed it out loud but I don’t think I needed to. I never felt isolated.” (Beth)

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<sup>19</sup> Colloquial expression for asexual

Lucy's comment reveals how she backgrounded her identity in sport but she was able to share it with her friends whereas Beth backgrounded her identity because she felt it was not important for her basketball experience. Both Lucy and Beth mention how others do not inquire about their relationship status, which could be interpreted as society assuming that everyone experiences sexual attraction, and thus people who do not, are not seen as having a legitimate identity.

Kath had adopted a "don't ask don't tell" mentality when it came to discussing sexual identity in the hockey club. Nonetheless, she wanted to be open about her bisexuality to combat erasure of her bisexual identity as someone who was in a heterosexual marriage. Research by Flanders et al. (2016) similarly documented interpersonal experiences of bisexual and non-monosexual identity erasure from family and acquaintances.

"It's one of these things that it's not something I'm shy about. But generally, some of the times it doesn't come up, people just assume that I'm straight. I mean, I am married to a man and people assume that just because of that, that's how it is. But it is a lot more complex, but it is just something that a few people know. And it's one of those things that I don't shy away from. I'm not hidden about it. I'm very open about it and very proud." (Kath)

There was a silence around being LGBT+ in Kath's hockey club and it was "noticeable" that people were heterosexual. This adds to the evidence that sexual orientation continues to be a sensitive issue for people in sport (Brackenridge et al., 2008; Dwight & Biscomb, 2018) and therefore silence persists in everyday interactions. Kath used the expression "out and proud" to describe her level of openness in sport volunteering and in the workplace. It however seemed that when Kath joined the hockey club she accepted the norms on whose sexuality could be platformed and which sexualities were deviant from the heteronorm.

"But in terms of volunteering, not many people sort of mention it, it's all very closed door you don't really know anything about anybody else. I don't think it would be a detriment for people to know from the off but it's definitely something

that's not really talked about. So it's noticeable that a lot of people in the sport are straight and identify as straight. And there are a few people who identify as being gay. But it's not really something that you see much of like, I mean, there could be people I don't know about, but we don't really talk.” (Kath)

Kath emphasises how a lack of open communication regarding identities can limit people's capacity to engage in identity work and create a sense of invisibility for underrepresented identities. Kath points to a need for fostering inclusive spaces in which people may share their identities and get support from others. Individuals who do not publicly disclose their identities may fear being judged or rejected from this social milieu, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and separation.

Kath also mentioned how LGBT+ people she knew participated in sports but did not appear to volunteer. Given the silence surrounding LGBT+ identities in the club, it's not surprising that there were few openly LGBT+ volunteers. The awkwardness surrounding diverse identities in the club may have shaped Kath's experience.

“I do notice that a lot of the people who are part of the LGBT community, that they don't really get involved with the volunteering side, they do spend a lot more time just playing and getting on with it. That it is just something that I don't know why it is, but there isn't much representation in it. And if there is it's not openly. So there are a lot of people who don't tend to mention it. I'm sure there's not a reason to sort of go I'm volunteering and I'm gay. Yeah, it's one of those things, but even with people that, you know, you don't tend to find many people that are bisexual that are gay that openly say, yeah, and volunteer in sport. They play it. But volunteering does seem to be quite a lot more straight people.” (Kath)

While participating in volunteer activities, Kath seems to suggest that LGBT+ individuals may experience discomfort and ambiguity in identifying as members of the LGBT+ community. Fear of discrimination or bad reactions from others may cause this uneasiness. As a result, people may forgo volunteering activities or conceal their sexual orientation while taking part. She suggests that straight people are more likely to participate in volunteer activities, which may be connected to societal norms and discourses around volunteering: heterosexual people may feel more at ease or

encouraged to join in volunteer activities, but LGBT people may feel excluded or unwelcome.

### 7.3.3 Gender and sexuality

Joan, noted how being an older woman meant her sexuality was less visible to people, highlighting the impact of age-related expectations and assumptions on one's sense of self and how others perceive them.

“I think in some ways, being old, I don't even get seen in the same way. I had this thing where I thought that men don't wolf whistle women anymore in the street in the way that they did to me when I was younger, you know, shouting obnoxious lad stuff. I actually thought it had gone away. When I spoke to my God kids I discovered it hasn't gone away. It just doesn't happen to me anymore. As an older woman, you become slightly invisible. So I think I wouldn't always be known for my sexuality anymore. I would be noted as an older woman if that makes sense. Kind of invisible, which is very nice and in other ways deeply insulting. I don't think people think when you're old that you have sexuality. It's not as active, you know, your sexuality doesn't appear to be as active and thus as threatening as it is when you're younger.” (Joan)

George in turn observed how he backgrounded his identity working in the financial sector “with lots of straight white men” because disengaging meant he was not risking a hostile reaction as often as if he would have been more forthcoming about his identity. This contrasted with his sport volunteer experience that was identity affirming (Taylor et al., 2018).

“I've always been quite open about my sexuality. I think, once I came out when I was 16-17, I was in college, and I've never really hidden it I think, but I don't think I'm massively open about it. Like some people, you know, when I'm at work, or I meet new people, I don't tell them necessarily that I'm gay. You know, I remember I first joined my job years ago, I was working there for a while and you know I mentioned to my mentor I had a boyfriend. He said he didn't know that I was gay. I said I never said I wasn't, I never denied it. But did I have to tell you that I was for you to, you know, I think people want you to say, by the way I'm

gay. Why? You know, if people ask me a question, I won't deny it but I won't say I'm gay, I say about my boyfriend or whatever.” (George)

In various social settings, George appears to switch between his public and private selves. He is open about his sexuality but does not feel obligated to tell everyone. This indicates that he is aware of the social norms and expectations and adjusts his behaviour accordingly. Additionally, his reluctance to express his sexual orientation explicitly may be an attempt to avoid potential stigma or negative reactions from others.

David conveys the impression that he felt like being a *gay man* provided him a platform to be 'out and proud' and beyond prejudice. David chose to educate rather than flag wave (Trussell et al., 2018) to discreetly influence his surroundings. What is notable about his confidence is that he consistently drew on other people's experiences which shows (a) he did not face those himself and (b) he thought of ways to improve the volunteer experience for others who had fewer positive experiences than him. David engaged in everyday activism (Orne, 2013) whereby he was visibly out to improve the conditions of those who came after him. Contrary to Liam, David's strategy of identity management was shaped by his already secure sense of self that made him actively foreground his identity.

“I don't think that I have experienced any pushback or any difficulties because I am a gay man. Most of the time I am very open about it even when I don't need to be. So for example at parkrun, which is not an LGBT event, then I will, I'm quite happy to associate it with my running club. When I write things to all the parkrunners I will sometimes write; as many of you know I run with a local LGBT running club so actually when I don't even need to, I make sure they realise that I'm gay, because I think it's then important for other people, who are less confident in being gay, they'll think oh right, actually he's one of the run directors and he's gay. Also, it is possible to do these roles even if you are LGBT+. So I probably go the other way. I don't face difficulties, I try to promote and push the fact that I'm LGBT, not in people's faces as such but to break down barriers for other people coming behind me so that they feel comfortable to take on some volunteering or other roles to take part in these kinds of things.” (David)

David further explains how he “took the bullet” (Orne, 2013) in a pride parade by turning the attention from knowing that the aura of hostility directed towards him reflected the audience member’s worldview, not of him as a person. He remains stigma resistant by relying on his double consciousness (Allen, 2002) in an acknowledgment that some still disapprove of LGBT+ people and his rejection of this view.

“My husband and I have always taken part in the Pride parade and since we joined the LGBT+ running club, the club takes part. Lots of our members wear their running vest and we march on the Pride parade. And sometimes if I look at the crowds at the side of the street, there will be one person maybe who gives a dirty look, disapproving look for LGBT people being so visible in the streets. But again, it’s not against me personally and my volunteering role, that person has a problem with LGBT visibility and wants it to be hidden away. But I see it, I do see that look of disapproval and realise they’re disapproving of me, us and our way of life. But it doesn’t stop me from doing anything. It doesn’t stop me from going to the parade next time.” (David)

#### 7.3.4 Continual identity negotiation

Gemma felt stressed because she had “failed” to express her identity openly. Gemma perceived there would be tension if she was out, perhaps mirroring her earlier experiences of disclosing her identity and encountering hostility as a result. Concealment (Clair et al., 2005) was her way of managing her identity and justifiable given the perceived threat to her relationship with the elderly woman she visited on Goodgym mission runs.

“So I do feel I've done a bad job there. Like retreating into just, I guess, like not mentioning it. And it's hard because I'm quite out in the rest of my life. And that's like the one time... it's like that hour a week after I have to revert to being like 15 again, and using gender neutral pronouns and to be fair I try and stay off the topic of my relationship I just talk about I guess like her past and stuff that's going on in her life, and she likes to complain a lot or talk about there's no post office in her neighbourhood. So I tend to listen to her a lot and talk about like topical things rather than like my relationship. It's easier not to talk about it because... It is frustrating. I thought about it a lot before I went and I really wanted to not have



to hide because I didn't want to be in that position again. But it just didn't work out. I thought oh, I don't know if she's misheard me, or if she wilfully ignored me. It can be a bit awkward. We'll have to see what happens with that one.” (Gemma)

Gemma seems to be filtering her identity with a member of the older generation. She also filtered her identity when she volunteered in STEM outreach for girls initiative at work. She was worried about the imagined hostile reactions of parents of the girls but also worried about letting gay kids down by not being out enough. This could be due to sexuality discourses being a taboo that should not be discussed with people of a certain age – elderly or children – due to deviant notions of not being heterosexual. However, Gemma was also involved with LGBT+ network at work and there she felt able to openly express her sexual identity. If the space was not LGBT+ specific, Gemma did not feel comfortable in bringing her whole self to volunteering which contrasted with Frida who equated her selfhood with volunteering entirely. It appeared Gemma had had to engage in a lot of self-reflection when negotiating her relationship with her lesbian identity.

“I wouldn't say I'm necessarily always out but it's not deliberate like if someone asked me I wouldn't lie. It's not like something I guess I'd advertise. But it just comes up more in the LGBT+ group stuff because well, it becomes a lot more relevant. Sometimes you can feel a bit awkward if you do stuff for kids. I suppose there's a lot of pressure like people's parents might not want them to be indoctrinated or whatever they think. The whole row in Birmingham over the LGBT picture books and stuff you start to think would people want me to do stuff like volunteering and maybe like, sharing my views with their kids? Sometimes I feel kind of responsible. Like you should be like a role model. And sometimes I feel like I'm not maybe visibly gay enough for example at the Girls in STEM thing for the kids that might be gay.” (Gemma)

Liam iterated how he did not come out to do volunteering. Liam was “already out” when he started volunteering and he emphasised he did not do volunteering to come out. However, he alluded that volunteering changed his confidence level as a gay person. Liam was not an active sports person before he joined the LGBT+ running club and therefore could not draw from his sporting prowess to bolster his confidence. Developing confidence is recognised as a key benefit of volunteering in volunteer

studies in sport (South et al., 2020; Nichols, 2017) and beyond sport (Brodie et al., 2011; Hallmann & Zehrer, 2016). Liam also expressed gratitude for not experiencing harassment because he is gay which is an expression of internalised stigma of LGBT+ people feeling they are likely to face harassment. Liam overlooking a random act of microaggression (Ueno et al., 2020) is an example of an identity management strategy Orne (2013) calls “dodging the bullet”, considering engagement as not worthy and a waste of time, therefore disengaging with the slur directed at the running group. This is comparable to findings by Storr, Jeanes et al. (2021), according to whom LGBT+ people have grown to anticipate some type of abuse, or vilification so much that it has become normalised.

“I’ve been very fortunate that I haven’t faced particular discrimination or abuse because of my sexuality. I think kind of since joining the running club I’ve become more confident and comfortable with that. I think I had always been quite reserved about it or just unsure of myself. I never wanted it to be kind of a focus or be all end all of this is me but actually since joining the running club my focus has shifted a little bit I think I’ve not had to face much prejudice based on that. There have been a couple of isolated incidents where we’ve been out running and things have been shouted at us but again, it’s one of those where we’ve just carried on and ignored what’s been said.” (Liam)

### 7.3.5 Privileged identity dimensions

Dwight and Biscombe (2018) established that sport operates in an overly male, cisgender, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle class environment that causes cultural and institutional barriers to accessing sport. Existing power structures such as whiteness (McDonald, 2005), masculinisation (Anderson, 2009) and able-bodied physicality (Lynch & Hill, 2020) continue to limit the diverse demographic makeup of sport (Dwight & Biscomb, 2018). These power structures should be highlighted due to their potential influence on the LGBT+ volunteer experience in sport. The felt effect of discrimination differs depending on the other social locations people inhabit. If a person is more privileged in other areas of life, the health impact of being LGBT+ can be mitigated or resisted (Bourne et al., 2018).

Identity work is as much about who people are and who they are not (Watson, 2020). Identity dimensions such as ability and ethnicity were largely missing from participants' personal volunteer histories and were only mentioned in passing. There was limited acknowledgement of participants' ethnicity but participants did not talk about their ability (perhaps alluding to ability being a taken-for-granted characteristic that does not need to be noted in the absence of a visible impairment). The focus on some identity dimensions and silence on others perhaps indicates positioning of whiteness and being able-bodied as the standard from which minority ethnicity or disability deviate. Long and Hylton (2002) called whiteness in sports 'the silent other' because the privilege of whiteness is not recognised by the people that benefit from it. Similar notions could be theorised for (dis)ability. According to Watson (2009), identity work is a relational and dialogic activity that draws on socially available discursive resources. It seems that participants in this PhD study were not often subjected to discourses around their whiteness or ability and therefore they did not feature more significantly in the participants' interviews – to put it in Down and Reveley's (2009) words, locally relevant symbolic discourses were not available.

### 7.3.6 Expressed identities

Being a volunteer was a very personal experience for participants with some welcoming the term in a literal sense and others recognising it in a contextual sense. There were participants who rejected the term altogether or did not use it in certain contexts. Volunteers experience tension in balancing their volunteer and participation personas (reflecting their identities and responsibilities as volunteers or participants), while their volunteer identities generally align well with their overall identities in other areas of their lives. The LGBT+ volunteer involvement in sport in this study is characterised by the extent to which they feel part of the LGBT+ community. Table 2 summarises the ways in which participants engaged in identity work and the resulting expressed identities. It is notable to distinguish between LGBT+ and sexually diverse identities because as Formby (2017) also notes, not everyone who identifies as non-heterosexual does not

necessarily feel a sense of belonging to LGBT+ community or communities because of a perceived threat of exclusion (see also Knee, 2019). Those participants also resisted or rejected LGBT+ labels altogether and thus positioned LGBT+ as other against the homonormativity. Those who feel part of LGBT+ communities use object symbols to indicate their belongingness such as apparel featuring rainbow colours and also refer to LGBT+ ‘icons’ or sporting role models growing up that have contributed to their sense of constructing LGBT+ identity. LGBT+ identifying participants see the influence of heteronormativity play out in their daily lives and actively challenge heteronormative practices. It is also noteworthy that LGBT+ participants sought belonging through their LGBT+ identities, foregrounding their identity more often than those who were sexually diverse. Now that the differences between feeling like part of the LGBT+ community or simply being sexually diverse have been identified and summarised in table 2, I now look at the similarities and differences in how participants got involved in volunteering and how they experienced volunteering and their thoughts about future in volunteering.

Table 2. Summarised differences between LGBT+ and sexually diverse identities

<b>Expressed identity</b>	<b>How do people engage in identity work?</b>	<b>Engages in identity work because (of)...</b>
Sexually diverse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies as non-heterosexual but either rejects or resists LGBT+ labels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sees the LGBT+ label as alienating</li> <li>• Subscribes to homonormativity / rejects labels altogether</li> </ul>
LGBT+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies as part of the LGBT+ community</li> <li>• Uses LGBT+ object symbols</li> <li>• Refers to famous LGBT+ people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sees heteronormativity as othering</li> <li>• Seeks a sense of belonging through LGBT+ identity</li> </ul>

## 7.4 Road to volunteering

As discussed in the methodology chapter, participants were given the option to fill in a timeline of their volunteering prior to or in the beginning of their interview which detailed their volunteering over time from when they first started volunteering to present day. Interviews took place between 2019 and 2022. This way the interviews all started with the recollection of participants' road to volunteering. Liam, George, Sophie, Colin, and Niamh all joined LGBT+ focused sport clubs to meet like-minded people. Key turning points in their lives prompted Liam and George to join LGBT+ clubs to integrate into the local (LGBT+) community. First, a discussion is presented on how participants got involved in their particular club/context and how that then led them to volunteering.

“I was encouraged to join and go along by one of my friends who I met since moving through to Newcastle without any drive or intention to become a serious or competitive runner. It was more of a chance to be more social in an LGBT environment and to meet like-minded people and get fitter in the process.” (Liam)

“I didn't really have that many gay friends or any gay friends at all, really. I was 17. Just in college, sixth form. And I got to meet someone online. He said come to football, you can meet lots of people, so that's how it started.” (George)

Liam and George joined LGBT+ sport clubs when an LGBT+ community connection pointed them in the right direction. Their primary reason for joining was not just joining a running club but rather the combination of doing an activity in an environment with a shared understanding of what it meant to be gay: an understanding of LGBT+ inequalities in society and the LGBT+ subculture or “*having strength in numbers*” as Liam put it.

There was a sense that LGBT+ clubs existed as safe havens for people to have a low threshold for getting involved in physical activity in an environment with like-minded LGBT+ people. Volunteering with like-minded people has also been covered by Nichols et al. (2016) as a prime motivation to volunteer: 30% of sport volunteers mentioned this as a reason for getting involved. Joan had similar reasons for joining the Switchboard

LGBT+ which prompted her to volunteer during the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. She described her involvement as *“a really good way to get connected to the community”*. She was therefore inclined to continue volunteering in LGBT+ sport because she felt like she found the community she was seeking. Sophie’s experience closely aligned with findings from Callwood and M Smith (2019) on the importance of identifying an LGBTQ+ subculture in sport to feel affirmed in one’s sexual identity.

“I joined in 2006, which was when I moved back here and I was looking for a community really, an LGBTQ+ community that wasn't just based around socialising. That had something more to it. So I think that was sort of an important initial driver for my involvement.” (Sophie)

We see here how Sophie’s sense of self is connected to her LGTB+ identity so much so that her innate need to belong is realised by joining LGBT+ sport club. Colin however was already a runner before joining a running club but for him the motivation was connected to a major life event that prompted him to look for different social circles.

“I had a 10 year relationship that finished. I wasn't interested in going out to pubs and bars but I wanted to meet people but do something that I enjoy doing. I've always run, I've always been a keen runner so when the opportunity came up I joined the group.” (Colin)

Niamh was keen on continuing her involvement with roller derby after moving to England from Northern Ireland. Sport was a familiar social context for her where she felt social connections could be made to help her settle into her life in England. Niamh foregrounded her sporting identity to ease her move into a new country.

“You know, one of the things when I moved over, I was like, right, I'm joining the roller derby team, because that's how I'm going to make friends. That's how I'm going to get a life. And I did. And I would say that was definitely the saving grace I had. Because otherwise I don't know how...I think I was 30 when I started, I was like, I don't know how you make friends at 30 unless you join a sports team.” (Niamh)

Sophie, Colin and Niamh actively sought out a like-minded community to do sport with – a documented reason for people to get involved in sport (Bakken Ulseth, 2004). In other words, sport had instrumental value: sport was a means to an end (Skille & Øterås, 2011) – to connect with the (LGBT+) community. Whereas Liam and George had recommendations to join a club to ease their way into LGBT+ sport communities, Sophie, Colin and Niamh took an active role in finding a meaningful activity that widened their social circles. Both Sophie and Colin stated the importance of meeting other LGBT+ people in settings that Sophie describes as “*having something more to them*” which potentially refers to the need to find other ‘things in common’ besides being LGBT+. Grouping all LGBT+ people together all the time is paradoxical due to the diversity within the LGBT+ community/communities. Being LGBT+ is one aspect of a person’s identity but not enough on its own to equal commonality in a vastly diverse population group. Whereas Colin was guided by his previous involvement in running, it is more likely that Sophie was influenced by her perception of softball as LGBT+ friendly space. Niamh posits joining a sports team as the only way to make friends as an adult. This might be due to the familiarity Niamh feels for sport as social integration and her existing positive experiences of roller derby in Northern Ireland. Niamh has thus assigned meaning to sport she would not have done with other types of leisure activities in which she has perhaps not been involved before. Roller derby is the anchor point that grounds Niamh in her surroundings, making her feel part of her new home country.

#### 7.4.1 Family socialisation

Following the example of family was a powerful source of inspiration to get involved in volunteering for Colin, David and Frida.

“My mum used to volunteer at a second hand clothes shop and she used to have quite a lot of trans men come in to try on outfits and she ended up being more or less like their fashion advisor if you will. To me that kind of said that’s the culture I’ve been brought up in is why would you not help people why would you be prejudiced against people. People were prejudiced against my parents when they moved here from Ireland. They would never do that to anybody else and they

instilled that. If I could make a difference I would without being terribly virtuous because I get something out of it as well quid-pro-quo.” (Colin)

Colin recalled how his mother’s actions had instilled fundamental values in him. Colin understood prejudice because his family experienced prejudice and felt like outsiders migrating to the UK from Ireland in the 1950s<sup>20</sup>. This influenced Colin as a gay man to challenge prejudice against LGBT+ people during his education, career and volunteering.

“I think I watched my mother volunteer at the local swimming club. I remember one day when one of the committee members spoke to all the parents and said, we really need people who will come stand next to the swimming pool and make sure the children are safe. My mother did that for a few weeks. Then she got frustrated. She thought, I don’t just want to stand here, I want to do something. So she asked if there was any kind of course she could go on and they said yeah of course. So she took this swimming course and became an assistant coach, and then a coach. I saw that and thought anyone can do that. My mum is just a cleaner in a school. Well, not just a cleaner but...anyone can do it. Then I started doing some coaching at the swimming pool when I was 15, 16 years old. That meant when I was an adult and I saw possibilities to volunteer I wasn’t scared because I had already seen that when I was younger.” (David)

Similarly to Colin, David’s mother’s example was crucial to David in his own volunteer pursuits and showing what he could achieve. Seeing his mother gain qualifications in a sport that she had not grown up with prompted David’s optimistic attitude towards volunteering: anyone could be a volunteer. This encouraged David to try new roles regularly and fostered a belief that volunteer-led organisations supported their volunteers, he merely needed to “*put his hand up*” and say he wanted to get involved. From early on volunteering did not show as a burden but an empowering opportunity for personal development. It appeared his mother managed to create an “empowering socialisation process” (Storr & Spaaij, 2017) for him to follow.

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<sup>20</sup> After WWII, Irish immigrants looking for lodgings in the UK were often greeted with signs saying ‘No blacks, no dogs, no Irish’ (Corbally, 2009).



Frida talked about her parents and how volunteering was an important way to spend leisure time as a family. Frida's parents created opportunities for her to take part in community life and therefore helped develop a civic identity (Bekkers, 2007). There was a norm to volunteer – Frida volunteered to express her values which meant there was emotional identification with volunteering as a value-based activity (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008).

“...a large number of those volunteering things came from the fact that my mum and my dad were both absolute sports volunteers all their lives. So I was definitely just following what was the normal expected activity. I mean, we didn't sit around doing nothing. We'd be helping, running, organising, doing, leading all the time. And so I guess, you know, therefore I don't like to sit doing nothing. I'd rather help or make a difference if I can. And that I think is probably a family oriented thing.” (Frida)

Both Colin and David peeled back the layers of how and why their mothers got involved in volunteering whereas Frida never specified why her parents were absolute sport volunteers. These quotes provide powerful insights into how one can be socialised into volunteering which is a documented pathway into volunteer involvement (Bekkers, 2007; Storr & Spaaij, 2017). The fundamental principles of inclusivity—people serving others, diversity among volunteers, and the expectation that one can make a difference and have an impact—appears to be present here. All three participants formed life course habits on volunteering: repetitive behaviours that an individual engages in over time, sometimes for the entirety of their adult life (Dekker & Halman, 2003).

#### 7.4.2 Request

Liam and Beth talked about other people identifying opportunities for them to get involved in volunteering. This was a board member / a coach who saw potential in them due to their developing identification and prolonged engagement with the sport club. Liam expressed this as happening soon after he joined the running club.

“I was approached by two members of the committee as there was a vacant spot on the committee and they asked if I would consider, or if I had ever considered joining a committee and doing so for the running club. It wasn’t anything that crossed my mind or anything I would have thought really. I didn’t know what it entailed or what would come out of it. However, they kind of said they felt that I would be a good fit, I would have something valuable and worthwhile to contribute to the committee and to the running club in a more general sense and wider sense.” (Liam)

Not only was Liam asked to volunteer but he was also asked to join the club by a friend, therefore coming into the club and into his volunteer role by the encouragement and recommendation of others. Liam might have been seen as a “*good fit*” because he was a continuation of the board composition at the time: a white gay man. Liam seems to suggest that he fits the stereotype of the ‘typical committee member in a general sense and in the wider context of LGBT+ spaces sometimes perceived as “white and male” (Denton, 2016). However, Liam also points out how the committee “*co-opted*” more diverse members to join because of their “*skillset and their personality*” and “*offering something different to what we currently offer*”. Liam recognises a similar process of identifying members with fresh viewpoints that could be considered for a committee role, drawing a comparison to how he got involved in the committee. Liam recognises diversity in the committee as a business case: offering different points of view makes the committee stronger. There also seemed to be a club ethos of offering volunteer opportunities to boost confidence which was something Liam felt like he was perhaps lacking being a gay man when he was coming into the club. While Liam’s involvement was encouraged by committee members, Beth’s coach recognised she would be a good fit as a coach.

“I started when my club chair asked me to do some volunteering. I went on some referee courses, the club had a couple of them. I was approached by, I guess my coach mentioned me to the club chair and then I was approached by them and first we just talked about it. It was quite informal. I think I was approached because usually in practices I would be the one to show my teammates how to do something.” (Beth)

Being asked is the most common way for people to get into volunteering as volunteers tend to recruit other volunteers from their social networks (Schroeder et al., 2014; Omoto & Snyder, 2002).

### 7.4.3 Expectation

Niamh, Lucy and Sarah were expected to volunteer in roller derby, sailing and horse riding (respectively). In Niamh and Lucy's case, it was part of roller derby culture (Pavlidis, 2012) and sailing club policy that every adult member was expected to subscribe to when joining the team or club. Niamh explained volunteering was a precursor to playing in roller derby:

“There's a lot of things that can get you rostered and one of them, you know, it's from your attitude, your attendance, and one of them is you have to have a job in the league. You have to contribute to the league in some way or form. And so for some people, that's what they do on game days. For some people, it's like me who works on the board, but you can. Our league is volunteer-based. So everybody is expected to have a role.” (Niamh)

Whereas for Lucy, helping out at a sailing club came with moving on from the youth group and being put on a duty roster. Lucy was not actively seeking to do this but it was part of the formal club volunteering process.

“When you're no longer classed as youth, I guess I was about 18. You get put into the duty roster. So I would be put on assistant officer of the day. And so you get about two to three of those. I usually got about three a year so that people are able to sail with the safety of knowing of those people there with the safety boat nearby or making sure everyone's okay onshore, communicating with the safety boat to make sure they go out and if people capsize.” (Lucy)

This was also a way of making sure that there were always volunteers to help out, with the lack of volunteers being a persisting problem in sports (Harris, S. et al., 2009; Cuskelly & O'Brien, 2013). However, the existence of a rota in the sailing club suggests there is a continued need for volunteers. Having a rota may deter people from

volunteering or embed them into the club culture. Sarah's experience shows that rota might have been a more equitable way to share volunteering responsibilities so that they did not fall on the same person. In Sarah's case volunteering prevented her from participating in the sport.

"I think because I kept the horse at the stables, I was always available because I had to go down every day anyway. So if you're already having to go down, it doesn't seem too much of a stretch to then make yourself useful while you're there. Especially if there's a big horse show. If I wasn't competing myself, then I couldn't ride anyway because the arenas were being used. So I would just end up helping out and then it became the expectation that I would help out rather than a choice." (Sarah)

Sarah recounted something similar in horse riding helping out to set up competitions. Being "voluntold" (forced volunteering as per Kelemen et al., 2017) was more a result of circumstances for Sarah and people seeing her as someone who was likely to help out because she was expected to help out rather than compete herself. This is also evidenced by existing research where one way to deal with shortages in volunteer numbers is to put more responsibility on those who are already volunteering (Breuer et al., 2012).

#### 7.4.4 Opportunity

Gemma was guided by personal drive to be involved in a movement volunteering programme Goodgym which has gained popularity in the past 10 years (Tupper et al., 2020) and Kath was guided by her desire to become more involved with the sport she played which is a typical way to get into sport volunteering (Nichols et al., 2016).

Gemma liked the idea of Goodgym and also recognised an opportunity to improve her mood after coming back from sick leave at work.

"I first heard about Goodgym and I think it started at the end of April. When I saw on Facebook that it was going to happen in my city I was like yes I want to go but I was off work on the sick because I was suffering from like anxiety and like low

mood. So wasn't really having a good time at all. I thought it was a really good idea. I like the idea of combining, doing sport and using your physical strength to actually do something rather than be in the gym, which is kind of the whole point of Goodgym is that instead of using that energy in the gym for no reason you can use that to actually go down and train that's going to help your local park example so I thought it was really cool idea.” (Gemma)

Regarding Gemma's experience, LGBT+ people are more prone to suffer from mental health problems than the general population (Zeeman et al., 2019) having been subject to minority stress: experiencing stigma because of one's sexual orientation or gender identity. Gates and Dentato (2020) have evidenced on a small scale that volunteering results in fewer days of poor mental health than not volunteering for LGBTQ+ individuals which is reflective of Gemma seeking out opportunities to help out other people and do so in a way that feels meaningful to her.

Kath wanted to know how things worked behind the scenes and became involved in her hockey club as a result:

“So I had been with the club for a year before I started volunteering, and I got to know quite a lot of the ins and outs of the actual club itself. And we started the year that we needed a new committee and I thought I would put myself forward for it to get to know a bit more about everything behind the scenes. So I played for a year without knowing anything. And then I decided just to get more involved.” (Kath)

Kath was driven by her love for sport which is a common reason to volunteer in sport (Nichols et al., 2016), wishing to gain insider status in the club and help her belong. She started to identify as a ball hockey player as she got more into the sport, and that became a part of her sporting identity. Kath was able to establish a sense of belonging within the ball hockey community by devoting time and effort to building her sporting and volunteer skillset.

Sarah, Lucy, Beth and Frida grew up around their chosen sport and added volunteering to their sport engagement. Kath, Gwen and Julie came into their sport as adults.

Gemma was looking for an activity on her way to better mental health whereas Kath became interested in organising the sport in addition to actively playing it. Sarah and Lucy did not volunteer in LGBT+ settings because they did not feel comfortable expressing their identities openly, fearing prejudice and discrimination which is reflective of the negative discourses around homosexuality. Beth, Frida, Gwen and Julie simply did not see a reason to volunteer in LGBT+ environments because they did not identify strongly enough with being part of the LGBT+ community and therefore did not feel the need to be actively involved in championing LGBT+ inclusion through volunteering. We see here that identity work is shaped by not just what the study participants feel like they should be (advocating for LGBT+ participation in an LGBT+ sports club) but their sense of personal agency and what they want to be. There is a disconnect between self-identities and social-identities. Being sexually diverse might be challenging in a sport volunteering context if it is all about the “sport collective” and appropriating a sport identity. Identity work creates these resources and constraints that shape how individuals respond to future identity tensions.

Participants found their way into volunteering via socialisation, request, expectation or opportunity, often accumulating experience from many volunteer roles in sport and general volunteering. Each volunteer journey is different. Therefore, there were instances where participants sought volunteer roles and other times when they were offered roles. This section defined ways of getting involved and compared them to existing literature. Next, I will be looking at what happened when they started volunteering.

## 7.5 Doing volunteering

Participants volunteered in various roles that ranged from local level grassroots sports clubs to national sport organisations (see appendix 5). The ways in which participants got into volunteering has been covered in the previous section, however this section provides more detail on participants’ journey through volunteering. The participants

discussed successes and satisfaction as well as challenges and barriers to their volunteer experience.

As indicated previously, participants came into volunteering through family socialisation, request, expectation or seeking opportunities to volunteer. This has provided a sense of where they came from, however, it has not shown what happened next – the turns and crossroads along the road, i.e. how their roles changed.

### 7.5.1 Role changes

Participants shared the view that volunteer roles were easy to come by, in fact clubs were *“so desperate to get help and so happy to help you to be able to help them more”* according to Lucy. David shared this sentiment that people in voluntary and community sport organisations *“want you to succeed so they always help you and give you the tools you need”*. Consistent with volunteer discourses, gaining qualifications and skill development through volunteering was also a marker of a good volunteer experience, and this will be discussed further in the next section on successes and satisfaction. For Lucy, and others, once they had helped out a few times, there were usually other volunteer jobs that they either spotted or were asked to help with. It became their duty to give back, therefore integrating participants further into their clubs. For David however, volunteering was a progression.

“I progressed through until I was at the top of the organisation and then took a step back and then became a more of a general volunteer. I don’t think it’s good for the same person to lead an organisation continually. It needs change.”  
(David)

David took steps to gain more responsibility and climb the ladder to more complex roles and then transition from the role when he had achieved what he wanted to achieve. He went through regular periods of role transitions (see also Gellweiler et al., 2019) rather than exiting volunteering completely. In contrast to David, there were also volunteers

like Frida who actively resisted the idea of a linearly progressing “journey” that had clear ambitions and an exit point or desired outcome. Frida rather travelled between grassroots, regional and national level volunteer roles according to her interests and opportunities that presented themselves along the way:

“I don't know if I see it as a journey necessarily. Some of the things that I did when I was starting out as a volunteer were possibly more prestigious or high powered than I'm doing right now. So not seeing it as some sort of journey that's definitely going from one place to another. I've just done loads and loads of different things.” (Frida)

Frida resists the idea of volunteering as a journey because in her view a journey is a quest (see also Tomazos & Butler, 2010) when in fact she characterises her volunteering as non-linear and fragmented.

For other volunteers, regardless of the relatively short length of their volunteer commitment, change in roles and responsibilities was an eventuality. Kath and Gemma had volunteered for just over a year at the time of the study, however, they had both been exposed to more than the role they originally signed up to within the organisations.

Sarah, however, grew up around horses and was given more responsibility as the years went on after proving herself capable of handling more complex tasks such as going from building fences for equestrian events to working in the entries office. For Niamh, changing roles was linked to her wanting to separate volunteering from her working life as a teacher.

Participants were primarily asked to recount their sport volunteering experiences, and recollection of general volunteering outside of sport was also encouraged if participants were (or had been) engaged in other types of volunteering. Colin's varied volunteer experience from HIV prevention to sign language interpreting to sport volunteering reflected his varied career and the socio-historical time period. Compared to Niamh, Colin sought out opportunities to further develop his skills in his chosen career through



volunteering, whereas Niamh wanted to separate her professional career from her volunteering. This reflected Niamh's unhappiness with her teaching job and how she was actively looking to develop skills that would help her change careers. Beth had volunteered in a peer to peer capacity in educating young people about addiction as well as being a scout leader before becoming a basketball coach and referee and seeing it as a viable option to spend her time doing something she thought as worthwhile.

The changes in roles were both within the organisations participants volunteered in but also across organisations in sport or outside sport. Participants also expressed aspirations to change roles in the future, however, this will be covered in more detail in a section focusing on future volunteering intentions of the participants.

### 7.5.2 Successes and satisfaction

Overall, most participants described having a positive volunteer experience. Participants considered their volunteering successes as benefiting others and/or benefiting themselves. Following Engelberg et al. (2014), volunteer satisfaction and commitment is layered and social: it considers the relationships volunteers had with members, service users and the organisation as well as the individual volunteer role. David reflected on what 'double benefit' of volunteering meant to him:

“That's one part, a selfish part, looking after my own satisfaction. Then I really want to help other people. I know lots of people who aren't as confident as me in general life, or in running, or in their LGBT identity.” (David)

It is noticeable how David separates between different identity dimensions, for example talking about running and LGBT+ identities as separate as well as grouping other dimensions under 'general' dimensions. This indicates David might look for different ways to help people, depending on their most prominent characteristic. Helping oneself by helping others is a widely documented motivation to volunteer (Cnaan et al., 1996;

Shibli et al., 1999; Koutrou, 2018) and central to discourses of volunteerism (Ganesh & Mcallum, 2009). People may be more likely to engage in activities that align with their identity or self-concept (Wegner et al., 2019). The positive experiences reported by volunteers like David can be understood through the lens of their personal identity as competent athletes in their discipline, which is reflective of their strong sporting identity. This suggests that an individual's identity can also be shaped by their competencies and experiences, which in turn can influence their engagement in volunteering activities. When participants mentioned gaining confidence in their abilities this was not solely to do with their volunteering but also as athletes. Volunteering may have been more unplanned at times, and at other times volunteers, such as Frida, may have played at the national team level, which propelled them into volunteering as a way of staying in sport (see also Cuskelly & O'Brien, 2013). Participants like Frida still gained confidence as volunteers, but their confidence level was higher than for research participants who started a sport with no previous experience.

Research participants regarded their personal achievements in the context of the organisations they volunteered. Kath noted how she was good at *“getting people to sign on the dotted line”* and as a direct result of her actions her club was growing again. This points to a developing organisational identification (Wegner et al., 2019) and how committed volunteers were to their organisations. The continuation of the sport was very important to most participants. Therefore, they needed to ensure new people came into the sport with some also wanting to run the club. Kath expressed how she wanted to take an active role in the club's development and how it gave her great satisfaction *“to tell people exactly what I want to do rather than just being someone on the sidelines”*.

Since half of the participants were coaches, seeing people pick up new skills and become more confident in themselves was a source of pride for most participants. Frida shared her experience of this.

“When I was coaching the U21 team, I would then take a new coach in to work with me so that they could develop themselves. And those people developed as individuals not necessarily to become like, I mean, obviously, I'd have loved it if

they'd become the next lacrosse coach that was going to then take over, but actually just in themselves, they developed their confidence in their learning as being part of the process. So success in developing people really has been something that I can look back on really positively.” (Frida)

There was a personal reward for taking part as well in the form of good feedback from stakeholders as well as developing their fitness and skills to tackle new volunteering or career challenges. Niamh talked about roller derby enabling her to develop new skills that would be useful in a future career.

“I feel like this year as part of volunteering, yes, I've helped guide the club but I've learned a lot. I've learned how a rebrand works, how to mitigate and sort circumstances, I have learned how to help draft a policy and I'm like, I've gained quite a lot of skills that are quite good as well. And I was able to reference them in a recent job interview. So that was great.” (Niamh)

Participants often deflected questions about their personal successes in volunteering to what their club had achieved or what they had achieved for other people. Frida summed up this sentiment: *“it's always about what, what we, as a group were able to do or what the people that I helped have been able to do”*. Instinctively emphasising achievements as a collective over individuals was typical for participants in this study and part of their sport ‘identity talk’ (Hockey, 2005) which contradicts the way Meyer and Rameder for example (2021) present reflexive volunteering as purely individualistic self-interest. Emphasising collective achievements might also reflect their identity ‘personas’ (Watson, 2020) to emphasise their belonging to or becoming part of a collective or to embody the altruistic values of volunteering.

### 7.5.3 Challenges and barriers

Despite the overwhelming number of positive experiences informing attitudes toward sport volunteering among the participants, there were also barriers to volunteering. For Peter, the type of volunteer environment made a difference. Peter described how being involved in non-LGBT+ specific clubs prompted him to establish a new LGBT+ specific

club. He played for a non-LGBT+ cricket club for “*a couple of years*” before coming out. While “*instances of homophobia were limited*”, he made friends in the club and described his involvement as “*fine*” on one level but on another level, he felt like there was still something that made him an outsider. Having been able to directly compare his experience across the club he was involved in and the club he was setting up gave him a chance to reflect on the differences of the two experiences and his personal journey in cricket.

“And, you know, the two parallel experiences sort of running alongside each other became much clearer what the difference was. And funny because years ago, I never objected to LGBT sports clubs. I just never felt like that was for me, either or that's something I'd want to get involved in. And now I've decided to exit the game, full circle, 180 degree decided to start LGBT+ club. Now I can instantly see the difference. I want it for me and to make a safe, positive environment for LGBT people who want to get involved as players or supporters or volunteers. It's about changing cricket into a more positive, inclusive environment more broadly, not just about the new club so that when you do go and volunteer, or play at another club, it's a good positive experience. Maybe it's a wild ambition, but I think it's something we should aspire for.” (Peter)

Peter's reference to LGBT+ clubs and how he thought they were “*not for him*” might indicate he did not feel he could be a part of such clubs. This might be because Peter did not identify with the stereotypes of fit gay men or his level of confidence in his own ability as a cricketer. He also implies there is a long way to go to achieve more inclusive environments in cricket but it is now his volunteering modus operandi.

Those who had mostly positive experiences in volunteering, tended to focus on barriers they observed other participants or the club had. Colin's sentiment is noteworthy to showcase the presence of not only heteronormative discourses but also discourses on social class: “*I have to count myself as a middle class kind of white guy really*”. Colin further commented on how some financial barriers that others may face in sport did not apply to him. There were others like Sarah who thought “*volunteering itself became a barrier for participation*” because of people's readiness to exploit her kindness for

helping out and put undue pressure on her as a result. To add to this, Sarah felt the need to conceal her identity for her own safety.

“The only accepted ones were gay guys. From the horsey girls I guess that's a different story but even though I am out now I definitely feel that I do select which people I will be honest and open with and generally don't try to draw attention to those aspects of who I am around the horsey world.” (Sarah)

We can see here that although the events Sarah speaks of happened in the past, these events had far-reaching consequences for her present-day involvement in the ‘horsey world’. Sarah’s observation of gay acceptance is supported by Dashper’s study (2012) where gay male equestrians felt comfortable expressing themselves and other men held tolerant attitudes towards gay men in the sport. However, acceptance only refers to tolerance of difference rather than actively making horse riding an inclusive environment. Sarah’s use of the term “horsey world” implies that although she speaks as an insider (de Haan et al., 2016), her sexuality makes her feel like an outsider. Volunteering can cause periods of biographical disruption (Caetano & Nico, 2019) when the interaction between the inner self and the social self is disrupted and the individual is confronted with needing to reconcile conflicts between an inner and outside self (Watson, 2008). This inspired more intensive and active identity work as well as increased reflexive awareness of identity (Alvesson, 2010) from Sarah. In comparison, Joan recognised volunteering becoming too much in a different way: to the detriment of her career.

“Volunteering actually got a bit overwhelming. And it was a bit too much. And I think possibly in some ways, it damaged my career. Because at one point, I was doing so much volunteering, right, that I wasn't really paying attention to my career. And I think I missed some opportunities at the time. So I think you can do too much. And you have to be mindful of, does it really fit with where you're going and what you're doing.” (Joan)

Joan’s passion for volunteering meant she was prioritising volunteering over paid work. This implies that Joan had been putting a lot of effort into her volunteer work, perhaps as a means of expressing a certain facet of her identity to both herself and others. The

nature of her volunteer work, however, meant that she was neglecting her career, which was also a significant part of who she was. She might have felt torn between two facets of her identity and found it difficult to strike a good balance between them. In the end, she believed that her volunteer work may have hurt her career and prevented her from taking advantage of some opportunities. This can be a negative consequence of volunteering if volunteering does not fit with other parts of one's life.

George and his club had to determine "*where do we fit in*" or where should they play as LGBT+ team. When the club grew in members they needed to decide whether they wanted to play county level football or stay in a Sunday league. Because of the ethos of the club to be welcoming and open to all, they decided to split into teams where they found places for those players wanting to be more competitive and those who wanted to play for fun. George also noted a change in recruiting younger players to the team.

"I also think that we do face a challenge of younger players who tend not to want to play for LGBT teams. And I think that's, it's good, in a way, because people who are students, why would they play for an LGBT team, when they could play for university, for instance. And I think that that is not a barrier, or that kind of homophobia found in any university or the younger generation as much as there used to be." (George)

George's experience shows the changing nature (and demand) for LGBT+ spaces in UK society. This might be reflective of the mainstreaming of LGBT+ lives and an expectation to assimilate to non-LGBT+ specific sporting spaces. Being LGBT+ does not appear to evoke the sense of community that younger people need or want. This may be due to LGBT+ discrimination being perceived as a shadow of the past. Also, LGBT+ sport clubs may not be part of campus offerings and LGBT+ groups might have an advocacy driven purpose that extends to multiple issues that are beyond the remit of a sports club.

Gwen, Julie, Joan and Kath talked about the challenge of managing people including the retention of volunteers. Kath mentioned how she struggled to "*get everybody in the right places*" in tournaments so that all volunteers could make a meaningful contribution

to the event. Joan expressed her frustration “*generally speaking in volunteering, it can be quite hard to find people and grow them and then move them on*”. What seems to be missing from Joan’s ‘programme management’ perspective is a volunteer development pathway, similar to athlete talent pathways (Côté, 1999). By applying Côté’s ideas to volunteer development, organisations could create a structured and supportive framework that nurtures the growth and engagement of volunteers, enabling them to reach their full potential and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Nichols et al. (2019) also note this in their commentary on the lack of growing volunteers but instead focusing on selling volunteering. Retaining volunteers and keeping them engaged is a challenge across the volunteer sector. However, sometimes the underlying factors why that is might go unchallenged. Peter and David talked about cost being a barrier for people to get into sport.

“(Cricket) it's quite expensive sport to run as well. So I think that's sort of a barrier. I think a lot of people see it as a middle class pursuit. That can be off putting to people, particularly if they've had bad experiences of sport when younger.” (Peter)

“There is another LGBT+ running club in Manchester and they have a lovely 10k race each year. We asked people...so last year some people went to the race in Manchester, why didn't you go? Any reason you didn't go? Some people said 'well I can't afford to go there, I can't afford the money to go to Manchester or I don't like driving a long way and Manchester is three hours so it's a long way to go for a race. And so, as part of the committee we decided that we would pay for a coach, a bus, to drive people to the race and then back again so we just went for a day, early start and late finish but we had a really lovely day at Manchester and a 10k race. There were 5 or 6 people on the bus who would have never considered going if we didn't make it so easy and free for them to go.” (David)

Expenses are indirectly linked to sports volunteering since it is more likely that people involved in sport will also become volunteers at some point rather than someone who has not participated in the sport. Consequently, addressing barriers to participation may address some barriers to volunteering. Higher socioeconomic status has been linked with more frequent volunteering (Southby & South, 2016).

Interviews were conducted between 2019 and 2022 which meant research participants experienced a hiatus from organised sport due to Covid-19. Seasons were cut short and whole seasons not played. Sophie felt like “*that comes back to losing some of those benefits of being involved in both playing and volunteering*”. Sophie also described the feeling that the pandemic impacted her volunteering because she was feeling disconnected from playing in early 2021. Due to uncertainty around ‘return to play’ policies, the pandemic cast a shadow over future planning for the LGBT+ network in which she belonged, similarly to findings of Nichols et al. (2022) on community sport club response to the pandemic. Julie pointed out that in late 2021

“people are so used now to sanitising their hands wearing masks keeping distance from each other that we have, we have something called COVID safety officer or COVID security officer at each event, but they haven't had to do anything. They haven't had to remind people to stay distant or sanitise their hands before they get to download. They're so keen for it to start and continue. They don't want to jeopardise it. So I think that they're generally happy to follow guidelines. You know, you don't you no longer have 10 people in the startbox, you'll have one person, and then a minute, and then another person. You only turn up in the car park when you've got 10 minutes to run? Before your time, everybody's given a runtime. So everybody's, you know, and because we want to get as many people as possible through the start, the chances of seeing people that you know, in the car park are much slimmer.” (Julie)

Covid-19 had shown the meaningfulness of orienteering to the participants who now understood how important it was to do their preferred sport (Nichols et al., 2022). It might have been easier for individual outdoor sports to retain participants whereas in George's experience, team events were a big part of the social makeup of the football team.

“The problem now is, with COVID happening, you can't really have socials and you can't really talk to people, you can't really get to know them. So that's going to be a big stumbling block for just trying to keep these players that we've recently picked up because if they are there for socials and there to meet people, and you can't really meet them, you know, are they going to turn up every week.



So that's probably the biggest challenge for us for the next six months really.”  
(George)

Covid-19 meant extra planning and time dedication for activities that already depended on the dedication of volunteers. This added more pressure to those who were donating their time regularly already. Frida's example shows the additional piling of responsibility in a difficult time period.

“So I probably spend at least an hour, an hour 30 minutes, plus the other three hours of doing coaching. And then as President, I also run the meetings, committee meetings, and then I'm also responsible for checking what everybody else is doing on the committee. So in that role as president in a moment, we're meeting for an hour every two weeks. But in the meantime, I'm probably talking to the COVID officers, maybe three times a week. And, you know, the finance or the child protection welfare person, maybe once a week as well. So it's a lot at the moment, at least, as I say at least an hour a day. So it's just interesting to see how, you know, how you kind of navigate in between all of those different responsibilities. It does seem that yeah COVID has changed things obviously for everyone but especially for volunteers with the different safety measures, you have to have just the amount of planning that goes into it that wasn't in there before perhaps, or at least to that extent.” (Frida)

Covid-19 made research participants adapt to new circumstances. However, beyond the logistical hurdles, this period of reflection and adaptation also brought about a deeper questioning of the very concept of being a "volunteer." There were participants that did *not* think of themselves as volunteers akin to Davis Smith and Gay's (2015) findings on older volunteers. Frida, Niamh and George felt the word 'volunteer' did not accurately describe their involvement because it was so closely entwined with their sporting identity. Helping out did not equal volunteer involvement because it was what was needed to make sport happen. George even separated sport volunteering and charity volunteering on the basis that helping out at a charity could be classed as volunteering but helping out his sporting family did not. van Overbeeke et al. (2022, p. 39) propose not calling volunteering 'volunteering' because the term might be off-putting to non-volunteers but rather call it "doing something for someone in society"

“I would not have used the term volunteer. Yeah, for most of my life at all. So it's all just about doing stuff, and enabling things to happen.” (Frida)

“I mean, I suppose, like, I don't really feel I'm volunteering in a way because these are the people I play with and with this team are close friends and you know, they are kind of like a family in a way. So it's not really volunteering. To me, I wouldn't even think of saying if someone asked me do you volunteer it wouldn't really come to my mind to say, Oh, yeah, I volunteer doing this, you know, I just do what I do to help. In my mind I'm doing something for a charity. To me it's just kind of part of my life and every day. So it's not really. I don't go, you know, I'm going to go do some volunteering here. This is just kind of part of my everyday life really. I don't really see it that way.” (George)

## 7.6 Future volunteering

Research participants were also asked about their future intentions and whether they envisioned doing more volunteering, doing less volunteering, doing different kinds of volunteering, returning to volunteering or not volunteering at all. Most participants showed interest in *continuing* to volunteer in sport, thus expressing “a sense of continuity in the face of change” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 19) as well as striving for coherence in their self-identity (Watson, 2020). However, participants also expressed interest in volunteering outside sport as well as making a difference in the local (sporting) community. Gwen and Julie were looking to do volunteering in their local community that would make their volunteer experience more meaningful.

“We've got a couple of friends who do work with refugees locally. And it might be nice to do some volunteering that is a bit more... A bit more hands on, a bit more helpful for people who really need it. You know something that's a bit less for white middle class, liberal, generally wealthy people.” (Gwen)

Gwen and Julie identified their current involvement as privileged and perhaps not meaningful enough. Gemma also wished to ‘stay local’ as a volunteer but because Gemma did not see her current involvement with Goodgym from a position of privilege akin to Gwen, Gemma made sense of not going to Africa by positioning volunteer

tourists as privileged thrill seekers who travelled from Global North to Global South for self-actualisation purposes.

“At one point I really wanted to go to Africa and volunteer there. But then thinking about it, it's a bit white saviour. I know people who've gone off to Africa for two weeks and built water tanks or whatever. But in a way, I think it's probably better just to send money and get them to employ African people to do it. So I kind of totally got off the idea. I'd rather volunteer in the local community. I was having this massive debate with somebody. It might be harder to commit to volunteering to go out in the horrible weather here and do it every week than it is to go to Africa for two weeks.” (Gemma)

Peter realised there was a future date at which he would stop playing cricket and fully transition into volunteering – *passing the torch* to a younger generation of cricketers.

“You know what, at some point I'd have to retire. Hopefully, that's not anytime soon. But at some point afterwards, hopefully volunteering then just gives you an opportunity to stay engaged as well. Stay part of the community and part of the sport. Otherwise, you could easily be lost.” (Peter)

Peter accepted the emotions that would come with such a role transition. Volunteering seems to be a way to cope with the end of a playing career (see also Gellweiler et al., 2019). Peter might be referring to the LGBT+ community when he talks about staying part of the community. We're starting to see notions of 'volunteering as belonging' here.

Two participants were not active volunteers at the time of the study but had considered *returning* to volunteering.

“I think I would definitely be very cautious in feeling obliged to do things I didn't want to do. So I would only volunteer if it fit me personally and my time is more limited now anyway. I would like to get involved with a sport for social reasons. I would steer clear from anything to do with horse riding volunteering for obvious reasons but would be willing to get involved with perhaps some other sport I used to enjoy netball or start a new sport like basketball, I think something where everyone's equal it would be very important that there was not a hierarchy of

volunteers. So I wouldn't want it to be too established, more like a grassroots level sport.” (Sarah)

“I'd say life got the better of me so to speak. I had to do different stuff, I played basketball and with the other obligations that are in my life I don't really have the time to volunteer. Until this day when I meet those girls on the street or whatever they're super sweet to me and they ask me what I'm doing and how I am, or if I'm with other basketball players, or someone else who coaches them then, oh she taught us this, she taught us that. And obviously that feels really rewarding. The intrinsic motivation ended up being much bigger than I expected in the beginning and that's something that it's hard to let go and stop volunteering forever and why I would enjoy doing it again in the future.” (Beth)

Sarah felt cautiously optimistic about returning to volunteering whereas Beth was waiting for the right time to get involved again. Their aspirations were different for a reason. Sarah's bad experiences with volunteering made her weigh involvement more carefully whereas Beth recognised the time would come for her to step into coaching again. For both participants, managing their other commitments alongside volunteering proved challenging.

## 7.7 Discussion and summary of Chapter 7

This chapter has outlined the cross-case analysis of topical life history interviews. I have done this by delving into the discourses surrounding inclusion and exclusion in sport volunteering from the perspective of LGBT+/sexually diverse participants. Applying Watson's (2008) cultural stereotypes to LGBT+ and sport volunteering contexts leads to a discussion of LGBT+/sexually diverse identities: with some participants resisting the LGBT+ label (similarly to some participants not identifying with a 'volunteer label') while others embraced these labels. Therefore, the role of context is important, given that some people did not identify with labels anywhere whereas for others they managed their identities in sport as volunteers or within their occupations.

Participants belonged to both LGBT+ specific or inclusive sport clubs (football, running, roller derby, softball, swimming) and non-LGBT+ specific sport clubs or activities (ball hockey, basketball, Goodgym, lacrosse, orienteering, sailing, horse riding). LGBT+ sport clubs were still seen as promoting safe spaces for LGBT+ people to do physical activity but also places to meet like-minded people outside the LGBT+ club scene.

The choice between LGBT+ specific and inclusive sport clubs or other sport environments can be explained by competing demands of distinctiveness and sameness; and whether participants felt that they needed to be in an identity-based environment as an expression of their LGBT+ identities. Individuals can navigate their sense of identity and belonging by selecting either LGBT+ specific and inclusive sport clubs or other sport environments, and by striking a balance between their need for community and their desire for individuality.

Some participants also indicated they engaged in volunteering that challenged LGBT+ (in)visibility and relied on their sporting prowess to create change from within. Liam, Colin and David worked hard to make sure their club was inclusive to different groups of LGBT+ communities by appointing a committee that included members beyond gay men and inviting lesbian women to join the club and considering activities tailored to them. Positive LGBT+ role models and LGBT+ welcoming environments may motivate and promote LGBT+ people to participate in sports.

Additionally, Gemma discovered that exercise helped her control anxiety and safeguard her mental health. Internalised homophobia, which refers to unfavourable views and beliefs about one's own sexual orientation or gender identity and may result in discrimination, self-hatred, and humiliation, can also be the root of unpleasant physical exercise experiences (Herrick & Duncan, 2018).

There has been studies that term non-LGBT+ sport clubs as mainstream clubs (see for example Elling et al., 2003; Elling & Janssens, 2009; Wellard, 2006; Drury, 2011). However, with the affiliation of the LGBT+ specific clubs to NSGBs of the respective

clubs, these clubs are subjected to the same rules and regulations that every club is. And, regardless of their branding as LGBT+ clubs, they tend to accept members whose identity is heterosexual. Therefore, I argue, LGBT+ specific or friendly clubs have aspired to and have become *mainstream* clubs in the process. What perhaps makes LGBT+ friendly sport clubs different to non-specific clubs is their mission alignment to social justice and establishing a cause beyond sport or physical activity. Participants' life histories depict a world where LGBT+ people are expected to become part of the mainstream since they have been given access to heteronormative institutions such as marriage, therefore rendering LGBT+ identities less deviant (Wellard, 2006). Participants and their clubs had access to NSGB training, competitions and leagues, with NSGBs offering narratives of progress and diversity to communicate LGBT+ inclusion.

Research participants came to volunteering through socialisation, request, expectation or opportunity. This chapter has introduced the successes and satisfaction as well as challenges and barriers they encountered as volunteers and how their journeys progressed over time, ending in their aspirations about the future for their involvement. Participants managed their lives in identity-related ways in different stages of their volunteer experience. They aimed for consistency and coherence in their narration of their volunteer experience to maintain a consistent and coherent conceptualisation of their selfhood (Watson, 2020) – to achieve ontological security (Giddens, 1991; Lok, 2020). There is great resemblance between what we learn from research participants and our knowledge of volunteering more generally and is not specific to LGBT+ volunteers. Be that as it may, there were also findings that are particularly relevant for LGBT+ volunteers and therefore highlight the differences between LGBT+ volunteers and non-LGBT+ volunteers.

Although participants were not prompted to tell their coming out stories, coming out emerged as central to participants' sensemaking of their LGBT+ identities. Highlighting coming out is an example of queer consciousness (Orne, 2011) and a way of positioning oneself as queer subject in society (by distinguishing from a heterosexual

subject). Participants recounted coming out narratives of themselves or famous LGBT+ role models. As Sandler (2022, p. 6) points out, coming out happens *in* a social institution, “coming out is always directed *towards* someone” and people come out as sexual minority for example even if that someone would be oneself. Coming out is also intertwined with other intersectional identity dimensions such as social class.

Participants often referred to their personal coming out as having happened in the past although some mentioned contemporary experiences of hostility or awkwardness towards their sexuality by members of the public, other volunteers or sport club members. The experienced hostility made research participants selectively come out – choosing not to come out in environments that contributed to such hostility. My findings reflect Orne’s (2011, 2013) concept of strategic outness to LGBT+ volunteers in sport by detailing how they end up “in the line of fire” and use strategies of “taking, deflecting or dodging the bullet” (Orne, 2011, 2013) to manage their identities in situations ranging from acceptance to hostility. It is notable that participants’ coming out is mostly verbal, disclosures of identity in some situations over others which validates participants’ subjective conceptualisation about their selfhood (Henrickson et al., 2020).

These unique aspects include those participants who transitioned into volunteering within a year of becoming a member of their club or organisation.<sup>21</sup> There was a quick transition from ‘participant to volunteer’ for those research participants<sup>22</sup> who were participating their sport before volunteering. This could be explained by altruistic behaviours of stigmatised groups<sup>23</sup> and championing inclusion because of personal experience of exclusion. Experiencing personal suffering can shape and redefine one's identity (Kahana et al., 2017).

The research participants' volunteering experiences to date have been compared in cases ranging from joining up for volunteering, their perception of inclusion in sport, and doing diversity work as a volunteer, to getting involved in their clubs and activities

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<sup>21</sup> This does not account for those who joined organisations as volunteers such as Gemma.

<sup>22</sup> Colin, David, Peter, Niamh, George, Sophie, Liam, and Kath.

<sup>23</sup> See also for the link between altruism and LGBT identity (Kahana et al., 2017; Ng et al., 2012).

through socialisation, requests, or in a goal-oriented way. Their intentions to continue volunteering in the future, stop, or resume volunteering have also been compared. The volunteering meanings, identity work and diversity work are subject to further discussion and conceptualisation in chapter 8.



# 8 CONCEPTUALISING LGBT+ VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

This chapter relays the meaning given to volunteering, identity work and diversity work experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport to bring these together under conceptual categories (see appendix 2). Through delving deeper into research findings, I investigate how LGBT+ volunteers negotiate their involvement in the sport community through identity work, giving meaning to their sport volunteer experiences and influencing inclusion through diversity work. Using the lens of identity work and resulting personas, this chapter examines the obstacles and possibilities that exist for LGBT+ people in sports volunteering and how these experiences shape their identities in these settings. Overall, this chapter conceptualises major events and ideas found in topical life history interviews to produce conceptual categories in accordance with the constructivist grounded theory principles (Charmaz, 2014).

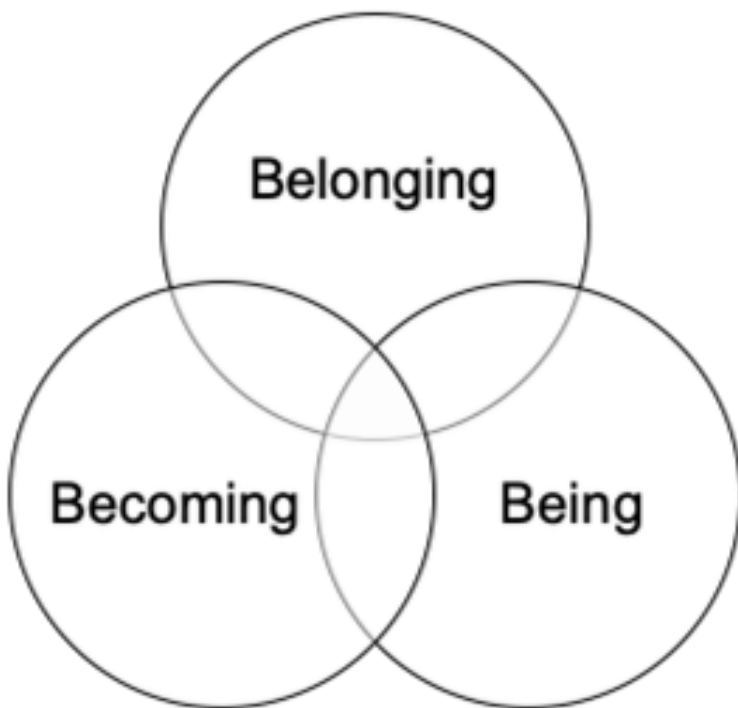
## 8.1 Conceptualising the meaning of volunteering

It is necessary to study the characteristics of the volunteer experience such as the meaning attributed to volunteering to determine whether people benefit from the volunteering they do (Wilson, 2012). This section presents three overlapping meanings (see figure 5 and table 3) that participants gave to volunteering, identified from the cross-case analysis:

- volunteering as becoming (functional meaning);
- volunteering as belonging (emotional meaning) and;
- volunteering as being (existential meaning).

These conceptual categories focus on the micro-level processes of volunteering and help to explain what meanings participants give to their volunteering: (1) how

participants recount their becoming/belonging/being as volunteers; (2) in what stage of their volunteering they experienced becoming/belonging/being as volunteers; and (3) the reasons given for becoming/belonging/being as volunteers. The meaning of volunteering was different depending on the length and intensity of volunteering as well as contextual factors such as volunteer environment, individual factors and societal influences.



*Figure 5. Conceptualising the meanings of volunteering (produced by author)*

### 8.1.1 Becoming

There were participants whose journeys were made meaningful through becoming. Volunteering as becoming reflected a change that took place in a person's life, sometimes on a personal level in relation to wellbeing but also as a new beginning, whether it was changing jobs or gaining new skills to then be at a better position to embark on a new career. Participants represented the 1980s and 1990s birth cohorts, therefore rendering the question whether their experience of becoming was closely tied to their age and establishing themselves in the world. Participants in the 1960s birth

cohort talked about becoming in the context of retirement, characterising this stage of their life as actively becoming.

Gemma's road to volunteering was shaped by her journey to better mental health.

“When Goodgym actually started, I was off work sick, not in a good place and I just couldn't... I was really paranoid about like... leaving the house at the time. September is like a fresh start sort of time of year. I was feeling a lot better at that point, and it's the new financial year at work, so I was like, I'm just gonna do it. So I just went along.” (Gemma)

Gemma was also aware of greater prevalence of mental health issues in the LGBT+ population compared to the general population (see for example Gates & Dentato, 2020) and the benefits of social connectedness through engaging in volunteer community groups (Ceatha et al., 2019). Volunteering offered Gemma an opportunity to create a positive association with a new pastime. Gemma struggled to stay committed to volunteering at first but because of Goodgym incentives that were designed with principles of gamification in mind with the community engagement and social activity, she found it easier to continue her involvement with Goodgym compared to doing solo runs for example. She knew charities and community organisations depended on the task force members' input, therefore making it harder to not go and give time.

Liam emphasised the benefits of volunteering to his career and how volunteering had helped him become better at his job.

“It has made me better at my job as well as outside the running club. It's helped shape the type of work that I wanted to do. So kind of a big part of me leaving for New Zealand was that I hated my job and I wanted a complete break from that. I didn't want just a job doing something else, I wanted a complete break. Then when I've come back I've found a new career that I really enjoy and a big part of that has been shaped by the running club. Big part of that has been the skills that I've been able to take to that role and have been shaped by the running club.” (Liam)

Liam did not enter his volunteer role with a progression plan but nonetheless he appreciated how important his experience at the running club was for him to make a career change.<sup>24</sup> As Ganesh and Mcallum (2009) suggest, family, ethnicity and religion provide scripts to establish ways of acting and behaving.

Similar to Liam, Lucy and Colin also saw their volunteering as a worthwhile way to gain skills and qualifications but also as a way to facilitate a good experience for other people. This is an example of "impure altruism" (Steen, 2006), in which what was useful to Lucy and Colin was then used to benefit others.

"I'm pretty proud of my assistant qualification. I got the level two and did first aid training too. It looks good on my CV. I guess just a highlight to get up the ladder, in a way. My sister, before I was an instructor...she didn't like it when the boat went fast, and she got very scared, and recently, I got her back on the water. I've managed to get her to enjoy it. She really wants to go sailing again because I guess my training and volunteering has got me to work with people that are very sensitive and scared and get them to feel safe. I've used that on her." (Lucy)

"I get a lot of benefit from the volunteering itself but also I've got some additional training that has helped me with my work because I'm a coach at work and I've helped to set the running group in my workplace as well so it's been quite beneficial on both sides really." (Colin)

Joan had a trajectory of learning where when she started volunteering it was fruitful for her career and later on volunteering facilitated lifelong learning.

"When I was younger, when I started to do some stuff with a swimming club for the first time, I think some of the projects, I used to do local press and publicity stuff, because I worked in the media. But actually, some of the learning that I did for the swimming club allowed me to grow my career in some ways, because I was able to try stuff out and work on stuff. That fed back into my career, which I think was a really great way of learning new skills, and, you know, teaching myself how to do stuff. On the whole, I've always done a lot of volunteering, actually, at that stage in my career, some of that really fed very successfully into

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<sup>24</sup> See Sheptak and Menaker (2016) as well as Thoits & Hewitt (2001) for similar findings.

my career. And, I needed to grow at work, as well as feel proud of the team being in the swimming club at that point. I mean, I'm now... I'm older, I'm not really looking to build a career in the same way. But I'd still like to learn these skills and learn new stuff.” (Joan)

Gwen sought to redefine her identity and find a new purpose, thereby undergoing a process of becoming someone with a meaningful role and contribution in society after retiring.

“It's different if you retire at 50 than if you retire at 65. There's a different expectation in your life, finding a purpose. Somebody said to me before I retired, he said: don't stop working, because you will be nobody. You will not, you'll no longer be senior manager for the biggest bank in Europe, you know, you'll become nobody. And I thought that's ridiculous but I can see how you could become nobody.” (Gwen)

Gwen illustrated how volunteering was a natural transition from early retirement and a way of retaining a sense of “civic utility” (Shachar et al., 2019). For Liam and David it was also as important to facilitate other people's becoming as it had been to make most of their volunteer opportunities:

“Giving back, whether that's helping people that have helped you, to the club, in my own experience to the club that helped me achieve a lot, helped me mentally and physically. Passing it on, passing it forward. Helping people who have just joined or are kind of new to the sport, the club. They have a talent, or something they can contribute as well, and I think seeing that and being able to encourage that is a big part of what I see volunteering is. Not just kind of keeping the status quo, but recognising this person would be really good and becoming involved as a volunteer and how they can progress things and change.” (Liam)

“In many areas, at my club, I know that I have some tools and some skills that I know I'm gay and comfortable being seen in an LGBT environment, not hiding away from it, or improving their fitness or running related goals so for example there was one guy who wanted to run a parkrun under 19,5 minutes so I asked him whether he could run with me to reach that time. I didn't really do that for my own satisfaction because I could already run that time, that was for him, to make sure he could realise his goal.” (David)

Liam refers to the holistic benefits of volunteering and a sense of gratitude in his personal growth as a volunteer he now wishes to relay back to new volunteers. In his view, the meaning of volunteering comes from being a mentor. David's aspirations relate to openly expressing an LGBT+ identity but also addressing sport-specific goals, another form of giving back. This further communicates the differences in how important Liam and David regard being LGBT+ to be in their lives. David actively foregrounds his LGBT+ identity wherever he goes, whereas Liam separates between being a volunteer and being a gay man.

People shift their conceptualisation of who they were, who they are and who might they become (Watson, 2020). *Volunteering as becoming* harkens to a functional meaning: "a sense of achievement and accomplishment" (Coghlan & Filo, 2013, p. 127). Therefore, volunteering as becoming is in line with volunteering as an activity that is sold to people (volunteers as consumers) and seeing volunteering as means to an end progressing one's career for example. This is closely related to Aggerholm and Breivik's (2020) conceptualisation of *having*, valuing an activity because of its instrumental value in the sense of what one can achieve from it and what the activity produces.

### 8.1.2 Belonging

Both experiences of belonging and non-belonging were present in participants' volunteer journeys. Some participants also facilitated other people's belonging in sport. Sophie described her involvement on a national LGBT+ panel in softball as a "*place we can be ourselves within sport*", referring to a safe space for her personally but also facilitating other people's belonging on the grassroots level of softball. Peter's experience of not fitting in was triumphed by his experience in an LGBT+ environment.

"The biggest challenge for me... you're trying to find a home. I guess you're trying to find a home when you're volunteering and then you want to feel part of that club or that environment. And I've come a long way towards feeling that you know, in the space of six months I feel much more at home in the LGBT+ club than probably will ever do at another club. There's got to be a sense of belonging. And I suppose you know when I did the other volunteering stuff. The

other club, it was in a sense, about trying to find that sense of belonging. By getting more involved with the LGBT+ club, it was more that I felt like I belonged. And so therefore, I could volunteer.” (Peter)

Peter described the ease of belonging in a supportive environment compared to the other cricket club in which he had been involved. Peter’s experiences mirror those of participants in Mock et al.’s (2019) study of LGBT+ focused community sport. This is a recurring theme for people taking part in LGBT+ sport, wanting to find a safe and inclusive environment where to practice sport.<sup>25</sup> Peter likens a safe welcoming environment to a basic need whereas his words could also be interpreted as seeking self-actualisation. His decision to move on from a non-LGBT+ specific club was based on a personal need (Hustinx, 2010) to be able to feel part of the LGBT+ community within the cricket community and not having to engage in stressful identity work but rather focus on doing diversity work.

Niamh’s sense of belonging was facilitated by her roller derby club.

“I had a relationship with someone involved in derby before I came out. And it fell to pieces. And so when I came to this club I made the decision that I wasn't going to date anybody to do with roller derby. It was too important to me at the time to risk losing, like your community and your family.” (Niamh)

Looking back, a perceived threat to that made Niamh re-evaluate what was important. When the end of a relationship threatened that feeling of belonging, Niamh realised the roller derby community was too precious for her to risk not being a part of it: roller derby was a home away from home.

For George, it was a sense of togetherness that made him regard his football club as more than volunteering or playing sport. Social relationships were resources for his long-term volunteer commitment (Wicker & Hallmann, 2013).

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<sup>25</sup> See also van Ingen (2004) and Wellard (2006) for similar findings.

“And all these people in this is, I think, the way I see the football team, though, is that they've always been more of a kind of a friendship group and a family than they have really been a chore or work. So a lot of people in the club and team are friends of mine, and we do things outside of football. I think that's important, you have to maintain that kind of friendship and that enjoyment. Otherwise, you would not want to do it. You know, if you're, if you're organising things, and it's full of people you don't really get on with and be able to talk to, it does become difficult. You can only do it for the joy of football for so long. I think you've got to have those people helping you out and supporting you along the way.” (George)

Research participants described their fellow volunteers and other club members as family, that's how close knit they had become. Experiencing “family atmosphere” is an important part of volunteer dynamics in sport<sup>26</sup> and discourses associated with volunteering (Ganesh & Mcallum, 2009). Beth reiterated the importance of basketball to her life and how volunteering to her was a way to belong more in basketball.

“The thing with it is that it's so closely related to basketball that I can't really separate it and basketball means a lot to me so volunteering in that is important because I did other volunteering but I don't think that meant to me as much as this did. So that's kind of hard to separate, meaning of volunteering and basketball but I definitely learnt a lot from it and it made me feel good so I wouldn't say it's the most important thing but that's why I'm not gonna say I'm not gonna do it because yeah, I think it can mean even more. Because I'm thinking that when I have to stop my playing career it might be something that will completely replace playing basketball.” (Beth)

Sophie associated belonging with a place, her subjective experience of moving back to her hometown. Her hometown had not changed, but she had since leaving and returning as an openly lesbian. Sophie's way of integrating into the LGBT+ community was through sports: she sought out LGBT+ sport clubs specifically and ended up playing softball.

“So when I moved back to my hometown, friends I had were like people from high school. So I didn't really have any sense of my identity and what that looked like as a lesbian, because I'd left when I was 18. So it was really important to me

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<sup>26</sup> See for example Stride et al. (2020) for experiences of female parkrun volunteers.



to try and find spaces where I could meet other gay people, but in a different context to just going out to a bar.” (Sophie)

Kath’s belonging was shaped by her gratitude to the team (reciprocity discourse) who took her in as a complete novice and taught her to play. Kath recognised the input of volunteer coaches who dedicated time and resources to help her as something she wanted to pay forward to others coming into the club:

“I really enjoy being part of the team. So I wanted to kind of get to know a bit more. It’s my first sort of dip into playing hockey that it was a case of after I’d gotten settled in I wanted to kind of know how everything worked behind the scenes and the opportunity came up. So when I got told what it kind of entailed, I thought it sounded like something I’d be interested in. So I thought I’d put my name forward. I ran, didn’t have any opposed to it so I just got straight into it. And I’ve really enjoyed doing the role.” (Kath)

Joan’s experience of belonging in sport was shaped by her earlier involvement with lesbian and gay organisations such as the Switchboard LGBT+. Joan thought volunteering was “*a really good way to get connected to the community*” which later on translated into involvement in LGBT+ sport that Joan had continued until present day.

In addition to personal journeys of belonging, it was also evident that after having had the experience of fitting in, the more experienced volunteers were now facilitating other people’s belonging. Therefore, the identity confirmation they received from their volunteer environment made a difference for them wanting to facilitate a similar experience for others. David offers us an example of how his actions facilitated the feeling of *place* (Aggerholm & Breivik, 2020) for a member of his club to combat isolation.

“A couple of years ago a member of the running club, who suffers from depression and is likely to back out of things easily, was joining us to travel to a race in Glasgow but couldn’t afford his own accommodation so I put him in touch with other people who were happy to share a room. He could then afford to go and wasn’t going to back out. That was important for his LGBT identity to go to this gay running event. It wasn’t so much about whether he did the run or not but

that he came to spend the weekend with his LGBT team members. It helped with his confidence and social interaction.” (David)

*Volunteering as belonging* refers to the emotional experience of belonging as a volunteer and in your volunteer environment, where volunteers feeling like they are part of something without having to try to fit in. Volunteering as belonging is particularly pertinent to the LGBT+ population who have been subject to marginalisation and feelings of isolation in sport. This is similar to Aggerholm and Breivik’s (2020) conceptualisation of *belonging* as a way of engaging in sport. Those volunteers who described volunteering as belonging referred to their connection to their sport specifically and also to their LGBT+ identity. Drawing on May’s (2011, p. 372) argument that people’s experiences of belonging offer a window into their experiences of social change and human interaction, a sense of belonging to LGBT+ communities can illuminate people’s feelings of not belonging with others/elsewhere. In other words, LGBT+ belonging is important because there is still a lack of sufficient social change. As a result, some LGBT people feel cautious and believe that they need to self-censor their behaviour in everyday interactions (Formby, 2017). Sense of belonging may also contribute to finding meaning in life (Lambert et al., 2013). Although some groups and individuals may experience oppression and exclusion within the LGBT+ community, all LGBT+ people share a risk of gender and sexuality-based oppression; however, of course, this risk will be moderated or intensified depending on the other identities that an individual has.

### 8.1.3 Being

The more experienced the volunteer and the more intense the relationship with their club or activity, volunteering is more likely to be described as a way of life and a sense of being, “being the subject of one’s activity” (Aggerholm & Breivik, 2020). Research participants thought volunteering was valuable in life in an existential sense based on their subjective experience (von Essen, 2016). This was reflective of the deep connection that participants had forged with their clubs or organisations and seeing volunteering as part of their sporting identity. When participants characterised

volunteering as being, they were the volunteers with the longest experience (20-30 years of experience or more). The following examples show how research participants embodied the meaning of “being”.

“It’s just a way of being. I don’t think I expect the people who don’t volunteer to volunteer, I just don’t understand what it is in their psyche that makes them not want to help anybody out with anything. One day, it might be me that needs it.”  
(Julie)

Volunteering had such personal significance to Julie that she questioned whether an opposite view could even exist. The reference to ‘psyche’ indicates the embeddedness of volunteering into her selfhood.

Akin to Julie, Colin questioned why someone would not volunteer. Rather than positioning himself as the future service user, Colin tied “being” into a model of good citizenship he had incorporated into his selfhood through his upbringing (Bekkers, 2007).

“I think there’s something about, I don’t feel like you’ve got to give back, like I have to give back. I suppose when you... the way that I was brought up was very much about you never discriminate against anybody and if you possibly can help somebody you should do it, why would you not do that?” (Colin)

Joan exemplifies volunteering as a state of existence: a fundamental aspect of her identity and personal fulfilment.

“My swimming is an essential part of my life, my health and wellbeing. But my volunteering is I guess...you know, I feel like it’s important. It’s part of what makes my heart sing in another way.” (Joan)

She described how she wished she could put her head in the water and shut off the world when she trained but people’s perception of her as ‘Joan the Volunteer’ sometimes became too interwoven with ‘Joan the Swimmer’. Where she deliberately looked for separation by training with the experienced swimmers rather than the

learners, others did not see that distinction and she became trapped in her 'public-facing' familiarity.

Research participants reflected on how volunteering also helped them to *be* themselves.

"I can say if I hadn't taken part in roller derby, I'd probably be married, probably with a child. And that would probably be to a man. Whereas now I'm engaged to a woman. So, I think in the context of I grew up in Presbyterian Church, in the 1990s and noughties, and there would have been that thought of being gay is wrong. So I make no apologies. I'm just, I'm just gonna be here. I'm always like, it took me till I was 30 years old to get this far. And then it took me till I was 33 to meet someone. I refuse to hide it away from anyone just because they might feel uncomfortable." (Niamh)

Niamh contextualised her involvement in roller derby as liberating, a way out of the old ways of her life that was greatly dictated by her involvement in the church in Northern Ireland. Roller derby allowed Niamh to be herself.

Colin implied that Irish Catholic upbringing could have been a barrier to his openness but it was not, unlike Niamh's.

"In my paid work as well it's absolutely the same you get me as a whole package and if you think I'm the right person to do something this is who I am and I would never expect you to be somebody other than who you are and have ever anybody suffer. For me it's really about my own sanity if I wasn't able to freely talk about who I am, what I did at the weekend or what kind of relationship I have with my children or with my parents or my family...I would say my family were cool with it and they were brought up in a strict Irish Catholic tradition." (Colin)

Colin's family allowed him to be himself, building a strong foundation that he carried with him to all areas of his life. Colin therefore did not separate between how he presented himself at work or volunteering. In other words, he brought his whole self to work and

volunteering<sup>27</sup>. A consequence of committed volunteer service was developing a volunteer identity and mirroring this with LGBT+ and other prominent identities.

Volunteering as being exemplifies how volunteering had become an inseparable part of the individual's identity, "the way they were" – moving towards permanence, rather than an ongoing process of becoming. Additionally, I argue that volunteering as being is an extension of volunteering as 'belonging' since being refers to a full adoption of a volunteer identity whereas belonging is signalling or feeling a sense of togetherness with one's surroundings.

*Volunteering as being* refers to an existential meaning of volunteering: integration of volunteering in selfhood or 'within' as an inseparable part of the volunteer in question. Volunteering as being is in line with developing volunteering or volunteers as citizens and linked to Aggerholm and Breivik's (2020) conceptualisation of *being* as an inherent existential quality of sport engagement. I addressed how volunteers, through volunteer journeys over time, volunteers develop a sense of being in their volunteer involvement. Volunteering as being should not be confused with ontology of being (Tomazos, 2016) as there is a flow between the categories of becoming, belonging and being, therefore pointing to a continuity and flux that are attributed to ontology of becoming (Elkjaer & Simpson, (2011, p. 75). Volunteering as being is not an "achievement state" (Chia, 1995, p. 588) but an emergent configuration of relations (Chia, 1995; p. 594). Becoming, belonging and being are forms of self-actualisation (Meyer & Rameder, 2021) and individualistic existentialism (Breivik, 2022).

## Summary of the meanings of volunteering

Sport England (2016) posits sport volunteering as a valued and meaningful way to engage in sport beyond participation. In particular, I shed light on the meaningfulness of

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<sup>27</sup> There were other participants such as Gemma and Sarah who felt they could not unreservedly bring their whole selves to volunteering (or work).

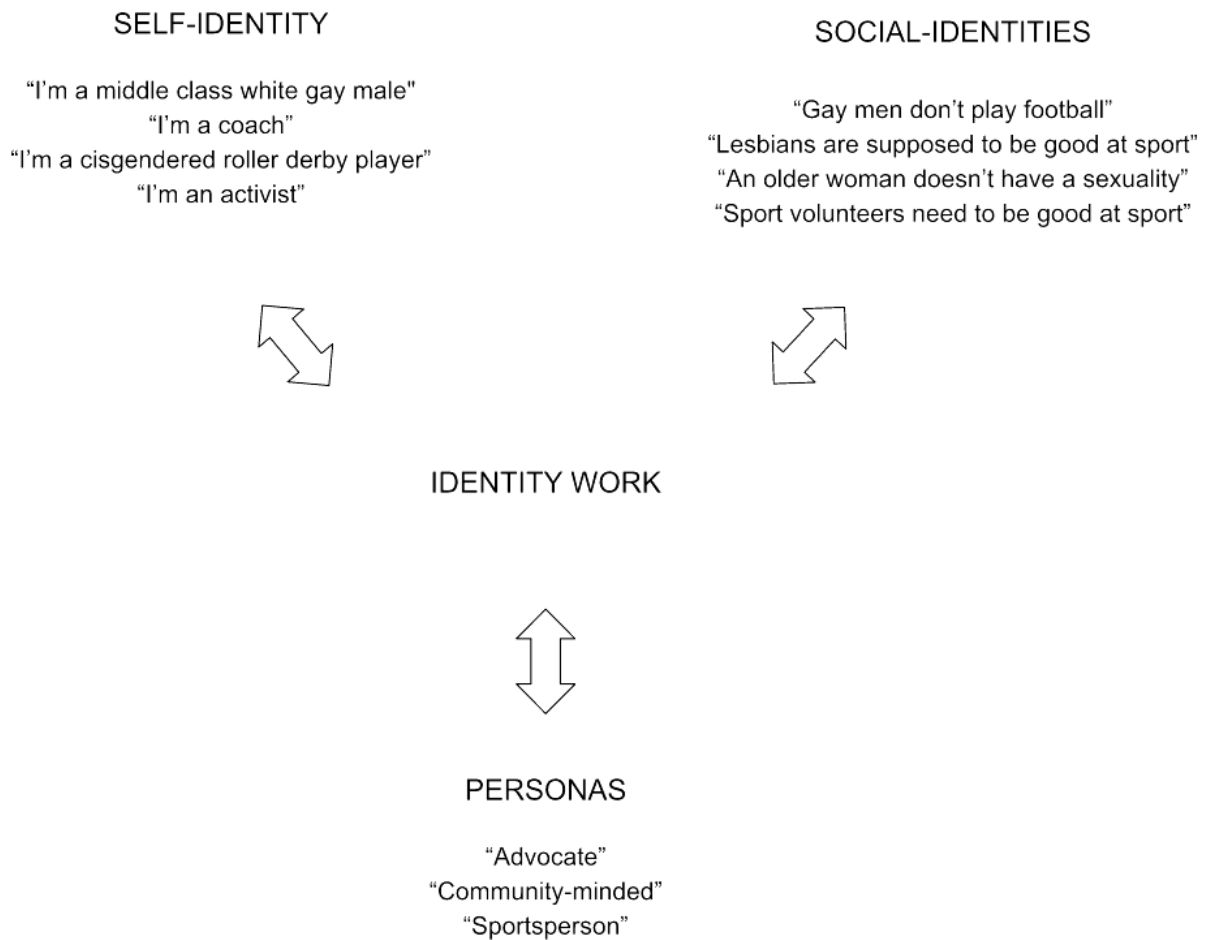
volunteering for LGBT+ volunteers by positioning the meaning of an individual volunteer experience as becoming, belonging and being. These categories are not mutually exclusive and represent the transcending potential of sport volunteering as a civic activity. There is overlap and movement between the categories (see figure 5) which implies that meanings given to volunteering can be understood as an amalgamation of these categories, and can change over time. The meanings of volunteering are compiled below (table 3).

Table 3. Summarised meanings of volunteering

<b>Becoming, belonging and being as meanings of volunteering</b>		
<p>Becoming – functional meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• upskilling;</li> <li>• facilitating others' becoming; and</li> <li>• life stage transitions.</li> </ul>	<p>Belonging – emotional meaning;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling accepted and included;</li> <li>• family atmosphere; and</li> <li>• facilitating others' belonging.</li> </ul>	<p>Being – existential meaning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “who I am”;</li> <li>• “can’t think of why someone wouldn’t volunteer; and</li> <li>• “state of being”.</li> </ul>

## 8.2 Conceptualising identity work

Adaptation of Watson’s (2020) four-fold scheme (figure 6) is presented to make sense of LGBT+ volunteer identity work experiences in sport. Figure 6 summarises the findings in relation to self-identities, social identities, personas and identity work in between. See appendix 8 for types of social identities for study participants.



*Figure 6. Participants' identity-making process (adapted from Watson, 2020)*

## Self-identities

There are instances in participants' accounts where LGBT+ identity is foregrounded and other instances where it is hardly mentioned, or it is minimised. This is reflective of how participants spoke and shows a separation between LGBT+ identity and other identity dimensions. There were glimpses of unpacking social class, socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Participants were reflective in their identity talk, expanding on the perceived identity work of others who might have had a more challenging volunteer experience and placed their largely positive volunteer experiences in context.

When LGBT+ identity was not relevant to the discussion, it became a backdrop. It is recognised that sport volunteering or being LGBT+ are not isolated identities but that volunteering and being LGBT+ can be a central and defining element of an individual's life and identity. Generally, participants expressed their sexuality openly in sport. However, there were differences in what participants considered 'open' expression of one's identity.

## Social-identities

There was an influence of cultural stereotypes on the social identities of LGBT+ individuals within the context of sport volunteering. The research participants discussed the impact of discursive pressures and stereotypes on their self-image and experiences. The quotes provided highlight the internalisation of negative stereotypes and the unrealistic expectations placed on LGBT+ individuals in sport. Participants expressed frustration with the assumption that lesbians should excel in sport and highlighted contrasting stereotypes about gay men and the need for them to prove their athletic abilities. There is added complexity in navigating social dynamics and the potential discomfort or stigma associated with disclosing one's sexuality. The interconnectedness of personal identity, cultural stereotypes, and social contexts plays a role in shaping the experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport.

## Identity work

Following Watson (2020) it is important to not only look at one aspect of a person's life (in this case, volunteering) but also look at the experience of being LGBT+ in and outside volunteering to be able to investigate the identity work of individuals. How actively or passively individuals engage in identity work is dependent on the circumstances they find themselves in at different stages of their lives (Watson, 2008). Identity work takes place socially rather than privately: self is inherently social (Watson, 2020).



There is an inherent desire to conform to social norms and expectations, and in idealised Western terms, to maintain authentic selves with some surface level qualities that are bound to change. This trope of authenticity results in a more coherent, continuous sense of self that is narrated through the life history interviews. I wanted to find out whether LGBT+ volunteers had a coherent sense of self despite them having to come out and proclaim change in themselves. However, an enduring sense of self is close to a paradox as both continuity and change reside in the same self. This is evident in LGBT+ coming out narratives that indicate a person's change from heterosexual to being LGBT+. When someone comes out, they communicate a part of their identity that they have previously hidden or been unable to acknowledge to themselves and the outer world. This is a unique scenario to examine identity work as a process of "exploring different spaces a person might not be ready to fully inhabit" (Dym et al., 2019, p. 154).

The findings indicate that those who did not deem their LGBT+ identity as their most prominent identity, were also less likely to belong to LGBT+ sport clubs. Swank & Fahs (2016) made similar observations in terms of their study participants less likely to engage in gay rights activism if they did not accept an activist identity.

This begs the question: (1) whether LGBT+ people want to be role models and represent their community; and (2) whether LGBT+ volunteers can be considered as role aspirants who have turned into role models (and, relatedly, what this could mean to them to be a role model, representing a heterogeneous "community"). Those who volunteered in LGBT+ settings thought being a role model was more important, but those who volunteered in other settings were not concerned about representing the LGBT+ community.

## 8.2.1 Creating volunteer personas

Volunteer involvement of participants is characterised by three different adopted personas: (i) advocate, (ii) community-minded; and (iii) sportsperson (as indicated in table 4). These personas<sup>28</sup> were developed as being the private and public selves presented in various social circles. All participants expressed how they were “doing” or had “done” volunteering but for some it was no longer simply an activity in which they engaged, but “being a community-minded” had become an organising feature of their volunteering. This also applies to those with “advocate” and “sportsperson” personas. Advocate, community-minded and sportsperson personas were therefore the foundation upon which the participants constructed relatively coherent sense of selves which became their preferred identity.

*Advocates* work towards LGBT+ inclusion by promoting LGBT+ physical activity initiatives via sport clubs or taking part in LGBT+ networks to improve inclusion through volunteering or work – in other words they are likely to have a ‘gay job on top of the day job’ by dedicating their time to further LGBT+ inclusion and to be an agent of change. They embody being a visible role model in order to provide more relatable role models to others than the more distant LGBT+ icons. *Community-minded* personas are presented when the person is driven by personal contribution for the good of the communities they serve. They hold in high regard the double benefit of volunteering, and the satisfaction they get out of donating time. One characteristic to the community-minded persona is that the individual volunteers in multiple settings of which sport is just one example. *Sportspeople* personas present in those people that are mainly concerned with how to make their sport thrive or survive and their volunteer contribution helps them bolster their already strong sporting identity. They seek belonging through their sport and associating with their sport (e.g., being a roller derby player). Volunteers presenting the sportsperson persona may have only volunteered in sport or physical

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<sup>28</sup> see also appendix 8

activity, or their commitment is to sport volunteering first, other causes are secondary. Next, I present a further discussion and examples of how the personas are realised.

#### 8.2.1.1 Advocate

David strived for a separation of his volunteer and LGBT+ identity in some of his volunteer roles whereas in others he was visibly LGBT+. David seems to be led by his professional identity, as someone working in marketing. He acknowledges that his LGBT+ identity was not the primary reason for his involvement as a trustee.

“The people at the swimming pool knew I was gay, they knew my husband. I didn’t hide it at all but it was never important, I wasn’t needed to be LGBT to be in that role. I don’t think they needed a token LGBT person to bring that voice to the committee. I was there because I was good at marketing, not because I was LGBT.” (David)

This appears to show that David saw his involvement as an opportunity to contribute his skills and make a difference in the organisation. He was an advocate in some areas of his life but, unlike Sophie (see below), he separated his LGBT+ activism from other areas of his life. It should also be noted that Sophie calls Pride a “*march*” to underline the event’s activist roots rather than a *parade* which has a celebratory connotation. For Sophie, volunteering involved an element of protest in and LGBT+ space, similarly to Formby’s (2017) findings.

“That comes from more than softball, so I’m an activist in other things that I do, as well. That’s an important part of my lesbian identity. I’m a journalist for LGBT publications, I’ve run my own lesbian ‘by women for women’ platform and done campaigning work through some of those platforms. But one of the things that the club does, more on the political side is, every year we have a marching group in the Pride march.” (Sophie)

Role models or more specifically the lack thereof, was significant to participants’ identity fit both in terms of becoming a volunteer and being a role model for other people, adopting an ethos of “being someone you needed when you were younger”. As Sarah

put it, *“if you can’t see it, you can’t be it”*. Van Overbrooke et al. (2022) noted how finding role models from communities of non-volunteers might encourage volunteering from under-represented groups. David felt compelled to be a role model for others as a result of his lack of role models as a child, which shaped his advocate persona.

“I think if I am there in a prominent position and known to be gay, it could help somebody else. So I do positively use my sexuality in that regard in my volunteering positions. I think it’s important to be known that I am gay and I’m doing these roles so that other people will realise they can do it.” (David)

The line between advocacy and activism is a blurred one. I use the term advocate to indicate participation through existing systems and structures to promote inclusion but recognise that some participants engage in activist actions to initiate direct action to challenge the existing sporting landscape, combining elements of advocacy and activism.

#### 8.2.1.2 Community-minded

Gemma exemplifies a volunteer who reinforces her sense of self as a supporter of community initiatives by participating in fitness philanthropy. By volunteering, Gemma hopes to "do good" and feel good about her contribution. She also wants to find purpose and a sense of community.

“I’m not very good at team sports. I hate...well, I enjoy being on a team, but I always feel like I let the team down because I’m not very good. Whereas with this, you could feel like part of the team without letting everyone down. And yeah, actually like doing... like helping people feels really nice as well. And the task was really fun because we built IKEA furniture for a charity that helps young people at risk of being homeless and stuff. And I think some of them were homeless or just out of care or that kind of stuff. We made chests of drawers for them. It was taking their staff like eight hours to make this chest of drawers between being interrupted by all the problems going on there and stuff. So we made like, four or five of them that night. So we saved them a lot of time and yeah, it felt really good to be part of something like that.” (Gemma)

Gemma talks about how much she enjoyed her volunteer sessions. She valued being able to feel like a member of a team without having to worry about disappointing others. By engaging in a volunteer endeavour that fits with her values and interests, Gemma is in this instance presenting her persona as being community-minded, highlighting the significance of volunteering in developing her sense of identity. By supporting the charity, Gemma's volunteering strengthens her perception of herself as a community-minded person who values helping others by for example building furniture for the charity and saving them time this way.

Presenting a community-minded volunteer persona meant that going back to being "just a participant" was hard once research participants became known as the organiser. For those who had volunteered longer, there was sometimes an issue of people seeing them as leaders even though they also wished to be present in club events as participants. This complicated enjoyment of their volunteer experience and they grew weary to queries and expectations of always being "member-facing" in their role. Atewologun et al. (2017) refers to this experience as identity conflicts – when two identities collide, similarly to what Colin and Joan experienced in this study. Colin and Joan emphasised how important it was for them to get their swim or run in peace without always having to be the group leader.

"Sometimes I really do want to just go along, have a run and come away and go home. Sometimes when you're feeling a little harassed or stressed you know it's a challenge to go along and because people know I've been there a long time and I volunteered they expect me to lead the group and sometimes I don't want to." (Colin)

"Sometimes if you're a little bit public, and people ask you a lot of questions, like oh please, just leave me. I just want my swim." (Joan)

The noticeable tension between participation and volunteering in this PhD study was similar to that of Wegner et al. (2019) where volunteers either accommodated both sport and volunteer identities or redefined their sport identities to fit in with their organisational (volunteer) identity.

### 8.2.1.3 Sportsperson

Liam was not yet relied on in the same way that Colin and Joan were in their sports clubs, but he recognised that change was required to keep him engaged as a volunteer. Being able to do just running from time to time was important to him and the reason why he joined the club in the first place.

“I think that actually what I now want to achieve with the club can be better met by me working as a coach, working as a leader, rather than necessarily being on a committee. I think in terms of my personal advancement it'll kind of allow me time for my own training, my own kind of running, and hopefully to get back to enjoying it as much as I can.” (Liam)

Liam saw his role as a coach as more effective than being on the committee, allowing him to focus on his personal growth and development. He was invested in the growth of the club both for his personal enjoyment and for the club's sake.

Beth thought volunteering 'unlocked' a hidden part of her identity, creating a continuation (Cuckelly & O'Brien, 2013) of her existing basketball identity rather than developing a new identity. It seems that because Beth was already emotionally invested in basketball, volunteering in the sport allowed her to become more deeply embedded in the sport. This corresponds to findings from Laverie and McDonald (2007) on developing identity importance in volunteering as a result of identity-related social and emotional commitments.

“Volunteering really opened up a part of myself that I wasn't aware of and I would have never gone there myself. That's actually not true, I can't say I never would have, I might have but those periods definitely, I would not have considered it. I would think that it's a possibility. So it's kind of, it gave me views about the future as well, things I might do or enjoy, start doing more.” (Beth)

Beth explored an aspect of herself that she might not have discovered without volunteering. It afforded her the opportunity to try new things and interact with people

outside of her usual social circles. In addition, Beth's statement that she "might have" considered exploring this aspect of herself without volunteering suggests that she had not yet fully acknowledged or acted upon a curiosity regarding this aspect of her identity. She has been able to explore and validate this aspect of herself through sport volunteering, which may have led to a greater sense of self-awareness and acceptance.

Niamh, however, is able to express even more clearly how volunteering is positioned in relation to being a participant as she has a strong sense of identity tied to being a roller derby player.

"I don't think anybody would call themselves volunteers because it's just what you do. It's just part of the culture of the sport. The thing is that I would call myself a derby player. I think volunteering is part of that, you know, if you put on all the different things that it takes to be a derby player, one of them is volunteering and helping run your league." (Niamh)

Niamh identifies as a "derby player", emphasising her dedication and participation in the sport beyond volunteering. She understands the importance of volunteering and helping run the league as part of her role as a roller derby player. This suggests that Niamh may view volunteering not only as a way to contribute to the sport, but also as a way to strengthen her identity as a member of the derby community. There may be a sense of social pressure to volunteer and contribute to the community because it is perceived as something "everyone" does.

The contribution of this PhD study is in the instances of (non-)disclosure of identities and the resulting complexity of identifying as LGBT+ in a sporting context. Some volunteers navigate this identity work process by compartmentalising their sports or volunteer persona while others assert their LGBT+ identity and promote greater acceptance and inclusion in sport by engaging in advocacy.

Table 4. Volunteer personas

Personas: <i>public</i> selves individuals present to others in the various social circles in which they mix as sexually diverse sport volunteers		
<p><b>Advocate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses sport volunteering as an arena for activism</li> <li>- Drives inclusion initiatives through volunteering (e.g. LGBT+ sport clubs and networks) and/or at work (e.g. LGBT+ networks)</li> <li>- Strives to be an out role model</li> <li>- Seeks meaning and belonging through activism</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community-minded</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses sport and other volunteering contexts as a means to reinforce identity of contributing to community initiatives</li> <li>- Values the wellbeing and success of the community</li> <li>- Tension between always being seen as a volunteer versus wanting to be seen as a participant when not volunteering</li> <li>- Seeks meaning and belonging through all volunteering</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sportsperson</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses sport volunteering to develop their identity as someone who is developing the sport itself</li> <li>- Wants to see their sport/club grow and thrive</li> <li>- Volunteers mainly or only in sport</li> <li>- Seeks meaning and belonging through sport</li> </ul>

## 8.3 Conceptualising diversity work

### 8.3.1 Engaging in and calling for diversity work

As the experiences of volunteering were explored, the value participants placed on inclusion and what could be labelled diversity work became apparent. This section addresses participants' perceptions of inclusion and diversity work experiences in their organisations. I refer to diversity work as what participants did to influence inclusion and how they achieved more inclusive practice in sport volunteering. Diversity work is therefore viewed as enhancing personal sense of belonging or improving conditions for LGBT+ communities (in organisational context) (Holck et al., 2016).



This section addresses how participants worked towards inclusion in sport. Participants were doing diversity work for their clubs to ensure other LGBT+ people were accommodated but they also took on diversity work in their professional lives and volunteer roles outside of sport. This further expands the use of Ahmed's (2012) concept of diversity work beyond higher education settings in sport volunteering (Spaaij et al., 2018; Storr, 2020). This section also discusses how the diversity work of participants can be interpreted adopting a business case, social justice case and a sustainability case approach (van Overbeeke et al., 2022). *Diversity as a business case* focuses on impacts on organisational performance and effectiveness (volunteers to reflect service users to provide better service). *Diversity as a social justice case* reduces exclusion and marginalisation. *Diversity as a sustainability case* sustains volunteer inclusion and advocates for new approaches to recruitment, for example inclusion of non-volunteering antecedents (van Overbeeke et al., 2022). Sustainability case can be considered an ideal type of inclusion as it focuses on an inclusive solution to retaining and recruiting volunteers whilst bolstering diversity.

The suggested importance of diversity work may be heightened because I separately included questions on influencing the level of inclusion in sport. However, some participants, such as Beth, did not carry out diversity work actions themselves but rather observed or suggested good existing practice when asked. Other participants, such as David and Lucy talked at length what they had done to increase inclusion and what they were going to do to make sport volunteering more attractive to LGBT+ people. For Colin, inclusion foregrounded his volunteering-related values, whereas for Gwen and Julie, influencing inclusion was a future consideration to shape volunteer involvement.

## Calling for diversity work

Participants talked about the (in)action of umbrella organisations or NSGBs in doing diversity work. Peter mentioned how sport governing bodies do not always put their EDI strategies into practice: *“they maybe make the right noises but I'm not sure it's filtered all the way down”*. This is an example of the language of diversity, a speech act that

does not equate to having diverse practices (Ahmed, 2012). Sarah was very critical of diversity efforts in horse riding after learning British Racing had established LGBT+ network at the time of the interview in 2020. In her view, 'it was too little, too late'.

“That is very much an afterthought. So it doesn't surprise me at all that they are very late to the party and in that sense, but I think that they still have a lot more to do in terms of all minorities because it is still very much so dominated by heteronormativity which doesn't reflect society and so it does need to update. But at least they've started so there's probably some positive in there.” (Sarah)

George thought that football governing bodies and leagues were simply not doing enough and were also engaging in non-performative speech acts (Ahmed, 2012): George explained why football bodies considered diversity a “*tick box exercise*” and his dismay on learning that his local Premier League club forgot to invite any (local) LGBT+ football teams to their LGBT+ football tournament:

“And it's this kind of thing they've been told they need to diversify. They've done it by, you know, as a tournament for gay people, but they're not really involved. It's just so that they can say we've done it.” (George)

George also criticised the frustrating time-bound nature of diversity programmes within the FA, which did not portray an image of an organisation where inclusion was profoundly established in organisational culture. This goes against the idea of “circulating diversity” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 28). In other words, diversity does not filter through to reach the individuals it is supposed to reach (Lawley, 2019) – diversity is an outcome rather than an underlying value and bedrock of an organisation. George's example shows how LGBT+ volunteers are instrumental in mobilising change despite a lack of support from institutional structures to combat homophobia and transphobia in sport (see also Kavoura and Kokkonen, 2020).

“I look at the national FA's objectives, they made a four-year plan to encourage LGBT in football. Only lasted four years and now it's sorted apparently, according to the FA, you know, four years, it was like, we train 100 people in diversity training and across the FA you know, we'll wear rainbow laces once a year. Well,

you know, it's not really solving anything is it, long term? Why do a four-year plan, should it not be just an ongoing part of their policies? You know, it shouldn't be like, we're going to tackle homophobia for four years and then we're going to tackle racism for four years. And then what?" (George)

As Seippel et al. (2018) note, when it comes to LGBT+ inclusion in sport, this is not always regarded as integral to sport's integrity as doping is for example. Therefore, sport organisations may take the issues of EDI less seriously or merely engage in performative acts of diversity (Bury, 2015). In professional football for example, Seippel et al. (2018) argue that homophobia is regarded as a more of a personal issue for the player(s) concerned rather than as a direct threat to the integrity of football. Denison et al. (2020a, 2020b) also note the inaction of sports organisations despite evidence detailing the seriousness of homophobia. Despite the limited recognition of LGBT+ inclusion as integral to the integrity of sport, it is important to recognise that LGBTQ+ diversity can have a direct impact on the overall success of sports teams and enhance the experiences of everyone within sporting environments (Cunningham, 2011; Cunningham & Hussain, 2020; Cunningham & Nite, 2020).

## Engaging in diversity work

Study participants were mindful of *doing* diversity rather than merely *stating* diversity. Good practices participants identified are reported in this section. Participants believed diversity was short-lived without inclusion. Diversity and inclusion need constant and consistent actions. Colin noted how the running club committee was not always diverse even though they were an LGBT+ running club. The exclusivity of LGBT+ spaces as gay, white, middle class and male has been recognised by other studies such as Wellard (2006). Joan highlights this problem in the demographic makeup of gay sport clubs seems reach across national borders.

"I mean, there aren't very many women swimmers. So that's a shame. And that's something that I've over the years I've worked on, but as yet has not been resolved. I'm not sure it will be. I think it's just there are so many... I think there are lots of reasons why women don't swim in a gay club and that is the same if

you look at clubs in Amsterdam, New York, they're all the same. There's not as many women. I think that's just the way it will go. I think it's important to keep working to change it. There are a lot of white gay men basically. And that's frustrating and that we need to work on.” (Joan)

Joan appears to be aware that this diversity work for female representation and inclusion will be ongoing and that this diversity work might not be finished in her lifetime. Colin on the other hand seems to have found a way for female members of his club to feel included through inclusive messaging.

“We've got a lot more women in the group now, we've got more lesbians in the group because at one point we had an increase in the number of women but they were all straight women. I recognised kind of for some of the lesbians I knew, they had never dreamed of coming to a running group and particularly they did not want to come to running group that was very male dominated and or that was about men and straight women because they wanted a space that felt safe for them.” (Colin)

Lucy on the other hand took action by changing registration forms at her sailing club or what Trussell et al. (2018, p. 58) call destabilising “heterosexist organisational policies and program designs”.

“I changed the form where it said stuff like, when asked about gender, I put nonspecific or trans. Things like that I added more things into it. It was a bit more or less black and white. You kind of get to secretly change it from the inside.” (Lucy)

The quiet resolve Lucy showed by simply changing the forms is similar to Trussell et al. (2018) study on LGBTQ+ parents experiences of community youth sport. Parents in Trussell et al.'s (2018) study and Lucy in this study may have opted for a more cautious approach due to the fear of facing prejudice and discrimination if they were openly vocal about their advocacy, as revealed by their experiences (Trussell et al., 2018). This discomfort with outspoken advocacy can be seen in Lucy's life when she stated how she did not feel brave enough to challenge everyday homophobic slurs she heard at the

pub sometimes. Even though unstated, there is an underlying sense of threat: what would happen if Lucy went up to the people using homophobic language?

Gemma was committed to diversity work as the head of the LGBT group at work and as a Goodgym volunteer. Being able to further causes that were important to her made volunteering more meaningful to Gemma.

“I get to help out by shaping the direction of Goodgym in a way. Finding stuff we can do. For example, Pride. I was really like, we have a massive pride here, we could totally do this. So then I reached out to Pride and I made that happen. So that was pretty cool getting to be involved in like starting it out.” (Gemma)

George did diversity work by bringing in sponsorships for his club. There is evidence of a “double bind” here; finding a balance between mission and market place values (Askeland et al., 2020) in running the football club. Even though George indicated he was not sure whether his club’s future was more recreational or competitive, the goal of formalisation of the organisation indicated the adoption of more market place values and marketisation<sup>29</sup> of the LGBT+ football club. George seemed to be driven by the corporate way forward, perhaps reflecting his professional identity in the financial sector but also emulating how professional football operated. However, in a virtuous cycle of sorts, George justified the marketisation of the football club to create a better experience for members in the club.

“When I joined the team up here, it was a lot less organised than it was in London. In London, yes, really big clubs like Stonewall have been around for a very long time and some of those football clubs have been involved in local leagues. And they've got big sponsorship deals and they're a lot more kind of visible. Whereas up here is really kind of you go and you have kicked around in perhaps a local school, it'd be just in the indoor facility to just be a kick around in the park. So it wasn't really structured anyway. So, after a few years of pain, I saw that I got to kind of try and help and get it a bit better than it was, in a way. You know, try and get some sponsorship deals, try and get some money to come

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<sup>29</sup> Marketisation can be defined as the volunteer organisation’s “increasingly market-type relationships with stakeholders” (Maier et al., 2016, p. 70).

and organise events so that we can enter tournaments and those kinds of things.” (George)

Whereas George was grappling with the dilemma of how his club should be placed, the stable participant numbers of Sophie’s club had afforded making a business case for diversity by framing her club as “sport for all”: fielding teams from complete beginners to national level of play. Sophie identified how this diversity work was a precursor to receiving funding.

“We’re seen as a club a space that can accommodate and where people are accepted without ridicule as gay athletes if that makes sense. And I think part of my intention around volunteering is a commitment to kind of keep pushing forward. You know, making sure that that that continues and also to think about, you know, other potential opportunities or see where we can take that really and you know, another part of that is about thinking about sport, or team sport as a wellbeing sort of activity as well and being mindful of the mental health benefits of engaging in regular outdoors, exercise with friends. That gets you money.” (Sophie)

Liam acknowledged his club’s privileged position in the UK context of LGBT+ human rights and why that was a reason for his club to work with LGBT asylum seekers.<sup>30</sup>

“We’re in touch with an organisation for LGBT asylum seekers. We’ve had three new members who want to participate in sport and have been referred to us by Rainbow Homes. We waive their membership fees. As asylum seekers they’re not eligible to earn anything. That’s one of the ways of recognising that the society here might have progressed to a certain level but outside it hasn’t and that there is still very much a need to provide safe spaces for LGBT individuals and asylum seekers.” (Liam)

As a member of the LGBT+ national panel for softball, Sophie had helped create more inclusive softball rules that challenged “the dual-sexed” norms of playing sport that

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<sup>30</sup> LGBTI asylum seekers are likely to be at risk of mental and physical distress due to experiences of discrimination related to their sexual orientation or gender identity at their country of origin (Alessi et al., 2015).

“contribute to a heightened degree of exclusion and marginalisation” (Lawley, 2019, p. 511). The panel encouraged its members to bring their experiences as players, organisers of sport and as LGBT+ people to implement change that could be rolled out and cascaded within clubs across the country. It was important for Sophie and the panel to create an LGBT+ player network to further inclusion, combat isolation and stigma.<sup>31</sup>

“We drafted a test adaptation of the International Softball Federation (ISF) rules to be trans and non binary inclusive. So because the way recreational and some competitive softball is played in the UK there are quite strict rules in most of the leagues and from the international sport federation rules around gender balances on teams, which is great in one regard, because it is about creating a level playing field for men and women. But it's problematic in that it isn't at the moment effectively non binary inclusive. So, we looked at some of these sticking points, and then how the rules are worded, and developed a set of adaptations that we want to encourage leagues and tournaments to adopt. So that all teams have the potential to be non-binary, and alternative gender inclusive, without obviously upsetting the work that the rules do to have gender equality within them. And then building stakeholder groups and partners who have been prepared to test the rules, give them a go, give us feedback, kind of both the logistics and the wording.” (Sophie)

Gwen and Julie felt there simply was not enough diversity in their small village to draw from to do diversity work. It appears that Gwen and Julie equate diversity solely with ethnic diversity and were therefore unable to think more broadly about the pool of people who might take up orienteering or become volunteers. However, when Gwen and Julie pondered on their future volunteer aspirations, they were interested in working with refugees but did not make the connection of introducing refugees to orienteering or introducing orienteering to people outside their social circles.

“We've talked about this at a committee meeting about attracting more diversity, and you can't attract diversity in an area where there is no diversity.” (Gwen)

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<sup>31</sup> See also McFadden and Crowley-Henry's (2018) study of public and private sector LGBT+ networks.

“It might be a different answer if there'd be a bigger pool of people to recruit. Whereas our area is not very diverse.” (Julie)

Sophie viewed the development of LGBT+ clubs during the past 14-16 years as widening diversity work actions and recognised the ongoing work and commitment required to ensure that these clubs truly fulfil their mission of inclusivity.

“to be proactively encouraging trans players and nonbinary players to join and not always getting it right, but wanting to be a space for all players of the LGBTQ+ family.” (Sophie)

“*Not always getting it right*” is reflective of limitations to the inclusiveness of LGBT+ spaces. LGBT+ spaces have been found to reproduce forms of oppression (see for example Davidson, 2013; McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2018) which is paradoxical because they are often termed as “safe spaces” (Herrick & Duncan, 2018b; Gaston & Dixon, 2020; Knee, 2019).

This section has shown how participants perceived the context of diversity work (level of inclusion in their sports and clubs), calling for diversity work by highlighting the problems and benefits of organisational diversity work and how they overcame identified problems to engage in their own diversity work (see table 5). Participants highlighted inclusive practice as well as low-level commitment to diversity. Inclusive sports and organisations were counterspaces to the traditional norms of organised sport which tend to focus on winning and hierarchy and where diversity is something spoken about rather than practiced (Ahmed, 2012). Additionally, participants' accounts suggest inclusive sports and organisations have a sense of *communitas* (McGinnis et al., 2008) by creating a space where people from different walks of life come together for a shared purpose.

Participants in this PhD study utilised a mix of business case, social justice case and sustainability case approaches. David presented a business case from his running club by devising a system where beginner runners were encouraged to volunteer to help others who were starting their Couch to 5K. This way volunteers reflected the service users (van Overbeeke et al., 2022) and provided better service to aspiring runners



compared to David who was a marathon runner. David's club had trained some run leaders to work with visually impaired runners and put the support in place for blind or visually impaired participants to take part as the club believed personal experience of participation was the gateway to volunteering in sport. In this case, David's running club seems to have succeeded in what Meyer and Rameder (2021) recommend in avoiding discriminatory mechanisms in recruitment of volunteers and delivering a sustainability case. Liam's club's efforts in welcoming LGBT+ asylum seekers was making a social justice case for diversity by reducing exclusion and marginalisation of a vulnerable group.

In these extracts, the perception and process of diversity work was presented. Following Henrickson et al. (2020, p. 8): *"diversity has long been constructed as a problem of diverse communities, rather than of dominant communities"* even though the exclusiveness of dominant communities should be questioned (Hicks, 2008; Fish, 2008). By calling for diversity work, participants highlighted organisations' responsibility in furthering inclusion while by engaging in diversity work also reinforced the observation of Spaaij et al. (2018) that diversity efforts are mostly a responsibility of individual diversity champions. The implications and considerations for organisations implicated in LGBT+ inclusion in sport volunteering will be discussed in chapter 9.

Whilst it seems no research participant in this study was ambivalent to the value of diversity, they showed both resistance of and commitment to LGBT+ diversity work. LGBT+ diversity work was more central to most volunteers and they were actively working on diversity. Not all participants were actively and consciously engaged in diversity work. For example, Sarah, although not volunteering at the time of the study, explained how although she was aware of the value of inclusion and held ideas on how to advance inclusion, she did not actively pursue such ideas as a volunteer. Whilst the interview question ('What can be done to further LGBT+ inclusion in sport volunteering?') was formulated to allow research participant to make up their mind on how to approach it, this may have influenced research participants in the sense that they felt a need to see (or present) themselves as doing diversity work.

Table 5. Influencing inclusion in sport through diversity work

<b>Calling for diversity work</b>	<b>Engaging in diversity work</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• actions of sport governing bodies</li> <li>• challenging the idea of diversity work as a tick box exercise</li> <li>• doing diversity without being diverse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• doing diversity at grassroots level</li> <li>• creating more inclusive practice on national and international level</li> <li>• market based / mission based values</li> </ul>

## 8.4 A model for understanding LGBT+ engagement in sport volunteering

This section presents a grounded theory model (figure 7) developed to illuminate the dynamics of LGBT+ volunteer experiences, identities and inclusion in the context of sport. The development of this grounded theory model involved an iterative process, starting with data collection through volunteer timelines and topical life history interviews. The collected data was then subjected to systematic coding and analysis, leading to the identification of core conceptual categories, and emerging conceptual categories. The resulting grounded theory model explores, the meaning-making process through volunteering, the construction of personas through identity work and influencing inclusion through diversity work.

Next, I will present and discuss the key components of the grounded theory model. Through this analysis, I aim to offer a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of LGBT+ volunteer engagement in sport and provide valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers in the field of sport volunteering. The model is divided into 5 levels:

1. Road to volunteering

2. Meaning-making through volunteering
3. Constructing personas through volunteering
4. Influencing inclusion through volunteering
5. Future volunteering

The **road to volunteering** is facilitated by various factors, such as being requested to volunteer, getting involved due to family influence, or actively seeking opportunities to volunteer. Volunteers may be expected to volunteer (in other words "voluntold") or want to proactively to contribute to their communities.

Volunteering serves multiple purposes in terms of **meaning-making**. It can be seen as **becoming** – a pathway to personal growth and development, encompassing upskilling and facilitating the growth of others, as well as aiding in life stage transitions. Also, it provides a sense of **belonging** and inclusion, with volunteers feeling accepted, included and experience a family-like atmosphere. Furthermore, volunteering can contribute to the belonging of others, fostering a sense of community and connection.

Moreover, volunteering represents a state of **being**, with volunteering being an integral part of volunteers' identities. Volunteering allows individuals to express themselves, forming an integral part of their identity. Therefore, these volunteers often cannot fathom why someone would not engage in volunteering – volunteering providing them with a deep sense of purpose and fulfilment.

Consequently, through volunteering, individuals engage in identity work, managing, constructing, and negotiating their identities. Once engaged in volunteering, individuals **construct** different **personas** through their involvement. Volunteers may adopt an **advocate** persona, to use sport volunteering as a platform for promoting inclusion. Through adopting an advocate persona, volunteers utilise sport volunteering as a platform for activism, driving inclusion initiatives and striving to be an influential role model. These volunteers seek personal meaning and belonging through their activism. They drive initiatives such as establishing LGBT+ sport clubs and networks and may also be involved in similar efforts at their workplace.

Through the adoption of a **community-minded** persona, community-minded volunteers leverage sport and other volunteering contexts to reinforce their identities as people who contribute to community initiatives. They prioritise the well-being and success of the community, but may experience a tension between always being seen as a volunteer and desiring recognition as a participant outside of volunteering. Their search for meaning and belonging extends to all forms of volunteering. Through adopting a **sportsperson** persona, volunteers use sport volunteering as a means to develop their identity as individuals who contribute to the growth and thriving of their sport or club. Their focus is primarily on volunteering in sports-related activities, and they seek meaning and belonging through their involvement in sports.

In terms of **influencing inclusion**, individuals contribute through **calling for diversity work**. This involves taking action within sport governing bodies and challenging the notion of diversity work as a tick box exercise. They emphasise the importance of genuine diversity and inclusion rather than superficial efforts.

**Engaging in diversity work** at the grassroots level is another way of influencing inclusion. This entails creating more inclusive practices on national and international levels, aiming to make a lasting impact. The values guiding these efforts can be market-based (devising a business case for diversity) or mission-based (devising a sustainability or social justice case for diversity), reflecting the underlying intentions and approaches of individuals involved in diversity work.

The model also considers **future volunteering** trajectories. Volunteers may continue their involvement, pass the torch to new volunteers, or consider returning to volunteering if they were not volunteering at the time of the study.

Overall, the model provides insights into the volunteer journey over time with multifaceted meanings of volunteering, the various personas that emerge within volunteering contexts, and the different levels of influence individuals can have in promoting inclusion.

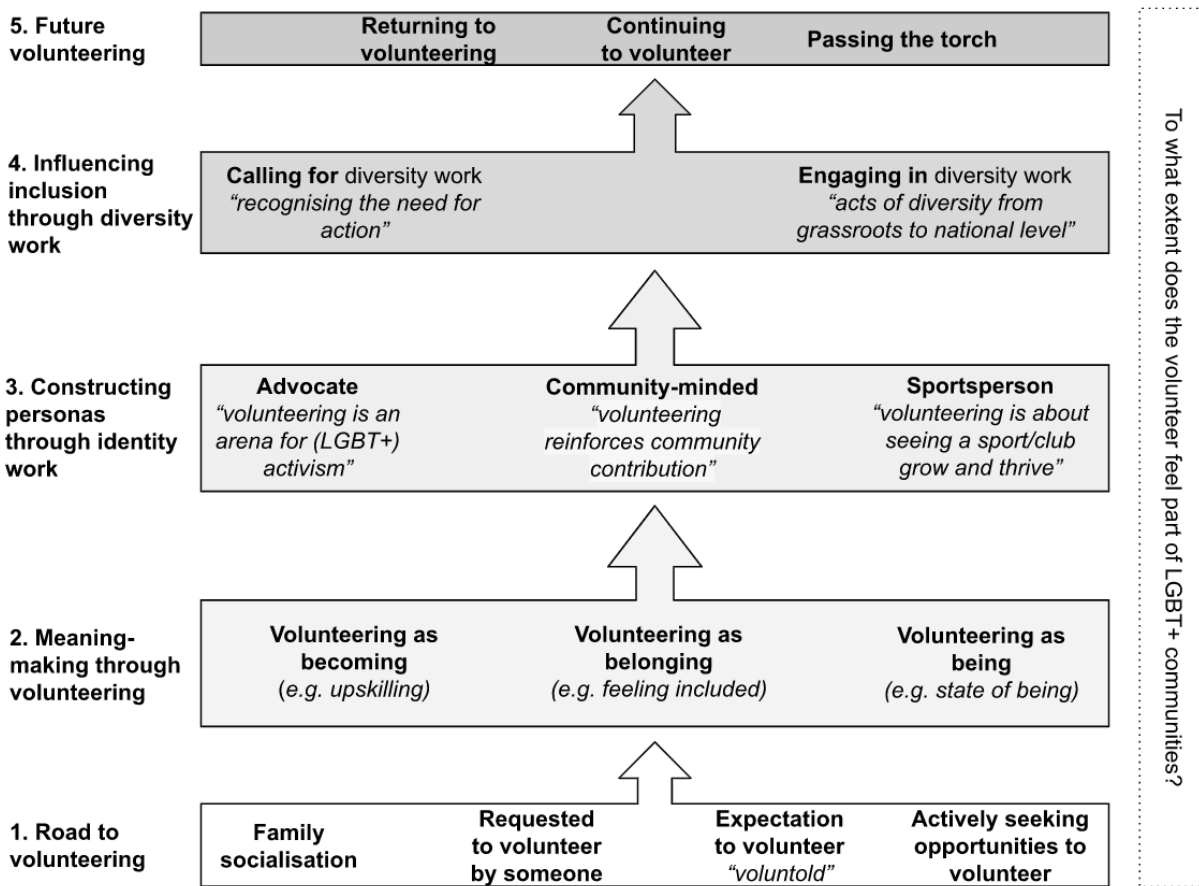


Figure 7. Understanding LGBT+ volunteer engagement in sport

## 8.5 Summary of Chapter 8

This chapter explored the meaning of volunteering, encompassing the elements of becoming, belonging, and being. It also investigates how individuals manage, construct, and negotiate their identities in sports volunteering through adopting personas such as advocate, community-minded, and sportsperson. Furthermore, the chapter addressed how research participants influenced the level of inclusion by calling for and engaging in diversity work.

The meaning that participants gave to their volunteering consisted of three at times overlapping categories. Volunteering participants' experiences of *becoming* varied

depending on their age and life stage, with some viewing it as a new beginning and others as a way to stay active in retirement. There was a presence of both *belonging* and non-belonging experiences in the journeys of volunteers, with some participants facilitating others' belonging in sports. For experienced volunteers who developed a deep connection with their clubs or organisations, volunteering became a way of life and a sense of *being*, seeing it as part of their sporting identity and valuable in an existential sense based on their subjective experience. Volunteering as becoming is influenced by a desire to feel accomplished and is frequently considered as a means to a goal, such as advancing to a board member position within a grass roots level sports club. Volunteering as belonging entails volunteers experiencing an emotional connection and inclusion within their volunteer environment, which may be especially significant for marginalised groups such as LGBT+ communities. Finally, volunteering as being incorporates volunteering into one's selfhood, which is frequently related with establishing a sense of active citizenship.

This chapter also introduced three volunteer personas (advocate, community-minded, sportsperson) which have been devised based on cross-case and case analysis from the previous chapters. These personas can become part of the individual's identity/identities:

- **advocate** personas present as the volunteer focuses on furthering the wellbeing of the LGBT+ communities they serve;
- **community-minded** personas present as the personal contribution of a volunteer is intended to benefit the communities they serve, regardless of the type of volunteering they do; and
- **sportspeople** personas present as those volunteers who are primarily concerned with the success of their sport, with their volunteer contributions aimed at assisting/strengthening an already strong sporting identity.

This study offers these personas as concepts to understand (and assist) the underlying intentions held by individuals when developing a coherent and consistent sense of self,

which becomes their chosen identity. The personas are not “set in stone” but rather an indication of the multitude of identity work the study participants engaged in as volunteers. Much like the meanings of volunteering, these personas are bound to change over time. With participants being at different stages of their volunteering journeys, their time spent volunteering as well as their personal characteristics and life experiences will influence the adoption, foregrounding and backgrounding of these personas may explain why a person presents as the advocate, community-minded or sportsperson within the context of sport volunteering.

Participants saw diversity work differently in their sports and groups, including the advantages and disadvantages. Inclusive practices were viewed as vital but not always evident. To encourage diversity, many tactics were used, including social justice and commercial arguments. While there not all participants actively advanced diversity through direct action, most participants committed to diversity work through their volunteering in sport or in other environments.

This chapter presented a grounded theory model (figure 7), developed to understand the dynamics of LGBT+ volunteer experiences and identities in sport. The model explores the road to volunteering, the meaning-making process, the construction of personas, the influence on inclusion efforts, and future volunteering trajectories. It provides insights into the multifaceted nature of volunteering, the adoption of different personas, and the levels of influence individuals can have in promoting inclusion.

## 9 CONCLUSION

This chapter recounts the key findings, derives theoretical, methodological and practical contributions to knowledge, addresses limitations to the study and suggests future research directions before offering final reflections on the study. The findings presented in this study provide an account of the sport volunteer experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in the UK informed by identity work (Watson, 2008, 2020). This thesis is informed by interpretivist/weak form of social constructionist paradigm and used CGT analysis (Charmaz, 2006) to explore the identity work and meanings of LGBT+ volunteers' experiences in sport over time by employing topical life history interviews (Plummer, 2001).

A composite vignette was constructed to present the context and cultural notions of being LGBT+ and to narratively combine the commonalities of the different volunteer experiences. Topical life history stories provided individual summaries of participants' sport volunteering in a story structure of beginning, middle and resolution. Composite vignette and topical life history stories then provided the platform for cross-case analysis and for developing a grounded theoretical understanding. In the next section I summarise the findings to each research question.

### 9.1 Findings summary

#### **RQ1. What meanings do LGBT+ volunteers in sport give to their volunteering experiences over time?**

The meanings that participants give to their volunteering experiences varied and evolved over time. Volunteering in sports provided a sense of community and belonging, a chance to give back to the sport or community participants felt passionate about, and an opportunity to develop new skills and knowledge. For some participants,



their volunteering was a way to raise visibility and awareness of LGBT+ issues, promote inclusion and equality, and break down barriers and stereotypes. However, the specific meanings given to volunteering changed over time as the individual's personal experiences, perspectives and priorities changed. Such changes were influenced by several factors including volunteers' personal growth, what was happening/happened in their sporting environment and shifting attitudes towards LGBT+ individuals. Feelings of belonging, a sense of community, personal fulfilment, and the opportunity to make a positive impact were important. However, some participants had also faced challenges, such as discrimination and marginalisation, which affected the meaning they attached to their experiences. Overall, the meaning that participants gave to their individual experiences was one which was multifaceted, being shaped by a range of personal, social, and cultural factors.

Participants conceptualised the meaning of volunteering as becoming, belonging and/or being. These, at times, overlapping categories expanded on the deeper meaning of having carried out volunteering as LGBT+/sexually diverse people. Volunteering as *becoming* indicated functional meaning and initiated change in circumstances in regard to one's career or wellbeing in the formation of a volunteer identity. Volunteering as *belonging* indicated an emotional meaning and refers to the feelings of acceptance and inclusion; finding your own tribe by volunteering. Volunteering as *being* indicated existential meaning, attaching volunteering as an integral part of your identity. Meanings were constructed as responses to volunteer journeys that illustrate that the road to volunteering is laden with socialisation into volunteering, expectation to volunteer ("voluntold"), request to take up volunteering, and seeking opportunities to volunteer as well as 'doing volunteering' in LGBT+ specific club or within other sport clubs. Research participants iterated their future intentions of volunteering in sport as either (i) returning to volunteering (ii) continuing to volunteer (iii) 'passing the torch' and stepping away from it altogether.

**RQ2. How do LGBT+ volunteers in sport manage, construct and negotiate their identities over time through identity work?**

Participants faced various challenges in managing, constructing, and negotiating their identities due to social and cultural attitudes towards homosexuality and gender non-conformity. Through identity work, they made deliberate efforts to shape and express their sense of self in a way that was meaningful to them. This involved resisting exclusionary dominant norms and expectations around homosexuality, challenging assumptions and stereotypes, and finding ways to express their identity in a supportive and inclusive environment.

This identity work involved various activities such as seeking out supportive communities, participating in events and activities that aligned with their identity, and engaging in self-reflection and personal growth. By actively working to shape their identity, participants created a sense of belonging and found fulfilment in their involvement in the sport community. Participants' identity work was ongoing and changed over time, reflecting changing social and cultural contexts. Participants may need to continually navigate and negotiate their identities in response to shifting attitudes and experiences, both within and outside of the sport community.

Participants' identity work created resources and constraints which shaped volunteer involvement and led to the development of personas. Participants' (perceived) identity threat for identifying as LGBT+/sexually diverse in volunteering and occupational contexts led to an ongoing identity work process, trying to figure out what their identities should be or how they presented them to others as personas. Participants negotiated multiple possibilities for identifying themselves due to presence of heteronormative discourses in sport and society. This leads to appropriating the different personas available to the volunteers. The personas that were identified include advocate, community-minded and sportsperson. *Advocate* personas were inspired by a cause to become and stay involved in volunteering. Participants exhibiting advocate personas identified as LGBT+ rather than sexually diverse and volunteered in LGBT+ related environments in sport and got involved in LGBT+ inclusion initiatives. *Community-minded personas* that were presented indicated long-time volunteer involvement for

participants to whom helping out had become an integral part of their self-identity. *Sportspeople personas* were an extension of participants' sporting identity and their desire to see their sport thrive.

All participants shared how they created their identities in their respective sporting contexts and the implications this had on them and their interpersonal relationships. Most participants were openly expressing their identities to fellow volunteers, teammates, and/or other club or organisation members, while a few participants mentioned concealing their identities at various points during their volunteering and avoiding discussions of sexuality or partners entirely. In some cases, they were forthright about featuring their identity prominently as a volunteer. This was facilitated mainly by their self-confidence in their LGBT+ identities and a personal sense of responsibility to be a visible role model for others who might not feel they could be out. Sport can be an extension of one's identity as can volunteering for its many benefits that for the LGBT+ population, seem to be improving a sense of belonging and finding a safe space to play sport.

### **RQ3. How do LGBT+ volunteers influence inclusion within sport?**

LGBT+ volunteers in sport can play a significant role in promoting inclusion and diversity in sport. They do this by serving as positive role models and advocates for the LGBT+ community and as mentors to other LGBT+ individuals, encouraging their participation in sports and breaking down barriers to inclusion. Their involvement can also demonstrate to the wider community that everyone is welcome in sport regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, which can help to foster a more inclusive and diverse culture.

Through their actions and advocacy, the research participants helped to create a more inclusive environment in sport that is more welcoming and respectful of all individuals. Participants were able to influence the level of inclusion by *calling for and engaging in* diversity acts and diversity practices, in other words by doing diversity work. Participants

demonstrated that they carried out diversity work in their everyday (professional) lives as well as in the organisations in which they volunteer. Research participants did not always rely on directives from NSGBs but rather their conviction arose from everyday experiences in their clubs (and in their lives outside volunteering). Participants in this study undertook diversity work which went beyond advancing LGBT+ inclusion to address income inequality, access to sport by disabled people and refugee inclusion.

## 9.2 Original contributions to knowledge

### 9.2.1 Theoretical and methodological contributions

In this thesis, I have provided a *theoretical contribution* to knowledge by investigating LGBT+ volunteers' identity work in sport volunteering and their experiences and meanings of volunteering over time. As set out in the introduction, research on diverse volunteer experiences, and specifically LGBT+ volunteers in sport, has been limited at the time of writing. Therefore, in this thesis, I helped fill this research gap by providing insights into the specific experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport volunteering. I also constructed a grounded theory model of LGBT+ engagement in sport volunteering (figure 7) to visually represent the findings of this research and to facilitate knowledge dissemination.

This thesis also makes a theoretical contribution to volunteer identity research by employing identity work in the examination of diverse volunteer identities. In doing so, I have extended the use of Watson's identity work (2020) by applying it in a sport volunteering context. This contributes to the broader understanding of volunteer identities and enhances the applicability of identity work in the specific context of sport volunteering. Through the development of volunteer personas (advocate, sportsperson and community-minded) which result from the identity work processes arising out of self-identities and social-identities, this thesis makes a further theoretical contribution to volunteer identity literature. The identification and exploration of these distinct personas

not only enriches our understanding of volunteer identities but also highlights the diverse values and roles that volunteers embody, broadening the scope of research in volunteer identity and providing insights for volunteer management and engagement strategies.

Ahmed's diversity work raises awareness about the importance of LGBT+ volunteers as change agents and their role in promoting inclusiveness in sport. This understanding lays a foundation for future actions aimed at enabling individuals to fulfil their identities in meaningful ways. By integrating existing theories, this research contributes to the literature by viewing diversity work as an extension of identity work, advancing our understanding of the complex interplay between personal identity, social change, and the creation of inclusive environments. This theoretical contribution presents a context for examining how volunteers' identity fulfilment and their engagement in diversity work intersect and mutually influence each other. It guides the development of interventions and initiatives that facilitate the authentic expression of identities and contribute to meaningful and inclusive volunteer experiences.

Using life history interviews to explore sport volunteering experiences remains a scarcely used approach (Gipson & Malcom, 2020). As a *methodological contribution*, the inclusion of topical life history interviews allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' volunteer journeys, capturing not only specific moments and events but also the evolving nature of their identities in relation to volunteering.

This thesis also contributes methodologically by employing a topical life history story approach, which builds upon the work of Pissanos and Allison (1996). The use of topical life history stories allows for a holistic exploration of participants' lived experiences, capturing not only individual events and narratives but also the broader social, cultural, and historical contexts in which these experiences unfold. This approach enables a deep dive into the complexities and nuances of the volunteers' journeys, shedding light on the multifaceted factors that shape their identities and experiences in sport volunteering.

In combining life story, life history and constructivist grounded theory quality criteria, this research adheres to rigorous standards in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The integration of multiple research traditions ensures a robust and comprehensive examination of the research topic, while maintaining alignment with an interpretivist ontology and a weak constructionist epistemology. This methodological integration enables a nuanced understanding of the subjective and socially constructed nature of volunteer experiences and identities, while recognising the importance of individual agency and the broader sociocultural context in shaping these experiences.

### 9.2.2 Practical contributions and implications

This thesis not only provides theoretical insights but also serves as a practical guide for stakeholders invested in advancing LGBT+ inclusion, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of equality, diversity and inclusion in the sports arena. A practical contribution from this thesis includes how LGBT+ lives sit within the political and societal changes of the past decades from decriminalisation of homosexuality to the Equality Act 2010 and marriage equality. Looking at volunteer experiences over time has been a useful approach to examine how volunteering and civic activity contribute to participation on an individual level. LGBT+ sport clubs are moving from being safe spaces only serving their members' needs to making business case for diversity and attracting sponsorship from local companies. LGBT+ clubs might be better placed to do this compared to other sport clubs because they have a clear cause in addition to sport. Sport clubs should establish a clear identity of what values the club stands for and to whom it caters.

Findings suggest that different approaches are used to ensure volunteer commitment. In roller derby and sailing, volunteers are regularly assigned specific tasks under the "duty roster" approach in roller derby and sailing. This approach is thought to encourage a sense of purpose among volunteers and aid in their self-actualisation. The approach used by Goodgym, in contrast, is more gamified and involves volunteers selecting

missions to earn virtual badges and points for their 'good deeds'. This approach is thought to encourage reflexive volunteering and individualism, allowing volunteers to decide how much they want to participate in the activity. Overall, there are various approaches to managing volunteers, and the one chosen may depend on the activity and the objectives of the group or organisation involved.

van Overbeeke et al. (2022) noted that people without volunteer antecedents are frequently underrepresented, perhaps because they were not invited to volunteer because of their neighbourhood, income, social standing, immigrant history, employment status, religion, age, and physical and mental capabilities. Participants in this study mostly fitted the “antecedents of a volunteer” (higher education level and being able-bodied according to van Overbeeke et al., 2022) and therefore found it easy to find volunteer opportunities. Some participants volunteered in LGBT+ settings because they deemed other settings as not inclusive or even hostile. Those participants who volunteered outside of these environments had experiences of hiding their identities or succumbing to a culture of silence regarding sexuality. This shows there are still barriers and challenges for LGBT+ volunteers in sport that need to be addressed to enable a more diverse pool of volunteers to get involved in sport or extend their involvement beyond participation.

As a concluding point of the interviews, I asked participants to reflect on best practices and further considerations for inclusion of LGBT+ volunteers. Having summarised suggestions from participants and my learnings from the study from a sport and volunteer management perspective, I combined these reflections to a broader set of implications for stakeholders and partners implicated in furthering LGBT+ inclusion in sport volunteering.

The needs of the LGBT+ community have been overlooked in sport, necessitating significant efforts to advocate for inclusivity. Given this context, it becomes imperative to target organisations that already demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity, as their doors may be partially open to fostering LGBT+ inclusion in sports. By collaborating with these

organisations, progress can be made more effectively, as they have already shown a willingness to embrace diverse perspectives and champion inclusivity.

Spaaij et al. (2018) highlight the significance of individual champions in promoting diversity within the sporting context. These individuals play a pivotal role in advocating for and driving the inclusion of LGBT+ individuals. However, it is important to recognise that the challenge lies in achieving organisational change. While individual champions may initiate and champion the cause of inclusivity, broader organisational shifts are required to create lasting and systemic change within sports institutions. There is a need to address the structural and cultural barriers within organisations that hinder progress. Organisational change encompasses policies, practices, and attitudes that need to be reshaped to ensure a welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBT+ individuals.

#### 9.2.2.1 Stakeholders & multi-level considerations

Determining the most impactful collaborators in the field of LGBT+ inclusion necessitates an evaluation of the potential impact stemming from alliances with diverse stakeholders in both research and practical applications. Key factors to consider encompass the organisations' influence, reach, commitment to inclusion and availability of resources. Particular emphasis should be placed on prioritising collaborations with partners who have a demonstrated track record of implementing inclusive policies and programmes, as well as a robust commitment to the advancement of LGBT+ rights and equality within the sporting domain.

This section broadens the research horizon of LGBT+ inclusion in sport volunteering by mapping and clarifying the structural partners engaged in fostering LGBT+ inclusion in the UK. Next, I discuss how these stakeholders are connected to understand their roles and find opportunities for collaboration regardless of the stakeholder the reader represents.



In table 6 I describe organisations with stakes in LGBT+ volunteer inclusion in sport. These organisations encompass associations that disseminate good practice, national/regional public bodies, independent bodies for sport and inclusion, LGBT+ advocacy umbrella organisations, LGBT+ specific and non-specific sport clubs, equality agencies, sports event organisers, sports media outlets, sports facilities and venues, youth sport organisations, and educational institutions with sports programmes. Each organisation's specific role and potential avenues for collaboration are clarified. This offers a practical framework for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to initiate partnerships and advance the cause of LGBT+ inclusion in sports.

Table 6. Stakeholders and partners for LGBT+ inclusion in sport volunteering

Type of organisation	Examples of organisations if applicable	What is their role?	How to collaborate with these organisations?
Associations that disseminate good practice	Association for Volunteer Managers Sports Volunteer Research Network	Share knowledge and resources	Collaborate on research, develop guidelines, and share insights on inclusive volunteering practices
National/regional public bodies	E.g. Sport England Active Partnerships	Develop policies and initiatives	Collaborate on policy development, funding opportunities, and support for inclusive sports volunteering programmes
Independent bodies for sport and inclusion	Sports and Recreation Alliance National Sport Governing Bodies	Advocacy and policy influence	Partner on awareness campaigns, policy advocacy, and promoting inclusive volunteering practices
LGBT+ advocacy umbrella organisations	Stonewall Pride Sports UK Gay Games Out For Sport	Promote LGBT+ rights and inclusion	Collaborate on research, develop resources, and promote inclusive volunteering environments within sport
LGBT+ specific and non-specific sport clubs	See Pride Sports UK club directory for LGBT+ specific clubs	Provide inclusive sports programmes	Develop inclusive volunteer programmes, share experiences, and promote diversity in volunteering
Equality agencies	Equality and Human Rights Commission FARE Network Kick It Out	Promote equality and inclusion	Collaborate on research, awareness campaigns, and development of inclusive volunteering policies
Sports event organisers	Local, regional, national, international	Organise inclusive sports events	Partner on inclusive volunteer recruitment, training, and support for LGBT+ volunteers
Sports media outlets	E.g. Sports Media LGBT+	Promote inclusivity in sports	Collaborate on awareness campaigns, storytelling, and promoting inclusive volunteering opportunities
Sports facilities and venues	Local, regional, national	Provide inclusive spaces	Develop partnerships to offer inclusive volunteering opportunities, access to facilities, and resources
Youth sport organisations	Youth Sport Trust StreetGames	Provide inclusive sport programmes	Develop inclusive volunteering initiatives targeting youth, share resources, and best practices
Educational institutions with sports programmes	Universities Colleges Schools	Provide sports education	Collaborate on research, develop inclusive volunteer training programmes, and promote inclusivity in sports education

Furthermore, Table 7 illustrates multi-level considerations for policymakers, spanning macro (societal), meso (organisational), and micro (individual) levels. At the macro level, perspectives from a diverse array of stakeholders, including LGBT+ individuals, volunteers, sports organisations, and community leaders, are advocated to attain a comprehensive understanding of potential impacts and necessary involvement. Various research methodologies, such as surveys, interviews, and examination of existing policies and initiatives, are suggested to comprehend the current landscape of LGBT+ inclusion efforts and volunteer engagement within the sports sector. Identifying key players and organisations already committed to LGBT+ volunteering and inclusion is vital in dismantling barriers and augmenting volunteer involvement. Addressing concerns associated with non-participation in sports by fostering a supportive community that embraces insecurities and facilitates individual success is also advocated. Additionally, promoting inclusive and accessible sport opportunities to cater to those unable to participate actively but who can contribute through volunteering is deemed essential.

At the meso level, measures to encourage individuals to identify themselves as volunteers based on their achievements and provide opportunities for skill development are encouraged. Identifying alternative pathways for individuals unable to participate in sports to engage in volunteering is recommended. Diverse interventions that engage different segments of the LGBT+ population, while avoiding blanket approaches that may overlook minoritised and marginalised groups, are also advocated. Moreover, ensuring sustained attention to LGBT+ inclusion beyond short-term campaigns and establishing dedicated committees and networks that authentically represent diverse experiences are deemed crucial.

At the micro level, the utilisation of symbols and actions to signal inclusion and advocate for LGBT+ visibility, such as participation in Pride events and campaigns, is emphasised. Gathering input from volunteers and members on strategies to enhance LGBT+ visibility and inclusion within sport clubs and organisations is also encouraged. Additionally, alternative terminology to describe sport volunteers that aligns with their

positions or sporting identities, moving away from the term "volunteer" itself, is considered as a potential strategy to foster inclusion.

The multi-level considerations for policymakers presented in Table 7 highlight the importance of a holistic approach to achieve LGBT+ inclusion. Macro-level considerations encompass a comprehensive understanding of the sports sector's current landscape, identification of key players, and addressing barriers to participation. Meso-level considerations emphasise the need for innovative approaches to engage diverse segments of the LGBT+ population, sustained attention to inclusion efforts, and the establishment of dedicated committees and networks. At the micro level, strategies such as using symbols and actions to signal inclusion, seeking input from volunteers, and re-evaluating terminologies contribute to fostering inclusivity.

Table 7. Multi-level considerations for stakeholders and partners

**Macro (societal level considerations):**

- Consider the perspectives of various stakeholders, including LGBT+ individuals, volunteers, sports organisations, and community leaders, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the potential impact and necessary involvement.
- Investigate the current landscape of the sports sector regarding LGBT+ inclusion efforts and volunteer involvement. This can involve:
  - Conduct surveys or interviews with sports organisations, volunteers, and LGBT+ individuals to gather data on current practices and experiences.
  - Research existing policies, initiatives, and programmes related to LGBT+ inclusion in sport.
- Identify key players and organisations in the sector who are already engaged in LGBT+ volunteering and inclusion efforts. Breaking down barriers to LGBT+ participation in sport to increase the likelihood of volunteer involvement.
- Address pain points of not participating in sport by creating a supportive community that embraces insecurities and helps individuals succeed.
- Promote inclusive and accessible sport opportunities to cater to those who may not be able to participate but can still contribute through volunteering.

**Meso (organisational level considerations):**

- Encourage and enable individuals to see themselves as volunteers by approaching them based on their achievements and providing opportunities for skill development.
- Be inventive in finding alternative routes for individuals who cannot participate in sport to still engage in volunteering.
- Implement diverse measures to engage different segments of the LGBT+ population and avoiding blanket interventions that may overlook minoritised and marginalised groups.
- Ensure continuous attention to LGBT+ inclusion, beyond short-term campaigns, and establishing dedicated committees and networks to better represent the diversity of experiences.

**Micro (individual level considerations):**

- Use symbols and actions to signal inclusion and advocate for LGBT+ visibility, such as participating in Pride events and campaigns.
- Seek input from volunteers and members on strategies to enhance LGBT+ visibility and inclusion within sport clubs and organisations.
- Consider alternative terms to describe sport volunteers that align with their positions or sporting identities, moving away from the term "volunteer" itself.

### 9.2.2.2 Meaning-based and persona-based messaging to attract and retain volunteers

To attract future volunteers and maximise the impact of this research, there is an opportunity to utilise the findings to inform effective volunteer recruitment strategies. There is scope to utilise findings of this research for attracting future volunteers by

- recruiting and supporting volunteers based on the identified personas,
- tailoring marketing materials to appeal to each persona<sup>32</sup>
- emphasising how volunteering in sports can fulfil their respective motivations and goals
- highlighting the positive impacts of volunteerism on the community, the benefits for personal growth and skill development, and the inclusive environment provided by the sports organisations involved
- utilising various communication channels, including social media, websites, newsletters, and local community events, to reach volunteers effectively.

This section explores several key approaches for attracting volunteers based on the identified personas and meanings of volunteering. By implementing these strategies, organisations can optimise their volunteer recruitment efforts and create meaningful connections with individuals who are passionate about contributing to the sports community. The following tables provide valuable messaging strategies and guidance for sport volunteer recruitment. Table 8 focuses on meaning-based messaging, offering different perspectives to attract potential volunteers by emphasising personal growth, community, and the fulfilment of contributing to something greater. Table 9 explores persona-based messaging, tailoring recruitment messages to specific volunteer personas such as advocates, community-minded individuals, and sportspersons. Each persona is addressed with targeted messaging that highlights their unique motivations and contributions.

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<sup>32</sup> known as customer personas, consumer personas or buyer personas in marketing – see for example Revella (2015)

With the creation of volunteer identity personas (advocate, community-minded and sportsperson), I have mapped out how the identity (and diversity) work connected to these personas could be supported in table 10. Table 10 suggests ways to facilitate the involvement of volunteer personas within your organisation, providing ideas for leadership opportunities, mentoring relationships, training, and development. The information included in the tables offers practical insights to effectively recruit and engage volunteers in promoting LGBT+ inclusion in sport. These personas are relevant for volunteer managers, sport clubs and sport governing bodies to better understand these groupings in the context of volunteer engagement and retention.

Table 8. Meaning-based messaging in sport volunteer recruitment

<b>Meaning of Volunteering</b>	<b>Messaging to support recruitment</b>
<b>Becoming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Join us and develop new skills through volunteering, enhancing your personal growth.</li> <li>- Be part of a team that helps others become the best versions of themselves.</li> <li>- Let volunteer help you catapult into a new career.</li> </ul>
<b>Belonging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteer and become part of a community of includers.</li> <li>- Join our team and experience a warm and welcoming family atmosphere.</li> <li>- Be that person you needed when you were younger by volunteering with us.</li> </ul>
<b>Being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discover who you truly are through volunteering and contribute to something greater than yourself.</li> <li>- Volunteer with us and experience the joy and fulfilment that comes from helping others.</li> </ul>



Table 9. Persona-based messaging in sport volunteer recruitment

<b>Persona</b>	<b>Messaging to support recruitment</b>
<b>Advocate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Join our team and use sport volunteering to drive inclusion initiatives in the LGBT+ community and beyond.</li> <li>▪ Be an advocate for change by actively promoting diversity and equality through your volunteer work.</li> <li>▪ Become (an out) role model, making a visible impact in the sport community and inspiring others like you to be their authentic selves.</li> <li>▪ Find meaning and belonging through your activism, creating a more inclusive and accepting sport environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Community-minded</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Contribute to community initiatives for the wellbeing and success of the community.</li> <li>○ Find purpose through your volunteering activities, connecting with like-minded individuals who share your values.</li> </ul>
<b>Sportsperson</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Play a vital role in developing your sport and club by volunteering your time and skills.</li> <li>● Contribute to the growth and success of your sport, leaving a lasting impact on the community and future generations.</li> <li>● Channel your passion for the sport into meaningful volunteer work, dedicating your efforts to its advancement.</li> </ul>

Table 10. Facilitating volunteer personas in your organisation

<b>Advocate</b>	<b>Community-minded</b>	<b>Sportsperson</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offer the advocate opportunities to lead diversity and inclusion initiatives within the sport organisation in order to share best practises and strategies for promoting LGBT+ inclusion in sport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Offer opportunities for community-minded to share their experiences and motivations with other members of the organisation as well as facilitating opportunities for community-minded to share their experiences and perspectives with others in their communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer opportunities for the sportsperson to assume a leadership position in the sport's development at club or NGB level.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage the advocate to serve as a mentor to other volunteers and participants that share a similar background.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure the community-minded feels valued as a participant in addition to a volunteer by providing opportunities to participate in sports without the expectation of volunteering. Create a conducive environment for community-minded by providing volunteer opportunities that are adaptable to their busy volunteering schedules and many interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the sportsperson to serve as a mentor to others within the organisation, including (younger) athletes and members of the community at large.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offer the advocate training and development opportunities to enhance their equality, diversity and inclusion skills and knowledge. Provide advocates with opportunities for networking and collaboration with like-minded individuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide community-minded with training and development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge in community engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer the sportsperson training and development opportunities to build their skills including coaching and officiating.</li> </ul>

### 9.3 Limitations of this research

This section details the limitations of the thesis. The research posed multiple challenges from narrowing down to a specific topic to choosing the most appropriate design to investigate diverse volunteer experiences. The novelty of the topic provided both a great opportunity and a challenge.

Sampling issues for this thesis meant that the sample became more dispersed than anticipated, expanding from a sample from the North East of England to the rest of the UK. Although the results cannot be generalised beyond the sample of 16, findings can, however, be interpreted in the context of existing studies which have touched on diverse volunteer experiences in sport. As Becker (1990 in Schwalbe et al., 2000) notes, the objective is to generalise processes, not populations – interpreting the experiences of LGBT+ volunteers in sport in the UK. The sample of 16 volunteers represented 13 different sports and 5 different sexual orientations with volunteer experience ranging from 1 to 35 years. This made the sample mosaic and meant the study was able to accommodate a breadth of different experiences but categories could not be analysed within each sport/activity individually. Each sport/organisation has its own culture, which influences the identities that are deemed acceptable within. Because there was no unified sporting or LGBT+ culture among participants, it was more challenging to recommend concrete actions to further inclusion. Furthermore, cultures of particular occupations might have an impact on identity work of participants. Future researchers could focus on LGBT+ identity work taking into consideration the culture of a single sport or volunteer environment.

Sexually diverse volunteers in this research are likely a reflection of typical sport volunteers in the UK (highly educated, white, middle class). The way people express themselves influences how they assign meaning to volunteering (von Essen, 2016). This sample of out individuals is therefore influenced by their experiences of outness.

This study has privileged just one social category (LGBT+) which is recognised as a limitation of the research. However, following Laverie & McDonald (2007), measures have been taken to explore the distinctiveness of this social category and to what extent research participants in this study identified with the LGBT+ label. This is because those belonging to a social category are thought to have a similar attachment to and understanding of that social category (Yuval-Davis, 2010).

Each person's perspective is influenced by their unique experiences, cultural upbringing, social standing, and other contextual elements. Therefore, it is important to be aware of subjective views as a researcher as well as the views of the people under study, especially those who are marginalised or underrepresented, and to take those perspectives into account. Acknowledging this may help encourage greater inclusivity and understanding in academic research and may result in conclusions that are more accurate and nuanced (Yuval-Davis, 2010).

Research participants were interviewed during a single interview. With more frequent and/or prolonged engagement, there could have been a fuller picture on individual timelines and helping recall of past events especially in cases where volunteering spanned decades. However, it was not within the scope of the research to conduct multiple interviews. Interviewing volunteers over a five-year period did, however, allow for the opportunity to triangulate interview data to evaluate conflicting information.

The interviews conducted for this thesis each had four sections which were relayed to the participants before commencing the interview. These sections were (i) journey in volunteering; (ii) future in volunteering, (iii) sexual identity in volunteering; and (iv) LGBT+ inclusion in sport volunteering. It is possible that structuring the interviews in this way invited some participants to restrict their LGBT+ related responses into sections where they were asked to talk their volunteering, therefore actively backgrounding their LGBT+ identity (before being asked to elaborate on that part of their identity). Similarly, this could have altered the extent to which participants emphasised their involvement in influencing the level of inclusion in sport.

A timeline tool (Opie, 1992) was used to aid recall of life events as participants were required to engage in both prospective and retrospective recall of their lives – thinking about their current and future volunteering in addition to recalling their past experiences. However, recalling experiences and events of the past may result in memory errors, over time, yet in relation to importance of sexual orientation to one’s identity formation, recall might be more accurate than of other life events (Calzo et al., 2011). Nevertheless, research aiming to understand how people perceive and make meaning of their experiences over time might benefit from participants' variable accuracy and dependability.

## 9.4 Future research

There are multiple avenues for further research.

A longitudinal research design where participants are interviewed multiple times from when they begin volunteering to when they (potentially) stop volunteering would address the issues with retrospective recall in future research.

Recruitment of more gender diverse participations may have provided greater insight into volunteer experiences in sport. This thesis has explored the interconnections of identity work and LGBT+ volunteer experience to answer research questions about meaning, identity management, construction and negotiation as well as levels of inclusion. Identity work is “a generic social process” which is useful in generalising social processes that may apply to different populations (Schwalbe et al., 2000). As identified in chapter 3, there are similarities in experiences of inclusion/exclusion for diverse sport volunteer groups. These could be explored in a future study as identity work could provide insight into the experiences of sport volunteers possessing protected characteristics (in addition to or) other than gender identity/sexual orientation since inclusion in sport touches all those who have had to defend their identity positions, felt marginalised or minoritised. Understanding the experiences of diverse sport volunteers

would in turn provide greater insight into the barriers posed to their broader sport engagement.

There is also scope for participatory action research that brings together both sport governing bodies and diverse volunteers encompassing diverse characteristics (again, beyond sexual diversity). This co-constructed approach would address the issue of making diversity not just the responsibility of marginalised people who might be subject to minority stress but also those who represent the gatekeepers to diversity work: i.e., the sport governing bodies.

Further, a more inclusive sport volunteer workforce may be achieved by recognising which groups of people and communities are not (adequately) reached or (pro-)actively recruited because they have non-volunteering antecedents or histories (van Overbeeke et al., 2022). Therefore, future research could focus more closely on views of sport and volunteer managers on inclusion: Again, following Henrickson et al. (2022), diversity ought not to be the sole responsibility of the diverse community/ies. And, with careful sample framing, there is scope to further compare the cultures of inclusion in different sports, than what has been included in the analysis of findings from this study.

The personas of sport volunteers developed within this study could be extended in scope to consider other diverse population groups in sport volunteering, enhancing understanding of the identity work of sport volunteers.

There are other portions of the data from this study which could yet be further examined, opening up possibilities for future research. For example, initial data indicates that there is also an opportunity to compare generational differences between older and younger LGBT+ volunteers and their experiences of (in)equality across the life course.

The experiences of sexually diverse volunteers in this study are more positive than negative when it comes to their expression of identity. This may be due to

characteristics that participants shared: white, highly educated, able-bodied and in some case middle class. LGBT+ individuals may be more protected from discrimination in sport and physical activity if their intersectional characteristics do not equate to multiple inequalities. This could be explored in a future study in order to provide a more complete picture of the (extent of negative) experiences of marginalised groups in sport.

## 9.5 Final reflections

This study has made me reflect on the volunteering, identity work and diversity work I have carried out during the past five years both in my private life and as a researcher. I have been challenged and I have challenged myself about the meaningfulness of this study; the message I want this study to convey. I have realised how much of my personal identity work I have done through writing and I am grateful to my participants, whom in agreeing to be interviewed, have engaged in verbal construction of their identities for research – something I since replicated by being a participant in a study about negotiating LGBT+ identities in social media. Having been both a research participant and a researcher, I now have a better understanding of how to be a more active listener and how to relate to sharing a part of myself for research purposes. I have constantly shaped my sense of self in relation to the research participants and being a research participant. A fellow PhD student once said to me that we research topics that are missing from our lives. I relate to this on many levels: not having LGBT+ role models in sport growing up and eventually finding a sense of belonging in my LGBT+ identity. Moving abroad for the first time was initially about adventure and discovery but it quickly dawned on me that I was searching for belonging. Sport was a way for me to integrate wherever I went but being able to open up about my LGBT+ identity made me realise belonging was not just about geographical location but finding belonging within myself. Much like an athlete who goes into coaching who is learning from their athletic career to become a better coach, I too have learnt from what I did not do or say in relation to my identity that have spurred me onto exploring other people's experiences of staying in or coming out.

The context of sport volunteering which was an area of my life where I had not openly disclosed my identity made me question what was holding me back. I compartmentalised my identity as a volunteer – splitting the identities as a volunteer and a gay woman. I hope this study has provided insight into the added layer of complexity that LGBT+ volunteers undergo whilst negotiating their volunteer identities and other identities. There was a need for me to engage in a process of self-representation and non-disclosure to maintain my sense of identity within the sporting context and to avoid discrimination and marginalisation within sport. Non-disclosure came down to subtle cues, such as avoiding conversation around personal topics or avoiding physical contact with others. Self-representation can also be empowering in supportive communities within sport. This is what I wanted to convey with my study – to explore whether the study participants also felt the need to reconcile sport and sexuality being at odds or whether they already experienced the positive impact of sport volunteering on their sense of community and belonging, helping to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, and improving overall mental health and well-being. This study has allowed me to start answering this question by co-constructing interview data with participants based on their identities and sporting interests in how they stayed involved or did not.

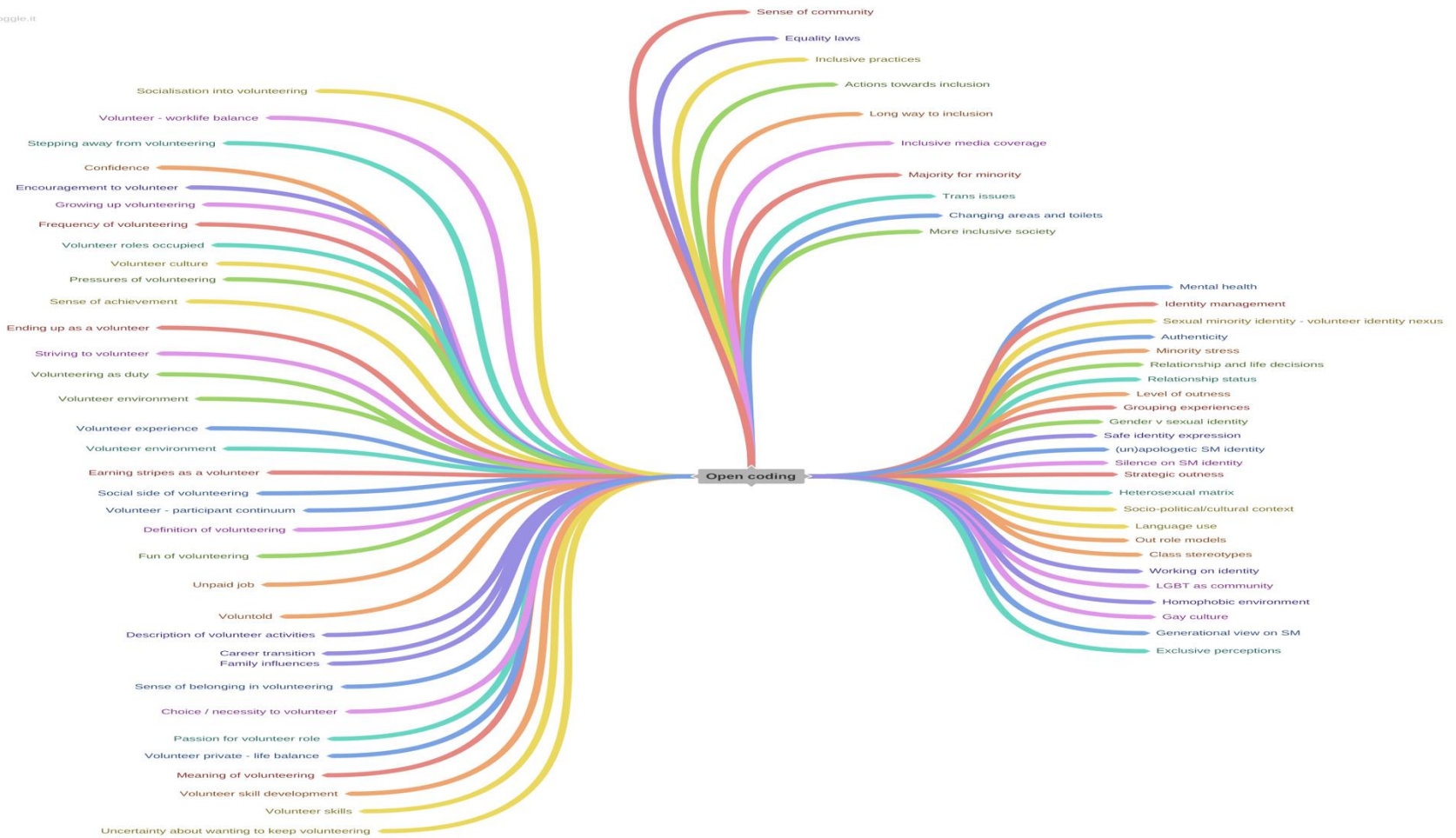
Ultimately, having explored the identities of sexually diverse volunteers in sport, there is a sense that ‘history does not repeat itself but it rhymes’. Regardless of participants’ birth cohort (1960s to 1990s), experiences of exclusion remain and push for inclusion continues. This thesis has made a small contribution to the LGBT+ inclusion ‘agenda’ by providing evidence and outlining support needed for the identity work and diversity work of sexually diverse volunteers in sport.



# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Initial codes

coggle  
made for free at coggle.it



## Appendix 2. Focused codes and conceptual categories

Focused codes	Conceptual categories	Core conceptual categories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• upskilling;</li> <li>• facilitating others' becoming; and</li> <li>• life stage transitions</li> </ul>	<b>Becoming</b>	Meaning-making through volunteering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling accepted and included;</li> <li>• family atmosphere; and</li> <li>• facilitating others' belonging</li> </ul>	<b>Belonging</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "who I am";</li> <li>• "can't think of why someone wouldn't volunteer; and</li> <li>• "state of being"</li> </ul>	<b>Being</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses sport volunteering as an arena for activism</li> <li>• drives inclusion initiatives through volunteering (e.g. LGBT+ sport clubs and networks) and/or at work (e.g. LGBT+ networks)</li> <li>• strives to be an out role model</li> <li>• seeks meaning and belonging through activism</li> </ul>	<b>Advocate persona</b>	Constructing personas through identity work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses sport and other volunteering contexts as a means to reinforce identity of contributing to community initiatives</li> <li>• values the wellbeing and success of the community</li> <li>• tension between always being seen as a volunteer versus wanting to be seen as a participant when not volunteering</li> <li>• seeks meaning and belonging through all volunteering</li> </ul>	<b>Community-minded persona</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses sport volunteering to develop their identity as someone who is developing the sport itself</li> <li>• wants to see their sport/club grow and thrive</li> <li>• volunteers mainly or only in sport</li> <li>• seeks meaning and belonging through sport</li> </ul>	<b>Sportsperson persona</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• action of sport governing bodies</li> <li>• challenging the idea of diversity work as a tick box exercise</li> <li>• doing diversity without being diverse</li> </ul>	<b>Calling for diversity work</b>	Influencing inclusion through diversity work
	<b>Engaging in diversity work</b>	

## Appendix 3. Coding families

<b>Coding families – adapted from Böhm (2020)</b>		
<b>Coding families</b>	<b>Concepts</b>	<b>Examples</b>
The Six C's	Causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, conditions	...of sport volunteering ...of identity work ...of influencing level of inclusion
Process	Stages, phases, transitions, passages, careers, chains, sequences, temporality	Volunteering over time
Cutting-Point Family	Boundary, critical juncture turning point, point of no return	What keeps them volunteering / what makes them want to quit
The Degree Family	Extent, level, intensity, range, amount, continuum	Extent of volunteering
Type Family	Types, classes, genres, styles, kinds, informal-formal	Types of volunteering, identity work strategies and inclusion strategies
The Strategy Family	Strategies, tactics, techniques, mechanisms management	How do they 'do' volunteering – level of inclusion
Interactive Family	Interaction,	Interaction of sport

	interdependence, reciprocity, rituals, ingroup-outgroup, explicit-implicit	volunteer, sport participant and LGBT+ identities
Identity-Self Family	Self-image, self-concept, self-evaluation, social worth, transformations of self, biography	Self-concepts of sport, volunteer and LGBT+ Identity backgrounding and foregrounding
Cultural Family	Social norms, social values, social beliefs	Social norms of volunteering and being LGBT+, LGBT+ community (non-)belongingness
Conflict Family	Contracts, agreements, definitions of the situation, uniformity, conformity	Compliance to club / SGB policies, interpretation of the socio-cultural context

## Appendix 4. Socio-cultural contexts of LGBT+ lives

Information was compiled from Stonewall UK (2004); Y Taylor and Singh (2021); (2020).

Time of the event	Socio-cultural event and context	Notes
<b>PhD thesis submission in March 2023</b>		
<b>2023</b>	Church of England motion to allow blessing for same sex couples backed in all three of General Synod's houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church of England doctrine still does not allow same-sex marriage.</li> </ul>
<b>2022</b>	FIFA World Cup in Qatar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FIFA threatens pro-LGBTQ OneLove armband wearing teams with sporting sanctions</li> <li>• World Cup ambassador declares homosexuality a 'damage in the mind' in an interview with German broadcaster ZDF</li> </ul>
<b>2021</b>	The UK census includes questions on gender identity and sexual orientation for the first time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBT+ population in England and Wales is measured as more than 1.3 million people identifying as LGB out of 59.6 million and 262 000 people out of 45.4 million do not identify with the same gender identity as sex registered at birth.</li> </ul>

<b>Last interviews for this study were conducted in April 2021</b>		
<b>2019-</b>	Covid-19 pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 had an impact on the volunteer experience of participants but not on being LGBT+ in a negative way</li> </ul>
<b>2019</b>	The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Northern Ireland) Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing up in Northern Ireland in a catholic community meant that prejudices and traditions weighed heavily on Niamh's early volunteer experiences.</li> </ul>
<b>First interviews for this study were conducted in April 2019</b>		
<b>2018/ 2019</b>	Increases in hate crime based on sexual orientation and gender identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to Home Office statistics, sexual orientation hate crime and transgender hate crime increased by 19% and 16% from 2018/2019 to 2019/2020 respectively.</li> </ul>
<b>2018</b>	The UK government reveals plans to introduce legislation that will outlaw conversion therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2022 government promised to ban conversion therapy.</li> </ul>
<b>2017</b>	The UK Parliamentary Inquiry on homophobia in sport uncovered scant evidence of change in the United Kingdom or elsewhere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is documented by Denison et al. (2020a, 2020b) who point out the focus on 'admiring the problem' (homophobia), yet few scholars or practitioners present solutions to this.</li> </ul>

<b>2017</b>	Second joint pledge by the largest UK sports governing organisations to combat homophobia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The second promise indicates that the matter has not been resolved, and the NGBs must express their support and plans openly.</li> </ul>
<b>PhD study commences in October 2017</b>		
<b>2014</b>	Same Sex Marriage Act (England)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gemma alludes to how she never planned her dream wedding, simply because the option to get married was not there for her growing up. This made her feel different from her peers.</li> </ul>
<b>2011</b>	The FA, RFU, RFL, EWCB, and British Tennis sign a "charter" pledging to eliminate homophobia and transphobia from their respective sports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major UK sport governing bodies collaborated on this statement. The charter's recommendations have not been adopted.</li> </ul>
<b>2010</b>	The Equality Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Even though Equality Act is about protections in the workplace, its significance was not lost on Gemma.</li> </ul>
<b>2004</b>	The Civil Partnership Act (England)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Even though civil partnership became possible before equal marriage was legalised, Frida's account shows how in her life there was still a high level of identity management in regards to her relationship with her partner.</li> </ul>
<b>2004</b>	Commitment of the English FA to lead Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following a government declaration on the significance of homophobia in</li> </ul>

	in eradicating homophobia	football, the English FA issued its first pledge to eradicate homophobia in the sport.
<b>2003</b>	Sexual Offences Act 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homosexual sex was removed by omitting mentions of ‘buggery’ and ‘indecentcy between men’ that were present in the 1957 Act. As Tatchell (2017) notes: “for the first time in 470 years, England and Wales had a criminal code that did not penalise gay sexuality. Scotland’s anti-gay laws were repealed in 2009 but, in the case of sodomy, did not take effect until 2013.”</li> </ul>
<b>2003</b>	Section 28 repealed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The repeal of Section 28 allowed schools to discuss diverse partnerships and families. Nevertheless, many opted not to.</li> </ul>
<b>2002</b>	Equal rights granted to same-sex couples applying for adoption.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 out of 16 participants mentioned having children.</li> </ul>
<b>2001</b>	The age of consent for homosexual relations is lowered to 16 (having been lowered from 21 to 18 in 1994), making it the same as the age of consent for heterosexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This represented another change to not legislate LGBT+ lives differently to heterosexual lives.</li> </ul>



	people.	
<b>1992</b>	World Health Organisation declassifies same-sex attraction as a mental illness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the light of other events in this table, this declaration was formalised late in the day.</li> </ul>
<b>1990</b>	Justin Fashanu is the first openly homosexual professional football player. Later, he commits suicide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants often talked about out professional athletes in the context of football and noted the growing number of out female footballers. Justin Fashanu was one of the sportspeople mentioned by participants who was a role model for them. Other role models seemed to come from the entertainment world.</li> </ul>
<b>The youngest interviewee was born in the 1990s</b>		
<b>1988</b>	Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher introduces Section 28 of the Local Government Act to prohibit the promotion of homosexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older participants mentioned bad school experiences with sport. Rather than educating school children about diverse relationships and families, Section 28 erased LGBT+ out of the curriculum.</li> </ul>
<b>1985</b>	AIDS epidemic in the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was a time period mentioned equally by participants in each birth cohort. However, for some it was an era they had heard of and for others a living memory.</li> </ul>
<b>1982</b>	First Gay Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The founding of Gay Games as the</li> </ul>

		ultimate LGBT+ inclusive sport event also motivated LGBT+ sport clubs to take part as Sophie reminisces on the 2018 Paris Gay Games.
<b>1974</b>	London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, a London-based information and support helpline, is established.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founding of LGBT+ services that helped the community through what were (more) hostile times to be out in UK society provided Sophie an opportunity to meet people like her and give back to the community she recognised as being part of.</li> </ul>
<b>1972</b>	The first Pride is held in London, attracting approximately 2,000 participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pride was seen as a key event for volunteers either in a personal, volunteer or professional capacity. Participants described Pride events as opportunities for increased awareness and further collaboration rather than their original meaning of protesting.</li> </ul>
<b>1971</b>	The Nullity of Marriage Act was passed, explicitly banning same-sex marriages between same-sex couples in England and Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since participants engaged in retrospective recollection of their volunteering, the emphasis remained on more current and positive events (such as gaining marriage equality) rather than thinking back to a time when equal marriage was banned.</li> </ul>
<b>1967</b>	In England and Wales, the Sexual Offences Act partly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The only acceptable form of</li> </ul>

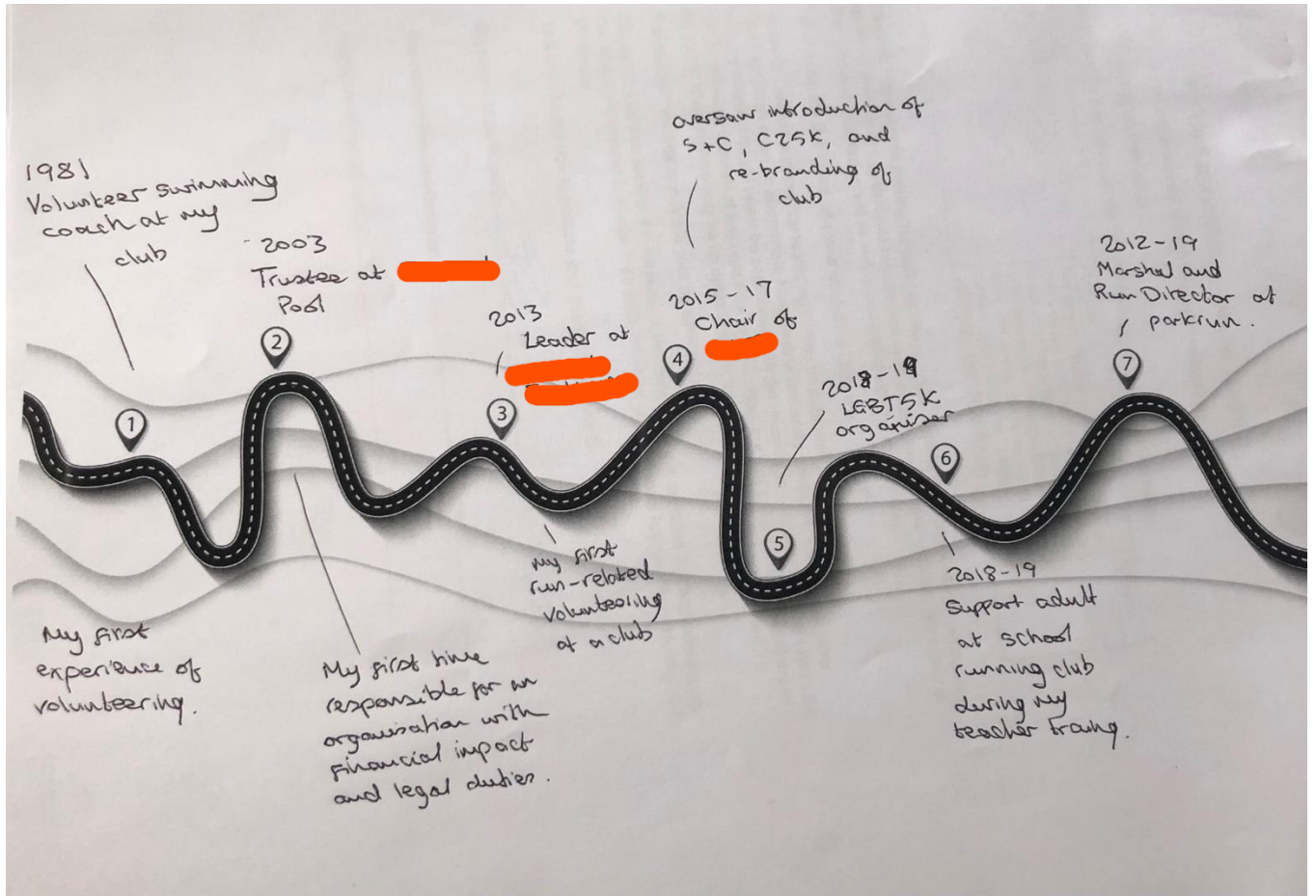
	decriminalised homosexual acts between two males over 21 in private.	homosexuality is between two males, therefore gay people may only be open about their sexuality at home.
<b>The oldest interviewee was born in the 1960's</b>		

## Appendix 5. Demographic characteristics of participants

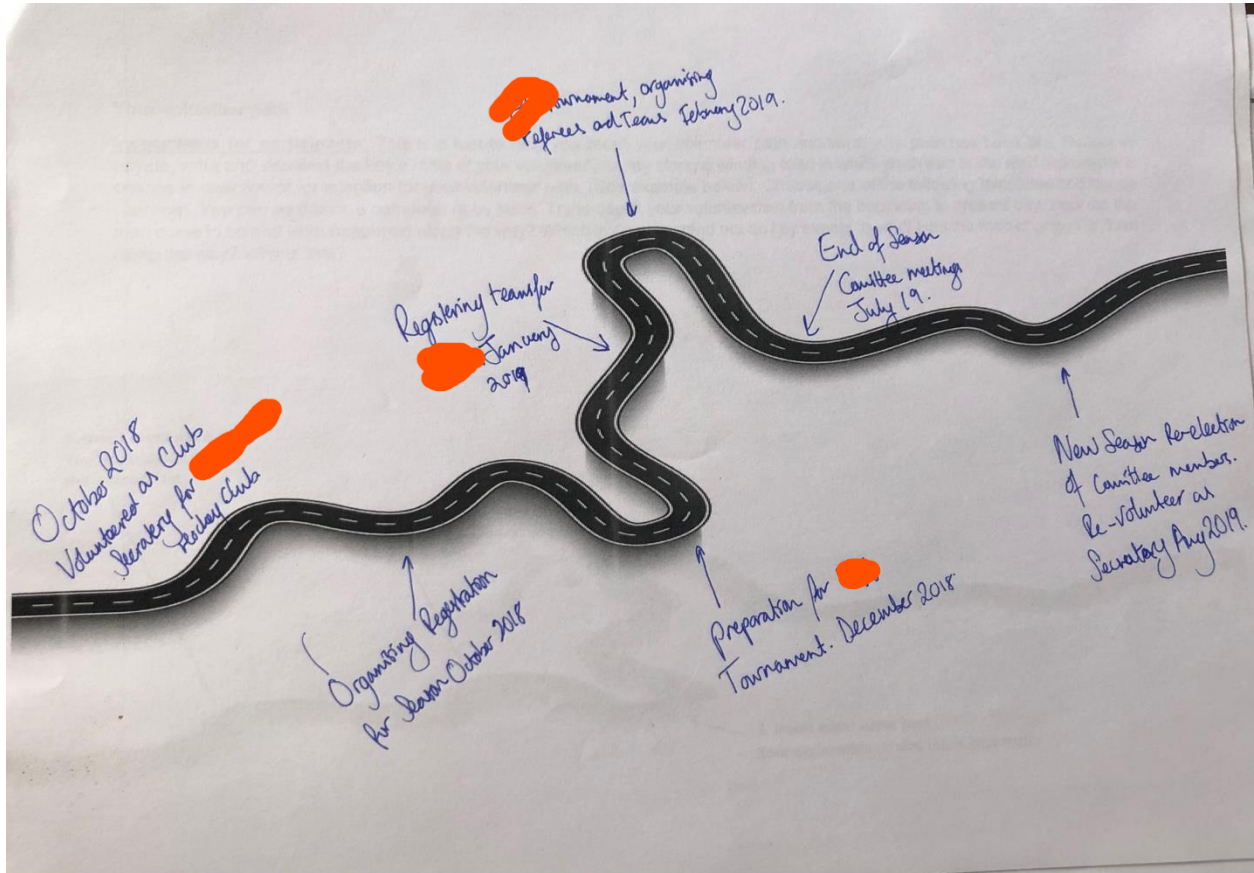
<i>Demographic characteristics of 16 participants</i>					
	1960's	1970's	1980's	1990's	<i>Total</i>
<b><i>Birth cohort</i></b>	5	2	4	5	16
<b><i>Location</i></b>					
London	1		1		2
North	1	2	3	4	10
Midlands	2	1			3
Scotland	1				1
<b><i>Gender identity</i></b>					
Cis male	2	1	1	2	6
Cis female	3	1	3	4	10
<b><i>Sexual orientation</i></b>					
Lesbian	2	1	3	1	7
Gay	2	1	1	2	4
Bisexual				1	1
Asexual				2	2
No label	2				2
<b><i>Highest level of education</i></b>					
University	3	2	4	5	14
Unknown	1			1	2
<b><i>Employment</i></b>					
Retired	1				1
Full time	2	2	3	4	10
Part-time	2		1		3
Student				2	2

<b>Length of volunteering</b>					
30+ years	4				4
20-30 years	1	1			2
10-20 years		1	2		3
5-10 years			1	3	4
1-5 years			1	3	3
<b>Sport involved in</b>					
Ball hockey				1	1
Basketball				1	1
Cricket		1			1
Football				1	1
Goodgym			1		1
Horse riding				1	1
Lacrosse	1				1
Orienteering	2				2
Running	1	1	1		3
Roller derby			1		1
Sailing				1	1
Softball			1		1
Swimming	1				1
<b>Volunteer role</b>					
Event organiser (inc. Goodgym missions)	2		1	1	4
Coach (inc. running leaders, sailing instructors)	2	2	1	1	6
Board member (inc. chairs, treasurers, committee positions)			4	1	5
Referee				1	1

# Appendix 6A. Volunteer timeline – illustrated 1



Appendix 6B. Volunteer timeline – illustrated 2



## Appendix 7. Full criteria used for assessing the quality of my study

This criteria was adapted from Charmaz (2006), Dollard (1935), Plummer (1999, 2001), Alleyne (2015) and Polkinghorne (1998).

### **Credibility**

Have I made systematic comparisons between observations and between categories?

Do the categories cover a wide range of empirical observations?

Are there strong logical links between the gathered data and my argument and analysis?

Has my research provided enough evidence for my claims to allow the reader to form an independent assessment-and agree with my claims?

Have I generated life history stories with a beginning, middle and an end?

### **Originality**

Are my categories fresh? Do they offer new insights?

Does my analysis provide a new conceptual rendering of the data?

What is the social and theoretical significance of this work?

How does my study challenge, extend, or refine current ideas, concepts, and practices?



Have I relayed the choices, actions, and decisions of the research participants?

Is there historical continuity in the life histories?

### **Resonance**

Have I drawn links between larger collectivities or institutions and individual lives, when the data so indicate?

Have I referred to the description of the cultural context of the case study?

Does my study make sense to my participants or people who share their circumstances?

Does my analysis offer them deeper insights about their lives and worlds?

Have I attended to the embodied nature of the individual when gathering and configuring data into a topical life history story?

### **Usefulness**

Does my analysis offer interpretations that people can use in their everyday worlds?

Do my analytic categories suggest any generic processes? If so, have I examined these generic processes for tacit implications?

Can the analysis spark further research in other substantive areas?

How does my work contribute to knowledge?

## **Reflexivity**

What are the moral dimensions of the life histories?

Can life histories be accountable to practices of truth?

How far does the life history reveal its own reflexivity?

How can I locate voices, authorships, and ownerships in the life history?

How plausible and understandable is the cultural context of the story?

Have I been mindful of the significant other people that affect the actions and goals of the individual?

Who are the others in the life history story?

## Appendix 8. Types of social-identities and volunteer personas

ADV= advocate, CM = community-minded, SP = sportsperson. This table indicates the volunteer identity persona that featured most prominently in participants' story. Volunteer identity personas overlapped at times and also changed over time.

	<b>Historical, literary, media</b> function as 'types' in our developing senses of self, which we may emulate or avoid as we grow older and become standardised social-identities (Watson, 2020)	<b>Social category</b> class and status, gender, nationality, ethnicity (Watson, 2020), sexual orientation, ability	<b>Formal role</b> occupational locations that sit alongside positions of rank (Watson, 2020)	<b>Local-organisational</b> components of distinctive organisational culture, type of role (Watson, 2020)	<b>Local-personal</b> characterisations of people made by others in the context of certain events or situations (Watson, 2020)	<b>Cultural stereotype</b> Cultural templates and (crude) stereotypes (Watson, 2008, 2020)
<b>Colin</b>  CM	Elton John	White middle class gay guy	Health care manager, board member, running coach	Meeting like-minded people in LGBT+ running club	Always out, always involved	Effeminate gay men
<b>David</b>  ADV	You're Being Served	White gay man	Marketing, event director, running coach	Parkrun event director	Visibly out gay man	Effeminate gay men

<b>Joan</b> ADV/CM	It's A Sin	Lesbian woman	Radio work, chair	LGBT+ activist	LGBT+ activist	Older women don't have a sexuality
<b>Peter</b> ADV	Not mentioned	Gay man	Business development, club founder	Sense of non-belonging in cricket	The only approachable one among the board members	Homosexuality is shameful
<b>Niamh</b> SP	Not mentioned	Northern Irish gay woman	Teacher, board member	Roller derby player first, board member second, volunteer third	Straight woman	Roller derby as an alternative space
<b>George</b> ADV	Justin Fashanu	Gay man	Financial sector work, committee member	Organiser, fundraiser	Colleagues are surprised he plays football	Gay men don't play football
<b>Sophie</b> ADV	LGBT+ rights activists	Lesbian woman	Researcher	LGBT+ network member	LGBT+ activist, writer, artist	LGBT+ people can be elite athletes too
<b>Liam</b> SP	Not mentioned	Gay man	Vice chair, run leader	Vice chair, run leader	Runner	LGBT+ deviance
<b>Gwen &amp; Julie</b> CM	Not mentioned	Women with no label	Retired, vice chair / nurse, event volunteer	Stalwart volunteers	Stalwart volunteers	Effeminate gay men Butch lesbians

<b>Frida</b> CM	Not mentioned	Lesbian “for the purpose of this study” woman	Researcher, lacrosse coach	Not a volunteer	Assumption of women with children being heterosexual Lesbian shame	Assumption of women with children being heterosexual Lesbian shame
<b>Gemma</b> CM	Out female footballers	Lesbian white woman	Business development, Goodgym task force member	Task force member	Shame associated with being LGBT+	Lesbians are good at sport
<b>Beth</b> SP	Not mentioned	Asexual woman	Researcher	Coach and referee	Role model	Ace equals single
<b>Kath</b> SP	Not mentioned	Bisexual woman	Customer service agent	Secretary and treasurer	Open and proud	LGBT+ community
<b>Lucy</b> SP	Not mentioned	Asexual woman	University student	Sailing instructor	Young sailing instructor	Ace equals single
<b>Sarah</b> SP	Out jockeys	Gay woman	University student	Event volunteer	Always available to help out	Only gay guys are accepted in the horsey world

## Appendix 9. Copy of interview schedule

### **INDICATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

(changes may occur depending on content of interview)

The aim of this interview is to explore the meaning sports volunteers who identify as LGBT+ give to sports volunteering and their identity negotiation and formation in this context.

The interview will comprise of four sections of discussion: volunteering overview, your future in volunteering, identity in volunteering, LGBT+ sports volunteering

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Tell me about you.

Which volunteer position(s) do you currently hold / did you most recently hold?

What is the sport/event/club you are involved in as a volunteer?

How regularly do you volunteer?

How would you define your gender and sexual identity?

### **SECTION 1: VOLUNTEERING OVERVIEW**

Can you fill out the timeline of your volunteering first. I'm particularly interested in your sport volunteering but if you have done other volunteering you may record that also.

Tell me about your most recent volunteer experience.

What do you do?

Have you always had that role?

Can you tell me why did you enter a volunteer role in the first place?

How did you get involved in that?

What made volunteering easier for you?

Now I'd like to hear about your volunteer experience across time.

Can you now take me back through your volunteer timeline and tell me about your experience. You can start wherever you would like.

You have done this for X years, what keeps you volunteering?

Looking back, how would you describe your volunteer journey to this date?

Can you tell me about the challenges you have had as a volunteer?

Can you tell me about the successes you have had as a volunteer?

Can you tell me about the barriers you have faced as a volunteer/ in your volunteer experience?

Looking back, would you do something differently?

What does volunteering mean to you?

How would you compare your general and sport volunteer experience?

I would like you to think back on your volunteering overall –

what have been the turning points, critical moments, and what has it meant overall in your lifetime to volunteer?

What has been the impact of Covid-19 on your volunteering?<sup>33</sup>

## **SECTION 2: YOUR FUTURE IN VOLUNTEERING**

How do you see your future in volunteering?

What kind of advancement opportunities are there for you?

What are your aspirations for the future?

(How would you compare your general and sport volunteer experience?)

## **SECTION 3: LGBT+ IDENTITY IN VOLUNTEERING**

How does your sexual or gender identity influence your experiences in volunteering? //  
Was there something significant happening in terms your sexual / gender identity that could have impacted your volunteer journey?

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<sup>33</sup> for interviews conducted in 2020–2021



To what extent have you expressed your sexuality / gender identity openly as a volunteer?

Can you describe how does your sport volunteer experience compare with your other potential volunteer experience?

If you were trying to encourage LGBT+ volunteering in sport, what would you have sport organisations do to increase volunteering?

Looking back across your journey now, if you did it all again or were advising sport organisations, what would make the experience better?

How would you compare your general and sport volunteer experience?

#### **SECTION 4: LGBT+, SPORT VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIETY**

Volunteers lack diversity in the UK. What could be done to diversify the volunteer base in sport clubs?

What are some of the existing good practices?

How do you view the role of (straight) allies in increasing the number of LGBT+ people in sport volunteer positions?

To what extent people's attitudes towards LGBT+ people are different now compared to when you started volunteering?

**CLOSE**

We have now gone through four sections of the interview. Is there anything you'd like to add before we finish the interview? If there is anything you'd like to add to your timeline, connect different parts to one another or give additional context, feel free to do so.

# GLOSSARY

## **Asexual (Stonewall UK)**

A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Some asexual people experience romantic attraction, while others do not. Asexual people who experience romantic attraction might also use terms such as gay, bi, lesbian, straight and queer in conjunction with asexual to describe the direction of their romantic attraction.

## **Cisgender (Stonewall UK)**

Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

## **Diversity (LGBT Foundation)**

A way to describe a community having a lot of different kinds of people in it, or a way of working having lots of different methods and tools.

## **Heteronormativity (Lenskyj, 2013)**

Active prejudice and discrimination against sexual minorities, as well as the implicit ideological assumptions that shape societal attitudes and practices.

## **Homonormativity (Duggan, 2003)**

Does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.

### **Inclusion (LGBT Foundation)**

A way of working that includes people from different backgrounds and communities, who have different experiences of discrimination and life

### **LGBT+ (Author's definition)**

Widely adopted acronym to describe those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. The plus is used to be inclusive of anyone who considers themselves to have a minority sexual orientation, gender identity/history of biological sex.

### **LGBTQIAP+ (Author's definition)**

As above with the addition of queer/questioning, intersex, asexual and pansexual.

### **Marginalisation (LGBT Foundation)**

The social process of being made marginal within society – being excluded or ignored.

### **Minoritisation (Gunaratnam, 2003)**

The active process by which individuals or groups are subjected to minority status by others, rather than considering them naturally existing as minorities, highlighting that individuals or groups are intentionally placed in a position of minority by societal power dynamics and processes of marginalisation and discrimination.

### **No label (Symons et al., 2017)**

Unsure about their identity and did not want to use a label.

**Non-binary (Stonewall UK)**

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.

**Pansexual (Stonewall UK)**

Refers to a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender.

**Sexual orientation (Stonewall UK)**

A person's sexual attraction to other people, or lack thereof. Along with romantic orientation, this forms a person's orientation identity.

**Sexually diverse (Newman et al., 2020)**

Nonnormative sexual orientation

**Transgender (Stonewall UK)**

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

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