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A THEORY TO PRACTICE APPROACH TO REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY ON GAY AND BISEXUAL INCLUSION IN MEN'S ICE HOCKEY

Josie D. Kinneer

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A THEORY TO PRACTICE APPROACH TO REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF HEGEMONIC
MASCULINITY ON GAY AND BISEXUAL INCLUSION IN MEN'S ICE HOCKEY

Josie D. Kinneer

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Project Advisor

Dr. Vikki Krane

Second Reader

Dr. Nancy Spencer

Abstract

Mainstream press narratives identify homonegative behaviors occurring in men's ice hockey that may negatively impact gay and bisexual inclusion in the sport climate. The conceptual framework guiding this project draws from Messner's (2002) model of peer group relationships and principles of inclusive excellence ("AACU", 2018; Kauer & Krane, 2010). Messner's (2002) model describes the social dynamics of the male athlete group, explaining how relationships are influenced by the desire for approval and acceptance as well as the fear of isolation. Inclusive excellence (AACU, 2018) is a guiding philosophy designed to increase diversity, inclusion, and equity. Kauer and Krane (2010) apply inclusive excellence to sport, suggesting that coaches utilize teachable moments, create dialogue, and engage in proactive behaviors. The theoretical concepts that influence the experiences of gay and bisexual (GB) men in ice hockey are hegemonic masculinity (Allain, 2008; Pappas et al., 2004) and homonegativity (Anderson, 2002; Gregory, 2011; Messner, 1992). Homonegativity is used to support the hegemonic masculine hierarchy, which is further supported by, and supportive of the peer group relationship structure as described by Messner (2002). Peer group interactions strengthen and mirror the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity, supporting the creation of a heteronormative sport climate by using homonegative language and behaviors. Motivation to retain group status regardless of questionable group member behavior (i.e., homonegativity) contributes to sustaining hegemonic masculinity. I offer four strategies to enhance GB inclusion in ice hockey: (a) change the climate of ice hockey by shifting value to traits associated with inclusive excellence, (b) reframing peer group relationships by changing the qualifying characteristics of leaders and empowering the marginalized, (c) offering emotional protection of teammates, and (d) addressing innate power imbalances by embracing individual responsibility to uphold equity. These suggestions are framed in inclusive excellence (AACU, 2018; Kauer & Krane, 2010) and are intended to guide coaches and sport psychology practitioners toward promoting a men's ice hockey culture that encourages GB inclusion by breaking from ideals associated with hegemonic masculinity and homonegativity, and by redefining peer group roles.

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A Theory to Practice Approach to Reducing the Effects of Hegemonic Masculinity on Gay and
Bisexual Inclusion in Men's Ice Hockey

Contact sports like ice hockey construct and reflect hegemonic masculinity, which refers to the most socially valued model of manliness. These sports often encapsulate the most valued hegemonic masculine behaviors (Allain, 2008; Connell, 1995; Messner, 1992; Pappas, McKenry, & Catlett, 2004; Pringle & Hickey, 2010). Aggression, a willingness to intimidate, violence, and overt heterosexuality are behaviors associated with men who successfully conform to hegemonic masculine ideals (Allain, 2008; Messner, 1992, 2002; Pappas et al., 2004; Pringle & Hickey, 2010). Overt heterosexuality within hegemonic masculinity allows for effeminate and gay masculinities to be devalued and subjugated. One way that effeminate and gay masculinities are subjugated is through homonegativism, which is the use of rational, purposeful negative attitudes and behaviors towards individuals who are not heterosexual (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Kauer & Krane, 2013).

As with any sport group, men's ice hockey teams have a set peer group structure that is both reinforced by, and reinforcing of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; Messner, 2002). The more willing a male ice hockey player is to display stereotypical masculine behaviors, the more likely it is for that athlete to conform to hegemonic masculinity and to engage in homonegativism. Homonegativism is used to establish and maintain a social hierarchy that is further supportive of, and supported by, hegemonic masculinity and peer group relationships (Messner, 2002). Male ice hockey players who are able to successfully demonstrate appropriately masculine behaviors are able to establish themselves at a higher status position within the peer group; consequently, males who display effeminate and gay masculinities occupy lower positions in both hierarchies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messner, 1992, 2002;

Weinstein, Smith, & Wiesenthal, 1995). Mainstream press narratives and popular culture films about men's ice hockey portray homonegativism as a common method for players to establish social roles, maintain ideals associated with hegemonic masculinity, and keep gay and bisexual (GB) players in their subjugated roles.

One of the quintessential ice hockey movies of all time, *Slap Shot* epitomized the violent nature of hockey in the era of the enforcer (Wunsch, Friedman, & Hill, 1977). Enforcers in men's ice hockey performed a protective role – they existed primarily to defend their teammates through violence and intimidation (Lepore, 2014). An enforcer will typically be sent out on the ice to violently hit an opposing player in retaliation for any cheap shots to a teammate. Though enforcers are not as common in contemporary ice hockey, their existence was a mainstay for nearly thirty years in the National Hockey League (NHL) and minor league affiliate teams. NHL analyst Billy Jaffe said of enforcers,

There's a history of players who've ingratiated themselves to the fans by using their fists. When they're standing up for their teammates, they're standing up for the city, the logo on the sweater. Fans love them for it, and there's a part of it that's hard to turn away from for the fans (Lepore, 2014, para. 15).

In *Slap Shot*, the Hanson brothers Jack, Steve, and Jeff have a thuggish style of play (Wunsch et al., 1977) that involves behaviors associated with hegemonic masculinity including a willingness to fight, to intimidate others, and a tendency towards violence and aggression (Allain, 2008; Messner, 1992; Pappas et al., 2004; Pringle & Hickey, 2010). The Hanson brothers use their violent play to fire up fans and teammates alike; the brothers skate with intention to injure the opposing team which ultimately results in an all-out brawl and a referee motioning to eject all three from the game (Wunsch et al., 1977).

Slap Shot also involves multiple instances of individuals using homonegative slurs as a method for insulting and instigating confrontation with others. For example, Reggie (Paul Newman) taunts the opposing goalie by repeatedly calling his wife a “dyke” – resulting in an end-of-game brawl (Wunsch et al., 1977). When Reggie returns to the locker room with his team, he proudly announces that he called the goaltender’s wife a “dyke,” which is met with cheers and smiles from his teammates (Wunsch et al., 1977). In this instance, Reggie receives praise and confirms his high-status position on the hegemonic masculinity hierarchy by using homonegative language to both instigate and belittle an opposing player, and by engaging in a violent fight.

A modern-day *Slap Shot* (Wunsch et al., 1977), *Goon* paints a portrait of Doug “The Thug” Glatt (Seann William Scott) as he lifts his team to glory and comradery as an enforcer (Carmody et al., 2011). *Goon* emphasizes intimidation, violence, and aggression throughout the film, insinuating that individuals who do not successfully adhere to these traits are less valuable in the ice hockey environment (Carmody et al., 2011). For example, after suffering a life-threatening head injury at the hands of Ross Rhea (Liev Schreiber) early in his career, skill-based player Xavier LaFlamme (Marc-André Grondin) approaches ice hockey in a way described as “scared sh-tless” (Carmody et al., 2011, min. 14:11). LaFlamme’s fear of violence, unwillingness to play aggressively, and unwillingness to suffer injury while playing ice hockey are seen as weaknesses that lower his value as a player and position on the team, ultimately costing LaFlamme his alternate-captaincy (e.g., one to two players who can speak to the referees when the captain is not on the ice) (Carmody et al., 2011). The behavior of Doug Glatt provides stark contrast to LaFlamme; Glatt is rewarded for his ability to fight, intimidate others, and behave violently when he is traded to a higher-level semi-professional team and given an alternate-

captaincy despite his lack of technical skill as a hockey player (Carmody et al., 2011). These examples demonstrate a film representation of hegemonic masculinity in ice hockey; LaFlamme loses status by not conforming to ideals associated with hegemonic masculinity, and Glatt is rewarded for successful hegemonic masculine performances.

Homonegativity in *Goon* is inconsistently addressed which may be indicative of a contemporary ice hockey climate that is unreliable in regard to acceptance and inclusion of gay and bisexual men. In the first scene, where Doug Glatt engages in a fight, he does so in response to an ice hockey player using a homonegative slur, shouting “hey, my brother is gay” (Carmody et al., 2011, min. 5:28). After violently assaulting the player, Glatt asks calmly, “do you want to take that word back, please?” to which the player responds, “f-ck you, f-cking faggot”; Glatt then renders the player unconscious (Carmody et al., 2011, min. 5:52). In contrast to this scene, however, is another where subtle homonegative comments are not addressed. At a bar, Glatt’s new hockey teammates offer that as a part of Glatt’s initiation to the team, he should let his teammates sign his genitals. When Glatt declines they ask, “Why are you being gay?... It’s not gay, not if you’re brothers,” to which Glatt responds, “my brother’s gay and he doesn’t even do that” (Carmody et al., 2011, min. 22:49). This scene implies that being uncomfortable with the inappropriate initiation idea is gay – which is implied to be negative and unwelcome in the team climate; further, by refusing, Glatt risks jeopardizing his tenuous relationship with his new teammates.

The above film examples offer cinematic portrayals that parallel the lived experiences of openly gay and bisexual (GB) individuals in ice hockey. Brock McGillis (2016), who identifies as gay, is a retired semi-professional ice hockey player who remained closeted during his career due to his fear of social rejection. McGillis (2016) says,

I can't count the amount of times I heard phrases like: That's gay or what a homo in the dressing room over the course of my hockey career. Words like fag, p---y, and b---h are part of the daily banter (para. 4).

This lived experience of homonegativism in men's ice hockey is mirrored both in *Slap Shot* and *Goon* (Carmody et al., 2011; Wunsch et al., 1977). Establishing and maintaining hegemonic masculinity through homonegativity, violence and aggression, and intimidation of others are common in both ice hockey cinematography and the lived experiences of individuals like Brock McGillis, Alex Valvo, and Joey Fisher (McGillis, 2016; Valvo, 2018; Zeigler, 2007).

Hegemonic masculinity in ice hockey (Allain, 2008; Connell, 1995, Pappas et al., 2004), homonegativity, and the sporting peer group structure as defined by Messner (2002) guide this exploration of the climate of men's ice hockey in relation to the lived experiences of GB men in the sport environment. In order to reduce homonegativism and increase GB inclusion in men's ice hockey, hegemonic masculine norms that establish and support non-GB inclusive peer group hierarchies must first be devalued and de-emphasized. I will offer strategies to diminish behaviors in ice hockey associated with hegemonic masculinity (e.g., violence, aggression, willingness to intimidate) and homonegativism in an effort to create an inclusive ice hockey climate. The relationship between hegemonic masculinity, homonegativity, and the peer group structure in men's ice hockey will be explored, followed by theory-to-practice suggestions for coaches and sport psychology consultants who are in positions to affect positive change in the sport environment.

Theoretical Framework

The guiding theoretical concepts are hegemonic masculinity in ice hockey (Allain, 2008; Pappas et al., 2004), homonegativity (Anderson, 2002; Gregory, 2011; Messner, 1992), the sport

peer group structure (Messner, 2002), and inclusive excellence in sport (Kauer & Krane, 2010). Exploring hegemonic masculinity and the sport peer group structure allow for a deep understanding of the climate of ice hockey in regard to GB inclusion. Inclusive excellence, as discussed by Kauer and Krane (2010), provides a guiding philosophy for creating positive change in the men's ice hockey sport environment in line with GB inclusion.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Homonegativity

Hegemonic masculinity is the most valued form of masculinity; it is both the culturally dominant ideal and the primary model of manliness to which men are expected to strive (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). A willingness to fight, to intimidate others, behave violently, and display aggression are traits associated with hegemonic masculinity in men's ice hockey (Allain, 2008; Pappas et al., 2004). These traits and behaviors are used by players to establish dominance in the sporting environment and secure positions of high social status (Messner, 2002).

Status-based positions in this hierarchy of masculinity are further established and reinforced in ice hockey by overt displays of heterosexuality and engaging in homonegativism. Overt heterosexuality also is associated with the ideal version of manliness; therefore, inclusion of overt heterosexuality in hegemonic masculinity in sport allows for the subjugation of gay masculinities as they are contrasted with the ideal version of manliness (i.e., the heterosexual male athlete). What this means is that heterosexual athletes are given status positions that are dominant, which they then reinforce by engaging in homonegativism and treating men who are gay or bisexual as lesser, submissive subordinates. Homonegativism allows men who successfully conform to hegemonic masculinity to reinforce heterosexuality as the norm; it is essential for men to prove their heterosexuality to avoid being viewed as less than a man (Connell, 1995; Klein, 1990; Messner, 1992).

Another way that hegemonic masculinity is reinforced through homonegativity is through the usage of slurs such as “fag” or “gay” to emasculate, belittle, and intimidate men who do not embody the traits associated with hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 2002; Gregory, 2011; Messner, 1992). This behavior has been observed and documented in ice hockey by the popular press (Murphy, 2018; Strang, 2011; Zeigler, 2007, 2017). Personal narrative reports – which are typically first-person narratives in the popular press written about the author’s personal experiences – of openly gay men in collegiate and semi-professional ice hockey indicate that behaviors consistent with homonegativism significantly impacted their decisions to remain closeted for as long as they did (McGillis, 2016; Valvo, 2018). In particular, McGillis (2016), an openly gay retired semi-professional player, and Valvo (2018), an openly gay current NCAA ice hockey referee, describe hearing homonegative slurs such as “gay” and “fag” frequently, leading them to believe that they would not be accepted by others if they came out as gay. McGillis (2016) and Valvo (2018) also described fearing social rejection from their coaches and teammates, which impacted their coming out decisions.

Messner’s (2002) Peer Group Structure

Messner’s (2002) model of peer relationships describes the social dynamic of male athlete groups. He explains how relationships are influenced by the desire for social approval, social acceptance, and the fear of exclusion. Messner’s (2002) model includes three groups within the athletic peer dynamic: the leaders, the audience, and the marginals. The leaders are individuals who best adhere to and uphold hegemonic masculinity norms and ideals; they are most likely to benefit from hegemonic masculinity (Messner, 2002). These high-status leaders often engage in bullying behaviors associated with homonegativism (Messner, 2002). The next peer group, the audience, is comprised of individuals who validate and support the actions of the

leaders by actively applauding and participating in the behaviors of the leaders (Messner, 2002). The audience provides validation and support reflecting their longing to be a member of the leader group. The marginals are individuals who do not agree with the actions and words of the leaders and audience (Messner, 2002). Despite feelings of discomfort, the marginals are unwilling to disassociate themselves from the group to avoid becoming a target, so they typically engage in silent complicity to retain group status. Additionally, marginals may feel a desire to be included in the masculinity-centered bonding that occurs in the peer group because this bonding represents acceptance and in-group status (Messner, 2002).

Messner's (2002) model of peer relationships mirrors and supports the hierarchy associated with hegemonic masculinity as the individuals who most closely demonstrate and conform to the ideal form of masculinity are given the highest status and privilege. In ice hockey, males who are most willing to intimidate others, act aggressively fight (i.e., engage in violence), and engage in homonegativity will occupy Messner's (2002) leader roles. Teammates who support and validate intimidation, aggression, and violence are the audience. These individuals may occasionally engage in aggressive or violent behaviors, homonegativity, and intimidation due to their desire to be a member of the leader group. The peer group structure allows for hegemonic masculinity to be reinforced through homonegative behaviors; GB men will be subjugated or socially isolated by the leaders and the audience for nonconformance to hegemonic masculinity.

Inclusive Excellence

Inclusive excellence is a guiding philosophy developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) that imagines diversified and inclusive learning in higher education (AACU, 2018; Kauer & Krane, 2010). Designed to increase diversity, equity, and

inclusion in higher education, inclusive excellence can be applied by teachers, coaches, and sport psychology consultants (Kauer & Krane, 2010). The four core principles of inclusive excellence are equity-mindedness, inclusion, equity, and diversity (AACU, 2018). Inclusive excellence is an active process that requires a willingness to engage in difficult conversations and necessary decision-making to affect change in a given environment (AACU, 2018). Achieving inclusive excellence involves challenging social conjecture about gender and sexual identities (AACU, 2018; Kauer & Krane, 2010). Coaches who embrace inclusive excellence teach athletes to develop Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans (LGBT) inclusion and acceptance through education, increased awareness, and challenges to exclusionary practices while also building greater team cohesion. It is likely that inclusive excellence will contribute to enhanced team climates and performance as all team member contributions to the sport setting become valued, supported, and receive recognition (Kauer & Krane, 2010).

Kauer and Krane (2010) encouraged applying inclusive excellence in sport. They suggested creating dialogue, utilizing teachable moments, and engaging in proactive behavior to create an inclusive team climate. Creating dialogue can involve nurturing a space where teammates feel comfortable discussing their GB experiences, leading a discussion about GB individuals that challenges assumptions, addressing harmful stereotypes, and acting as an educational resource (Kauer & Krane, 2010). Utilizing teachable moments involves challenging team members to consider that all male athletes are not heterosexual, and to change language-based team norms to reject homonegative language (Kauer & Krane, 2010). Being proactive can mean establishing a goal of inclusive excellence, having visible signs of acceptance (e.g., posters, stickers), engaging in inclusion-focused training (e.g., safe-zone training), enhancing awareness of pronoun use, and showing interest in the GB-related activities of diverse members

of the team (Kauer & Krane, 2010). These principles of inclusive excellence will act as a guiding philosophy to reducing the negative effects of hegemonic masculinity (e.g., homonegativity) within the ice hockey peer group as a method for increasing GB inclusion.

GB Inclusion Strategies

Players who successfully demonstrate a willingness to behave aggressively or violently, intimidate others, and to engage in fights typically will occupy higher status positions in the social hierarchy (Allain, 2008; Pappas et al., 2004); these individuals likely will be the individuals engaging in homonegativity to further establish and reinforce their dominant social position over GB males. Addressing and decreasing the value of the above traits associated with hegemonic masculinity will break the cyclical relationship between homonegativism, the hegemonic masculine hierarchy, and the peer group relationship structure. Reducing the significance of hegemonic masculinity requires establishing an alternative social status achieved by embracing diversity and GB inclusion. Reducing the significance of hegemonic masculinity will then reduce the use of homonegativism, as homonegativism is used to reinforce hegemonic masculinity by belittling and intimidating other males – thereby breaking the cyclical relationship between the two concepts (Anderson, 2002; Gregory, 2011; Messner, 1992). The following strategies are designed to redefine peer group relationships, reduce focus on hegemonic masculinity, and reduce instances of homonegativism affecting GB inclusion in men's ice hockey. In the process, they also will contribute to increased team cohesion and performance (Krane & Kaus, 2014). Further, a hypothetical men's ice hockey team called the Tigers will be used as an example that will help practitioners visualize the following steps.

Changing the Climate of Ice Hockey

One strategy for changing team climates is to focus on developing social norms of inclusion (Krane & Kaus, 2014). This desired climate can be framed within inclusive excellence in which emphasis is placed on the value of individual differences to the team as a whole (Kauer & Krane, 2010). No longer will behaviors that support the hegemonic masculinity hierarchy (e.g., willingness to intimidate, violence, aggression, homonegativism) be reinforced or even valued. Further, the coach or sport psychology consultant should lead the team in discussion to recognize that homonegativism interferes with team cohesion, and ultimately can negatively impact performance within the team climate (Kauer & Krane, 2010; Krane & Kaus, 2014). Instead of emphasizing violence and aggression, coaches and sport psychology consultants should emphasize the unique skills that players bring to the team. As an example of an activity that encourages players to value diversity, the Tigers' coach instructs the team to come up with one unique strength for each teammate that they feel contributes to the team. In doing so, each player will recognize their own unique value. It should be emphasized that each player is an equal, unique, important piece in the team's puzzle. In the example, the Tiger's coaching staff has decided that instead of encouraging players to use intimidation or aggression to score a goal, they will emphasize speed and puck handling. Similarly, instead of encouraging players to retaliate against perceived slights by instigating a fight, the coaches for the Tigers have decided to emphasize creating scoring opportunities and defending the net. Social status in male peer groups is often reinforced by homonegativism. Emphasizing and valuing technical hockey skill instead of traits associated with hegemonic masculinity will create the opportunity for each player's skill level to determine his social status. This change in emphasis breaks down hegemonic masculinity in ice hockey and discourages homonegativism, ultimately resulting in the development of a more positive, GB inclusive sport climate.

A primary motivator for athletes in their peer group is to feel as though they belong; fear of social rejection is often why marginalized players do not speak out against their peers (Messner, 2002). Fear of social rejection is often a motivator behind some closeted players choosing not to come out; homonegativism in the sport environment indicates to closeted players that being GB would not be acceptable and would result in social isolation (McGillis, 2016; Valvo, 2018, Ziegler, 2007). A team embracing diversity and individual differences in line with inclusive excellence will ultimately create GB inclusion because they are allowing individuals to view their differences as beneficial to the team, thereby creating a sense of value and belonging (Kauer & Krane, 2010). Embracing individual differences can be framed as the foundation that supports team success by positively impacting individual participation and developing a productive GB inclusive team dynamic (Kauer & Krane, 2010).

Coaches and practitioners can utilize teachable moments that require actively confronting homonegative language and behaviors when they occur (Kauer & Krane, 2010). Consider the following examples of how the coach of the Tigers utilizes teachable moments to confront homonegativity. The Tigers' coach overhears Player A calling Player B a "fag" during practice. The coach decides to use this teachable moment to challenge his team to consider that not all male athletes are heterosexual by saying, "We don't use that language on this team, maybe somebody here is gay or has friends or family who are gay." In this instance, the Tigers' coach has opened the door for the athletes to consider that homonegative language may be harming or insulting somebody that they know. In another situation, the Tigers' coach overhears members of his team talking about how, "gay men aren't tough enough to play hockey." The Tigers' coach recognizes that this is an inaccurate, harmful stereotype that is homonegative, and decides to use this teachable moment to confront homonegativity on his team by saying, "That isn't an

appropriate thing to say, and it isn't true. Brock McGillis is an openly gay retired semi-professional hockey player; how could he have gotten to be a semi-professional player if he wasn't tough enough?"

A GB inclusive goal the Tigers have adopted is to challenge themselves and one another to be aware of the pronouns that they use. In the example, a member of the Tigers has not come out to his coaches or team because he is afraid that they will not accept him due to the gay slurs that he has often heard them use. Despite his team being unaware of his sexuality, and despite there being no homonegative language aimed at him, he is fearful of the social rejection and bullying he might experience if he were to come out to his team. He is withdrawn at practices and in the locker room, and he has been less productive in games which has caused the entire team to function less effectively. In this example, the closeted player on the Tigers is experiencing fear caused by homonegativity that adversely impacts his relationship with the team and his performance, thereby negatively impacting the performance of the entire team. In ice hockey, homonegative language and behaviors are often used to intimidate and subjugate others. Regardless of intentions, homonegativity can distance members of the team and cause them to disengage, meaning that they may not be showing their full potential as a player - which can negatively impact the communication and performance of the entire team (Kauer & Krane, 2010; Krane & Kaus, 2014).

Further proactive behaviors in line with inclusive excellence are attending safe-zone training, increasing knowledge and awareness of existing GB policies and resources, and engaging in productive, inclusion goal-oriented dialogue. Safe-zone training provides an opportunity for attendees to learn about the LGBT community and receive ally training, as well as to examine prejudice, assumptions, and privilege (Safe Zone Project, n.d.). Safe-zone training

is often a local resource provided by colleges, universities, or LGBT-resource centers (Safe Zone Project, n.d). Coaches and sport psychology consultants can familiarize themselves with their organization's policies on LGBT inclusion by reviewing organizational handbooks, mission statements, and non-discrimination policies. For coaches or practitioners involved with NCAA organizations, Athlete Ally (2018) has an online Equality Index that operationally measures LGBT inclusion policies and procedures to provide a graded score on inclusion; the index can provide awareness to coaches of issues they can examine in their own athletic departments. Once coaches have established familiarity with their organization's policies and resources, they can begin to implement or improve them to foster LGBT inclusion in athletics. Engaging in inclusion goal-oriented dialogue with the team can be as simple as the Tigers creating a goal statement such as, "We will use inclusive language on this team," followed by a discussion where team members brainstorm how to uphold their inclusive goal statement. Tigers' players and coaches should frequently remind one another of the team goal statement, ensuring that it is upheld. These are all strategies that a coach or practitioner can use to develop GB inclusive team norms and devalue norms associated with hegemonic masculinity (Kauer & Krane, 2010; Krane & Kaus, 2014).

Reframing Peer Group Relationships

The existing sport peer group structure for men's ice hockey teams both reinforces and is reinforced by hegemonic masculinity; males who do not successfully display hegemonically masculine traits are less likely to fill leadership roles than males who do (Connell, 1995; Loy, 1995; Messner, 1992; Pringle & Hickey, 2010). Peer group roles must be redefined to break this cyclical relationship (Krane & Kaus, 2014). In particular, the qualifying characteristics of the leader group must adapt to place less emphasis on violence and aggression, and to depart from

homonegativism as a method for establishing hierarchical positions. The marginalized group must also be empowered so that they experience opportunities to have their voices heard and break from silent complicity. In order to empower the marginalized group, the leader group behaviors should change to become more inclusive first.

Leaders have direct influence over the audience and the marginals (Messner, 2002); thus, they have enormous social impact when creating and maintaining team norms (Kauer & Krane, 2010; Krane & Kaus, 2014). If individuals in the leader group adopt norms consistent with GB inclusion, then they will be able to serve as models for the rest of the team. Leaders should learn to model compassion and encouragement (Krane & Kaus, 2014) instead of violence, aggression, or intimidation (Allain, 2008; Pappas et al., 2004). Team leader roles on the Tigers belong to individuals that support team norms of encouraging emotional expression and engaging in compassionate physical contact. The leaders of the Tigers engage in these GB inclusive norms while simultaneously discouraging violence and homonegativism. To encourage the leaders to adopt GB inclusion as a norm, useful strategies include frequently reminding players that it is their responsibility to encourage their teammates to respect others and encouraging athlete leaders to create and practice predetermined responses to homonegativism (Kauer & Krane, 2010). The Tigers' coach pulls the captain and assistant captains aside and tells them, "As team leaders, it is your responsibility to act respectfully and set a positive example of inclusion for your teammates." Their coach then asks for the captains to brainstorm some predetermined responses for their teammates, "How will you encourage your teammates to be respectful and inclusive? What might you say if you see a member of the team going against team norms, and being non-GB inclusive, or using non-inclusive language?" In this instance, the Tigers' coach realizes that the team captains may be unsure about how they would set a positive example or

confront homonegativism. To help them, the coach makes a few suggestions, “Try saying, ‘On this team, we are respectful and inclusive,’ to remind your teammates that homonegativism is unacceptable.” The Tigers’ coaches also make sure to recognize and reward players who consistently model GB inclusive behavior such as speaking out against homonegativism, being mindful of their language, and showing interest in local GB organizations.

Coaches can reinforce inclusive behaviors by modeling inclusion which can involve being aware of their pronoun usage, recognizing their responsibility to speak out against homonegativism, designating a safe space, and proactively creating productive dialogue with the team about GB inclusion (Kauer & Krane, 2010). Modeling inclusion and encouraging inclusive behaviors are coach-based changes that are supportive of one another, and that should occur at relatively the same time. The coach of the Tigers demonstrates awareness of pronouns by saying “partner” instead of “girlfriend”, and consistently addresses non-GB inclusive language and behaviors on their team as unacceptable, making statements like, “we don’t use that language on this team.” The head coach and assistant coach of the Tigers have also attended safe-zone training and have designated their offices as GB-safe areas by placing visible stickers and posters by their doors (Kauer & Krane, 2010). The Tigers often have team discussions where they create GB-inclusive goals and discuss common misconceptions about the LGBT community.

The marginalized group should consistently be provided with opportunities to make their voices and opinions heard. Creating a space where marginalized group members feel able to disengage from silent complicity without fearing social isolation will help to create a positive bottom-to-top effect that breaks down the hegemonic masculinity hierarchy. Marginalized members of the group may feel uncomfortable with the language and actions of the men who rank higher in the social hierarchy, but they also may feel a desire to be included in the bonding

that the ingroup (the leaders and audience) experience (Messner, 2002). Due to the support given by the audience, and the silent complicity from marginalized group members, the leader's behavior often is unchecked. During a team discussion about GB-inclusion, the Tigers' coach asks for each member of the team to identify one specific thing that they can do to actively be more inclusive; one of the marginalized members of the Tigers says, "I could be more inclusive by asking my teammates how their partner is, instead of saying girlfriend." The Tigers' coach responds by saying, "That is a great idea! Let's adopt that as a team." The response of the coach provides overt support for an expressed opinion by a marginalized team member. By providing opportunities for marginalized group members to voice their opinions in an environment where they feel supported and protected to do so, the homonegative behaviors of the leaders and audience may be tempered. It is likely going to take a major change in the overall sport climate before marginalized players feel safe to voice their opinions. Coaches can help to establish a safe environment for the marginalized by overtly placing value on individual differences, teaching leaders that it is their responsibility to model and encourage respect and recognizing their own responsibility to consistently and overtly support marginalized players (Kauer & Krane, 2010). In this example, the head coach of the Tigers provides an opportunity for the members of the team who do not typically speak out to voice their opinions, as well as providing overt support for the idea of a marginalized player.

Protect Your Teammates

There is always the potential for a member of the team to identify as GB. Regardless of whether or not they disclose their sexuality to the team, it is important for individuals to be aware of how their words and behaviors impact others. It is also possible that teammates may have family and friends who identify as LGBT. Homonegative language and behaviors may indicate

to closeted GB teammates or to teammates who have close LGBT family or friends that they are not in a safe or supportive environment. This can cause members of the team to be withdrawn, distant, or anxious – all of which can negatively impact their performance, thereby negatively impacting the cohesion and performance of the entire team (Kauer & Krane, 2010; Krane & Kaus, 2014).

In ice hockey a commonly held belief is that each member of the team has a duty to protect their fellow teammates. An example that typifies this belief can be found in the role of the enforcer. Enforcers historically have relied on traits consistent with hegemonic masculinity such as intimidation, aggression, violence, and a willingness to play through injury to physically protect their teammates during a game. Remaining consistent with the idea that it is important to protect teammates, but breaking with hegemonic masculinity, a GB inclusive approach emphasizes the importance of emotional protection. Coaches can do this by recognizing and rewarding players who check in on their teammates, offer emotional support, and stand up for others will positively reinforce these behaviors. On the Tigers, emphasis is placed on offering overt support for GB teammates, checking in on the emotional wellbeing of teammates, and standing up to individuals who engage in homonegativity. In this hypothetical scenario, a member of the Tigers (Player A) overhears an opposing player (Player B) calling a Tigers' team member (Player C) a "fag." Instead of ignoring the homonegative slur, Player A tells Player B that homonegative slurs are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Player A then checks on Player C, saying, "I've got your back. Are you alright?" In this scenario, Player A is offering non-violent protection that confronts homonegativity and indicates GB support.

Addressing Harmful Power Imbalances

When asked about power dynamics in sport, many athletes will identify the coach as having the most power; however, athletes who occupy leadership roles in the team dynamic occupy positions of power as well. Inclusive excellence indicates that changing the behaviors and norms of individuals with power can create positive change throughout the entire team, including the marginalized group (Kauer & Krane, 2010). There have been numerous player statements from former semi-professional player Brock McGillis (2016), NCAA referee Alex Valvo (2018), and former collegiate and professional players (Pappas et al., 2004) that have indicated members of the coaching staff and administration as perpetrators of harmful behaviors associated with hegemonic masculinity. Coaches and administrators who want their team to become GB inclusive should model inclusive excellence to their team. Brock McGillis (2016), an openly gay retired semi-professional hockey player, challenges individuals to think about how often they have heard a coach or parent use homonegative language. Parents and coaches occupy influential positions of power; engaging in homonegativism likely will perpetuate the cyclical relationship between homonegativism and the hegemonic masculinity hierarchy.

NCAA referee Alex Valvo (2018) describes a coach directing a homonegative comment at him first time officiating an ice hockey game,

I don't remember what penalties I called, who won, or what led to me tossing the coach from Toronto. But I will never forget what he said to me after I told him to leave, and the snickers that I heard from his assistant coaches and some of the players. "I'll say hi to your boyfriend in the lobby." He didn't mean it as a message of acceptance (para. 2-4).

During an interview, McGillis shares a story about a junior ice hockey team where the coach said, "I don't want any f—gs on this team," which he says contributes to the perpetuation of homonegativism in ice hockey (Leavitt, 2018, para. 21). Due to the power dynamics, it may

be intimidating or even dangerous for any member of the team to confront a coach over their homonegative behaviors or language; not only that, but it may suggest to team members that homonegative behavior and language is acceptable. In our example, The Tigers ice hockey team overhears their coach screaming at one of their teammates (Player A) after a game, saying, “I told you to injure that queer, but you didn’t! What are you, his boyfriend?” A few of the Tigers’ players who are regarded as leaders on the team laugh at the coach’s comments, but a few of the typically quiet players on the team look away with concerned expressions on their faces. Later, one of the individuals on the team who fits into Messner’s (2002) audience group (Player B) physically bumps into Player A, and then says, “Oh, sorry, *queer*. Don’t tell your boyfriend on me.” This comment draws more laughter from Player A’s teammates; Player A now is visibly upset, and quietly walks out of the locker room after packing his gear up. In this scenario, the coach of the Tigers has modeled inappropriate homonegative behavior, which was recognized and then repeated by Player B. Player B realized that the leaders on the team found the homonegative language their coach used to be humorous. By repeating the coach’s behavior, Player B is using homonegative language to belittle Player A and establish himself in a position of dominance over player A. Player B is also showing direct support of the leaders by engaging in inappropriate behavior that they found humorous. It is also worth noting that the marginalized members of the team (i.e., the typically quiet players) did not engage in homonegativity, but they also did not challenge this inappropriate behavior despite being uncomfortable with it.

One suggestion for coaches, as individuals in influential positions who wish to adopt inclusive excellence on their team, is to recognize their responsibility to adopt and model GB inclusive language, and to act in a manner consistent with GB inclusivity. Due to inherent power differences, it can be very difficult for subordinate individuals to confront harmful language and

behaviors that they feel uncomfortable with without risking social isolation. It is important for coaches and team leaders to recognize that they hold positions of power and influence over others, to use their power to protect, respect, and support individuals with less power than themselves, and to model appropriate GB-inclusive language and behaviors. Coaches modeling and reinforcing appropriate behaviors is essential every step along the way to becoming and sustaining inclusive climates. It is also important for subordinate members to be aware of procedural options (e.g., meet with coaches, assistant coaches, or administrators) that they have if they do need to address the behaviors and language of their coaches or team leaders.

Conclusion

Components of men's ice hockey culture that are consistent with hegemonic masculinity (e.g., a willingness to engage in violence or aggression, intimidation, homonegativity) must be deemphasized to facilitate the development of a GB inclusive team climate. I offered suggestions framed in inclusive excellence ("AACU", 2018; Kauer & Krane, 2010) that are intended to help guide coaches and sport psychology practitioners towards fostering an ice hockey team culture that departs from ideals related to hegemonic masculinity and redefines peer group roles for the purpose of promoting GB inclusion.

Appendix: An Exploration of the Climate of Men's Ice Hockey Literature Review

Since 2013, there have been a handful of ground-breaking announcements in the world of professional athletics as male athletes from four major team sport leagues in the United States (NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL) made the decision to publicly come out as gay. Jason Collins of the National Basketball Association (NBA), Michael Sam of the National Football League (NFL), and David Denson of Major League Baseball (MLB) were the first active players in their respective leagues to come out publicly as gay; however, in the 100 year history of the men's National Hockey League (NHL), there has never been an openly gay player, active or retired (Collins, 2013; Grinberg, 2015; Hine, 2016; Martinez, 2015).

The commissioner of the NHL, Gary Bettman, has stated that he believes that it is the league's "job to create a culture and an environment where a gay player knows he is safe and welcome" (Hine, 2016, para. 5). One formal effort that the NHL has made to officially foster an environment of inclusion is to partner with the You Can Play project. You Can Play (2017) is a campaign that is dedicated to providing fair opportunities for individuals in sport regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Founded in the memory of openly gay collegiate ice hockey player Brendan Burke, You Can Play works to foster environments of equality, respect, and safety for all individuals in sport by focusing on the skills, competitiveness, and work ethic that athletes bring to the table (You Can Play Project, 2017). You Can Play appears to be widely accepted by players, staff, and administration within the NHL; in fact, the NHL has decreed that February is "Hockey is for Everyone" month (NHL Public Relations, 2017).

There is a slowly growing movement in collegiate ice hockey to follow the NHL's lead participating in the You Can Play campaign. For example, The Ohio State University men's hockey team has partnered with the Columbus Ohio Gay Lesbian Ally Hockey Association

(COGLAHA) to host a “pride night” where they released official You Can Play videos during the game to create awareness and foster inclusion for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) athletes (Columbus Ohio Gay Lesbian Ally Hockey Association, 2015). Miami University partnered with You Can Play in honor of openly gay former player Brendan Burke, who was the younger brother of You Can Play’s co-founder Patrick Burke. Brendan reportedly received universal support and acceptance from his teammates when he publicly came out as gay (You Can Play Project, 2017).

The You Can Play initiative, as well as the actions of the NHL and collegiate teams, indicate that there is a movement towards fostering inclusion in men’s collegiate and professional ice hockey; yet there are startlingly few publicly out players. The purpose of the current literature review is to identify and examine four existing facets of men’s ice hockey culture that may influence Gay and Bisexual (GB) individuals’ decisions to come out as GB. The concepts of hegemonic masculinity, homonegativity, and heteronormativity in sport will first be introduced and examined; following, the interactions of these facets with the development and maintenance of peer relationships will be identified. An analysis of narratives within the mainstream press concerning men’s ice hockey will then be conducted to illustrate the real-world influences of hegemonic masculinity, homonegativity, and heteronormativity as seen in sporting peer group relationships on individual’s coming out experiences.

Theoretical Framework

The current literature review is approached from a critical theory epistemology. An epistemology is concerned with the construction and acquisition of knowledge (Markula & Silk, 2011). A critical theory epistemological approach assumes that there is an existing social inequality in the culture being studied (Markula & Silk, 2011). This inequality is seen as an

imbalance of power between the dominant members of society and the subordinate members where the ideologies of the dominant group appear both natural and just (Markula & Silk, 2011; Schroyer, 1973). Critical theory scholars view power in society as a permeating phenomenon that shapes social interaction, ideologies, and control (Markula & Silk, 2011; Schroyer, 1973). In particular, critical theory allows for an analysis of the ways in which power is constructed through gender (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Power differentials between males and females in sport can be understood in binary terms, where masculinity is more highly valued than femininity. Emphasis and value in sport have been placed on masculine behaviors, such as violence and aggression, while femininity has been disparaged. Placing value on learned masculine behaviors reinforces masculinity as superior to femininity, thereby creating a power differential in society that is paralleled by sport (Bryson, 1987; Messner, 1988, 1992).

The relationship between power and sport can be explored further by a critical examination of the society in which the sport exists, making analysis of cultural context essential to understanding sport phenomena (Cole, 1993; Ryba & Wright, 2005). A critical theory epistemology is applied to shape understanding of men's ice hockey culture because of the impact that hegemony (i.e., social dominance) and power differentials have on the construction and maintenance of social groups and social identities (Cole, 1993; Ryba & Wright, 2005).

Discrimination or bias towards males who do not adhere to social ideals of masculinity are methods for the assertion of dominance which then serves to elevate the social status of males who do adhere (Messner, 2002). Social status demotion of individuals who do not conform to dominant masculine ideals also occurs in instances of discrimination or bias (Messner, 2002). In this case it is assumed that existing facets of men's ice hockey culture such as hegemonic

masculinity, heteronormativity, and homonegativity directly result in unbalanced, non-GB-inclusive behavior.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Conceptually, hegemonic masculinity in sport refers to the culturally dominant ideal of what it means to be a man. Hegemonic masculinity is the most valued form of masculinity, and it is the primary model of manliness to which men are expected to strive (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The successfully masculine athlete exhibits behavioral traits which include, but are not limited to, aggression, a powerful physique, overt heterosexuality, and willingness to play through injury (Connell, 1995; Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Loy, 1995; Messner, 1992, 2002; Pappas, McKenry & Catlett, 2004; Pringle & Hickey, 2010). The inclusion of overt heterosexuality in hegemonic masculinity in sport leads to the subjugation of effeminate and gay masculinities by contrasting effeminate and gay masculinities with the ideal version of manliness (i.e., the heterosexual male athlete). Anderson (2002) states that sport has been “a mainstay for the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity” wherein males are taught to conform to hegemonic ideals of what it means to be masculine (p. 873). Moriss-Roberts and Gilbert (2013) describe participation in masculine sports as a method for masculinity to be secured and ideals associated with masculinity to be upheld. Contact sports like ice hockey are used to define and construct hegemonic masculinity as they represent the form of sport that encapsulates the most valued hegemonic masculine behavioral traits (Allain, 2008; Connell, 1995; Messner, 1992; Pappas et al., 2004; Pringle & Hickey, 2010).

Hierarchical levels of hegemonic masculinity can be observed by examining a male athlete’s tendency toward stereotypical masculine behaviors (Pringle & Hickey, 2010). The more successfully a male athlete displays behaviors such as aggression or violence, the higher his

social status will be (Connell, 1995; Messner, 1992, 2002). In this way masculinity is a performance where success is dependent on the ability of the performer to demonstrate behaviors associated with the socially dominant form of masculinity (Loy, 1995; Pringle & Hickey, 2010). The more willing a male athlete is to display stereotypical masculine behaviors, the more likely it is for that athlete to conform to hegemonic masculinity. It is in this way that positions of social status based on dominant ideals of masculinity within male sport social structures are established and reinforced (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Loy, 1995; Messner, 1992; Pringle & Hickey, 2010). Males who are able to successfully demonstrate appropriately masculine behaviors then are able to establish themselves at a higher status position within the hierarchy, while males who display effeminate traits occupy lower positions on the hierarchy (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messner, 1992, 2002; Weinstein, Smith, and Wiesenthal, 1995).

Status-based positions in the masculinity hierarchy further are established and reinforced by heterosexual posturing (Connell, 1995; Messner, 1992). Heterosexual posturing involves distancing from and subjugation of effeminate, or gay masculinities and adopting homonegative attitudes, behaviors, and language (Connell, 1995; Messner, 1992). Homonegativism constitutes rational, purposeful negative attitudes and behaviors towards individuals who are not heterosexual (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Kauer & Krane, 2013). Whereas homophobia refers to an irrational and uncontrollable fear, homonegativism refers to deliberate negative behaviors and attitudes towards LGBT individuals (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; MacGillivray, 2000).

Homonegativism is a method by which hegemonic masculine males reinforce heterosexuality as the norm; it is essential to prove one's heterosexuality to avoid being viewed as less of a man (Connell, 1995; Klein, 1990; Messner, 1992). Successful display of overt heterosexual attitudes

and behaviors is one way in which acceptance in the sport world and a higher-ranking position in the hegemonic masculinity hierarchy are gained (Connell, 1995; Loy, 1995; Messner, 1992; Pringle & Hickey, 2010).

Pappas, McKenry, and Catlett (2004) interviewed former collegiate and professional ice hockey players to examine their perspective on aggression and violence in sport, as well as how that aggression and violence may impact social relationships. The players identified norms in hockey culture such as willingness to intimidate opponents, willingness to fight, and willingness to seek retribution for perceived slights (Pappas et al., 2004). Hegemonic masculinity in hockey, therefore, is performed by demonstrations of fighting and toughness; behavior which is promoted and often actively encouraged by authority figures (coaches) and teammates (Pappas et al., 2004). In their interviews, “several players discussed the ways in which hockey players are likely to equate manliness with a willingness to engage in violent behavior” (Pappas et al., 2004, p. 303).

Magrath, Anderson, and Roberts (2015) identified heterosexual socialization behaviors as being made up of, in part, sexualized discourse and banter whereby a male’s heterosexuality is confirmed by other men. Ironically, in an effort to establish their heteronormativity, male athletes engage in banter where they simulate attraction to one another (Magrath, Anderson, & Roberts, 2015). Another way in which hegemonic masculinity is established through homonegativity is the usage of slurs such as “fag” or “gay” to describe male individuals who do not embody traits associated with hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 2002; Gregory, 2011; Messner, 1992). These words are used in an effort to motivate others to conform to heteronormative practices and can also be used for the purpose of emasculation (Anderson, 2002; Gregory, 2011; Messner, 1992). As an example of homonegativity being used as a tool for emasculation and heterosexual

posturing, a 2011 incident in the NHL between Philadelphia Flyers player Wayne Simmonds and New York Rangers player Sean Avery involved the usage of a gay slur (Connell, 1995; Messner, 1992, Strang, 2011). Avery, who was a vocal advocate for gay rights, alleged that Simmonds had directed the slur at him in the heat of an argument during gameplay. The incident and the slur were caught on video with an audio feed, despite this the league did not penalize Simmonds citing a lack of evidence (Strang, 2011). This incident is one of many that highlights the use of homonegative language to establish masculine dominance by attempting to effeminize or subjugate another player.

Hegemonic masculinity is the primary modus by which effeminate, and/or gay males are subjugated, homonegativism is enacted, and heteronormativity is upheld (Connell, 1995; MacGillivray, 2000; Messner, 1992; Osborne & Wagner, 2007). Contemporary discussions of masculinity indicate a spectrum of masculinity that departs from the traditional dichotomous view of gender, whereby that which is feminine is inherently not masculine, and vice-versa (Dashper, 2012; Anderson & McGuire, 2010; Anderson, 2011a, 2011b). This shift in the contemporary understanding of gender roles allows for the increasing acceptability of feminine traits and behaviors that would have previously identified a male as gay (Roberts, Anderson, & McGrath, 2016). Inclusive masculinity refers to a change in attitudes which then allows for inclusive acceptance of gay male peers by heterosexual males; this is done by encouraging emotional expression and compassionate physical contact while simultaneously discouraging violence and homonegativity (Anderson, 2002, 2013b). This optimistic approach to contemporary masculinity in sport potentially creates opportunities for gay males in ice hockey to receive more acceptance in male peer groups than before (Anderson, 2002, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2013b; McCormack & Anderson, 2014; Roberts, Anderson, & McGrath, 2016).

Peer Group Relationships

Messner (2002) developed a model analyzing the social dynamics of male athlete peer groups in an effort to understand how these relationships are influenced by the desire for social approval and acceptance. Messner (2002) discovered that both the desire to be socially accepted and the fear of exclusion may cause male athletes to act questionably. Messner's (2002) model of peer relationships includes three groups within the male athletic peer group dynamic: the leaders, the audience, and the marginals. The leaders are the individuals in the group who are at the top of the hegemonic masculinity hierarchy. These high-status individuals uphold the values of hegemonic masculinity by directly conforming to norms and stereotypes associated with ideal masculinity. These individuals often engage in behaviors such as bullying, hazing, and homonegativism, and they are the most likely individuals to benefit from hegemonic masculinity (Messner, 2002). These benefits include access to power, status, sex, and avoidance of marginalization (Messner, 1992, 2002). The next peer group, the audience, is comprised of individuals who offer validation and support for the actions of the leaders (Messner, 2002). The validation and support that the audience provides for the leaders by actively applauding and participating is done out of a desire to avoid becoming a target, as well as a desperate longing to be in the leader group. The marginals are individuals who, at times, feel discomfort with the actions and words of the leaders and audience, but who still are unwilling to disassociate themselves from the group. Rather than actively supporting the leaders, the marginals engage in silent complicity. They may not join the leaders or audience by participating in homonegativity; however, they often will utilize silence as a safety measure to avoid being cast out of the peer group (Messner, 2002). Fear is the primary motivator for marginals to remain silent; dissent against the leaders or audience risks expulsion from the group, or becoming a target themselves

(Messner, 2002). Despite feelings of discomfort or fear, marginals may also feel a desire to be included in the masculinity-centered bonding that occurs at the center of the peer group, as it represents in-group status and acceptance (Messner, 2002).

Messner's (2002) model of peer relationships is related to the hegemonic masculinity hierarchy because high-status individuals (i.e., leaders) use their social position to uphold the values associated with traditional masculinity. Essentially, Messner's (2002) model identifies three social group rankings: the leaders, who are the most privileged group members, the audience, who support the leaders in an effort to become leaders themselves, and the marginals, who are the least privileged members of the group. Messner's (2002) model of peer relationships mirrors the hegemonic masculinity hierarchy where individuals who most closely demonstrate and conform to masculinity are most privileged. The less successful a male athlete is at performing the ideal form of masculinity, the lower their social and group ranking will be. Lower status males are less likely to occupy leadership roles, as those roles are commonly filled by high status males (Connell, 1995; Loy, 1995; Messner, 1992; Pringle & Hickey, 2010).

In ice hockey, males who successfully demonstrate a willingness to play through injury, to intimidate others (i.e., aggressive behaviors), and willingness to fight (i.e., violence) (Allain, 2008; Pappas et al., 2004) are typically going to occupy roles consistent with Messner's (2002) leaders. These individuals may use homonegative language as a method by which to instigate fights or intimidate opponents. Teammates who applaud or encourage violent and aggressive behaviors in the leaders can be understood as assuming the role of audience in the ice hockey setting (Messner, 2002). These individuals may also engage in aggressive or violent behaviors, homonegativity, and may display willingness to play through injury as a means for ascending from the role of audience to a leader role (Allain, 2008; Messner, 2002; Pappas et al., 2004). Ice

hockey players who feel pressured to engage in violent and aggressive behavior to retain group status are consistent with Messner's (2002) marginals role. One of the ice hockey players interviewed by Pappas, McKenry, and Catlett (2004) stated,

I think there was a lot of pressure to stick up for yourself... you're kind of expected to stick up for yourself and people think you should and kind of have the perception that if you are not, you're not as manly (p. 303).

While marginals in an ice hockey setting may periodically engage in the violent and aggressive behaviors consistent with hegemonic masculinity when pressured to do so, this conformity is due to fear of being cast out of the social group (Messner, 2002).

The significance of Messner's (2002) model is the motivation behind retaining group status despite questionable group member behavior. Bonding, acceptance, and the desire to maintain or improve status within the social hierarchy contribute to audience and marginal willingness to conform to the homonegative actions and language of the leaders. The complicity of audience and marginal members of the peer group assists in sustaining hegemonic masculinity as the dominant form of masculinity (Messner, 2002). Hierarchical construction of peer relationships allows for the boundary between the ingroup (i.e., masculine males) and the outgroup (i.e., effeminate and gay males) to be established (Messner, 2002). The interactions of these peer groups reinforce and mirror the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity, further assisting in fostering a heteronormative climate through the use of homonegative behaviors and language.

Current Climate Towards LGBT People in Sport

Cultural Context in Relation to Sport Climates

It is necessary to understand cultural context when examining sport phenomenon, as the understanding of power in sport requires a critical examination of the culture in which the sport

exists (Cole, 1993; Ryba & Wright, 2005). The cultural climate in the United States towards LGBT individuals has experienced a gradual shift towards tolerance, visibility, and inclusion over time. LGBT visibility in television, film, and society is increasing, with the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) organization reporting a general upward trend in representation of LGBT individuals in popular culture (GLAAD, 2017). In June of 2015, the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage, making same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states (Obergefell vs Hodges, 2015). This landmark court decision was representative of a slowly growing cultural movement towards acceptance and equality for LGBT individuals in the United States.

The general trend towards acceptance and visibility in society for LGBT individuals has been mirrored in sport. The Olympic Games can be viewed as a stage where political and socio-cultural issues are displayed by athletes and governments alike. Russia experienced international condemnation when the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi put a spotlight on Russia's anti-LGBT policies (Stone, 2014). In fact, the 2014 Games became an epicenter for LGBT activism, and provided a spark for global protests (Stone, 2014). The 2016 Rio Olympics hosted a record number of openly LGBT athletes, and athletes are increasingly using their platform to draw awareness to LGBT existence in sport, issues pertaining to LGBT visibility and safety, and to social inequalities (e.g., marriage, employment opportunities) ("A record 56", 2016; Belam, 2018). In the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics, LGBT athletes used social media as one platform for increasing awareness of LGBT athletes in sport, as well as to critique American political leaders with anti-LGBT histories (Belam, 2018). The upward trend in visibility for LGBT athletes in the Olympics is indicative of a societal shift towards acceptance of LGBT individuals; however, the fight for LGBT inclusion and equality in sport and society is far from over.

The efforts of the NHL to partner with You Can Play, host pride-night events, invest in LGBT charities, and create an LGBT-inclusive environment (NHL Public Relations, 2017; You Can Play Project, 2017) is indicative of a professional sport climate that is mirroring the societal shift towards inclusion. Minor league ice hockey teams have followed the example set by the NHL by hosting their own pride nights, partnering with You Can Play, and donating funds to LGBT charities (Stockton Heat Hockey Club, 2017; Syracuse Crunch Hockey Club, 2017). Collegiate ice hockey teams, such as The Ohio State University and Miami University programs, also have joined the You Can Play movement by hosting pride night events and creating pro-LGBT team videos aimed at creating awareness and fostering inclusion (Columbus Ohio Gay Lesbian Ally Hockey Association, 2015; You Can Play Project, 2017). Ally movements like You Can Play overtly challenge homonegativity by creating awareness, offering educational resources, and providing inclusion training in an effort to foster social change in sport. The growing movement towards LGBT inclusion in ice hockey is indicative of a societal challenge of traditional gender stereotypes; however, it may not be indicative of a total departure from traditional hegemonic masculinity.

Ally Activist Movements in Sport

The current movement within male sport, particularly within professional and collegiate ice hockey, towards higher levels of visible LGBT inclusion hints that homonegativism may be beginning to lose favor as a primary method for the construction and reinforcement of dominant masculinity. 21st century collegiate and professional ice hockey appears to step away from overt homonegativity as a method for reinforcing hegemonic masculinity; on the surface it appears as though collegiate and professional leagues are attempting to foster LGBT inclusion through participation in ally programs and promotional events consistent with LGBT pride and

acceptance. This apparent trend towards LGBT inclusion in ice hockey is aligned with recent research which suggests that contemporary masculinity is beginning to shift away from homonegativism as a primary method by which masculinity is established and reinforced in sport environments in general (Anderson, 2011c, 2013a; McCormack & Anderson, 2014; Roberts, Anderson, & McGrath, 2016). Involvement with LGBT ally organizations like You Can Play may be indicative of a growing departure from homonegativism is a method by which hegemonic masculinity is demonstrated and reinforced in the sport context.

There have been several sport-centered activist organizations that have been on the forefront of creating inclusive sport programs. By providing resources, offering inclusion education and training, and increasing visibility of LGBT discrimination, these activist programs are fostering social change in sport (Kauer & Krane, 2013). The three specific programs that are explored below are the Women's Sport Foundation's, *It Takes A Team!*, Athlete Ally, and the You Can Play project, all of which to some degree focus on providing educational opportunities and taking action for equality.

The WSF's, *It Takes A Team!* is an organization whose initiative is to eliminate homonegative barriers and sexism in sport. Primarily, *It Takes A Team!* focuses on distributing practical information and resources to high school and college administrators, coaches, athletes, and parents in an effort to decrease homonegativism (WSF, 2018). Founded in 1996, and under the guidance of Lisa Dawn Thompson and Pat Griffin, *It Takes A Team!* included an educational kit, and provided informational workshops to educate athletic communities on issues related to homonegativism and sexism (WSF, 2018). *It Takes A Team!* continues to provide educational resources in an effort to reduce homonegativity in sport (WSF, 2018).

Athlete Ally (2018a) is another activist organization that calls upon leadership in sport to eliminate homonegative, exclusionary practices. With a focus on educating athletic communities at all competitive levels, developing and implementing inclusive sport policies, and advocating for LGBT rights through an advocate program, Athlete Ally aims to create equal opportunity in sport (Athlete Ally, 2018a). One of the most significant contributions from Athlete Ally (2018b) is their Athletic Equality Index which serves to measure policies and procedures specific to LGBT inclusion in athletics.

The Athletic Equality Index is a comprehensive annual report focused on nine specific LGBT-inclusive practices and policies in the NCAA Power Five conferences: policies protecting categories of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, availability of LGBT specific resources for student athletes, adoption of NCAA best policies and practices for transgender athletes into written policies, LGBT-focused student athlete led groups or initiatives, existence of a fan code of ethics explicitly protecting the LGBT community, existence of a framework or history of partnership with LGBT campus groups, participation in LGBT pride night or similar inclusion campaign or event, existence of vocal LGBT or allied coaches or administrators, existence of anti-LGBT policies or exemption from Title IX (Athlete Ally, 2018b). A comprehensive audit of campus materials including handbooks and policy manuals was conducted alongside an audit of social media and new sources to determine the policies and procedures at a university (Athlete Ally, 2018b). Athlete Ally (2018b) then developed a weighted scoring scale to assess how these nine specific LGBT-inclusive policies and best-practices were being implemented, and how accessible the policies and procedures were. Notably, the highest average score among the NCAA Power Five organizations was an 81.6, with the lowest average ranking at 56.7 (Athlete Ally, 2018b). The average score of the NCAA

Power Five organizations is a meager 66.68, which corresponds to the letter grade D (Athlete Ally, 2018b). These scores indicate that while some male athletes may be adopting inclusive masculinity in contemporary sport (Anderson, 2002, 2013b), there is certainly room for improvement in collegiate athletics at an organizational level for the implementation and application of LGBT-inclusive policy and procedures.

The You Can Play project gained national attention when it partnered with the NHL in 2013 (You Can Play, 2017). Since 2013, eight sport leagues and countless high school and college teams have joined the You Can Play movement. The primary mission of You Can Play is to increase opportunities for individuals to participate in sport by focusing on competitive spirit, work ethic, and contributions to the sport or their team instead of focusing on their gender or sexual identity (You Can Play, 2017). You Can Play project offers access to educational resources and training geared towards increasing inclusionary practices in sport for all individuals - including LGBT athletes, coaches, and fans (You Can Play, 2017). Video campaigns pledging inclusive, respectful behavior, and the Captain's Challenge to confront homonegativity are two specific activities that You Can Play provides (You Can Play, 2017).

Homonegative Narratives Within Mainstream Press

It is significant to consider existing narratives about men's ice hockey as they provide both a cultural lens and first-hand insight into the stereotypes that impact the lived experiences of individuals identifying as GB. For the purpose of this literature review, sport narratives involving GB inclusion, and decisions by individuals who identify as GB to publicly come out have been separated into two primary categories: mainstream press reactions to homonegativity in ice hockey, and self-narratives of former and current ice hockey players published on platforms associated with the mainstream press. The mainstream press reactions will consist of opinion

pieces published in response to instances of homonegativity and in regard to LGBT inclusion in ice hockey. Specifically, the mainstream press reactions will be examined to see how the culture of ice hockey is described by analyzing mainstream press responses as well as NHL official and player interviews. Further, facets of men's ice hockey in relation to individual's decisions to publicly identify as GB will be examined by exploring the narratives of these individuals.

Media Reactions to Homonegativism in Men's Ice Hockey

One of the most common themes in reports by the mainstream press is the belief that more needs to be done by the NHL to consistently address and reduce homonegativity in men's ice hockey. The incident between Simmonds and Avery in 2011 gave the media a chance to call attention to the shortcomings of the NHL to condemn the blatant usage of gay slurs (Strang, 2011). A more recent media response to homonegative language in the NHL included a condemnation of the league's weak stance against Anaheim Ducks captain Ryan Getzlaf in March of 2017 (Hine, 2017). Getzlaf directed a gay slur at an opponent multiple times in game four of the conference finals, and later issued a statement that distinctly lacked an apology. Among other things, Getzlaf can be quoted as having said,

There were obviously some words said, not necessarily directed at anyone in particular, it was just kind of a comment. I've got to be a little more responsible with the words I choose. Definitely as a father, as somebody who takes a lot of pride in this game, it's tough to see somebody refer to it as what TSN did. I didn't mean it in that manner in any way, and for that to go that route was very disappointing for me. I did accept responsibility and I accepted the fine. We talked to the league and I understand that it's my responsibility to not use vulgar language, period, whether it's a swear word or

whatever it is. We've got to be a little more respectful of the game... I hope I didn't offend anybody outside of the circle that we trust (Jhaveri, 2017).

As for the league's response to Getzlaf's language, no action was taken for suspension and a fine was issued (Hine, 2017). This is a less-severe stance than the league took against former Blackhawks player Andrew Shaw in the spring of 2015. Shaw shouted an anti-gay slur at a referee during gameplay and was issued a one game suspension as well as a fine (Cohen & Murphy, 2016). The league's strong response and condemnation of Shaw's language was met with general support by NHL owners, teams, and fans, and it sent a message to the players that anti-gay language would not be tolerated in the environment of inclusion that the league was attempting to foster. The inconsistencies between the Shaw and Getzlaf incidents have incited the media to further call into question what the official response from the league will be when it comes to anti-gay slurs by players - even big-name individuals like Getzlaf and Simmonds - on the ice.

The NHL's commitment to foster a league which promoted LGBT inclusion was further called into question with the decision to hold the 2018 NHL draft in Dallas, Texas. The decision to hold the draft in Dallas was upheld, despite developing Texas legislature mandating discrimination against transgender individuals (Zeigler, 2017). Zeigler's (2017) opinion piece on the NHL decision to take the draft to Texas condemned the NHL team ambassadors for You Can Play by not speaking out publicly against the league's decision and referred to the inconsistency behind the league's message of inclusion and its actual commitment to creating an inclusive climate. Zeigler (2017) expresses that not only do such inconsistencies send a message to players that homonegativity will be tolerated, but it also signals the same to closeted players. Murphy (2018) drew on the statements of Vancouver Canucks goalie Anders Nilsson to illustrate the

damaging effects of homonegative language and behavior on LGBT players. Murphy (2018) explains that Nilsson believes that he would have discontinued participation in ice hockey if he would have identified as a gay man due to the commonplace usage of homonegative slurs in ice hockey. Further, Nilsson points to the peer group structure as a contributing factor to why LGBT individuals may choose to leave ice hockey rather than deal with the homonegative climate of the sport (Murphy, 2018). Nilsson expands on this by explaining that the feeling of belonging in a peer group in youth sport for LGBT players was likely made impossible by homonegative language and behaviors, prompting individuals to leave the sport behind (Murphy, 2018). The media narratives set forth by Murphy (2018) and Zeigler (2017) illustrate two common themes: that homonegativity is impacting LGBT individuals involved with men's ice hockey, and that the lack of consistent commitment by the NHL to condemn homonegativity both on and off the ice is impacting player decisions to come out publicly as gay.

Despite the numerous media articles documenting instances of homonegativity in men's ice hockey there are a handful of media narratives that serve to highlight the divide between players who are accepting of LGBT individuals and players who are not. In a survey conducted by USA Today, thirty-four out of thirty-five active NHL players anonymously said that they would be accepting of an openly gay teammate (Allen & Hascup, 2015). When USA Today asked then-General Manager (GM) of the Calgary Flames Brian Burke, he said that he was "not-surprised" by the overwhelming positive results, though he did say that he was "disappointed" in the one player who indicated that he would not be accepting of an openly gay teammate (Allen & Hascup, 2015, para. 3). In an interview with George Stroumboulopoulos, Burke stated that he believes that a player who decides to come out will face less opposition than he thinks he will. Burke's belief is based in part on the acceptance that his late son Brendan received when he

came out as gay to his Miami University hockey team (Stroumboulopoulos & Burke, 2012 [Interview]).

GM Brian Burke is not the only member of the NHL to publicly speak about the importance of inclusion. Boston Bruins player Brad Marchand has stated that he believes that “guys would accept [an openly gay teammate], no question” (Blackburn, 2017, para. 9). Marchand then went further, explaining his reasoning as, “It doesn’t matter what different beliefs guys have, or where they come from, or whatever the case may be. Guys would accept it. Again, in the room we’re a family” (Blackburn, 2017, para. 9). The coach of the L.A. Kings, Darryl Sutter, has stated that he is openly welcoming of diversity on his team, including LGBT players (Buzinski, 2017). Multiple members and former members of the New York Rangers have expressed open and accepting attitudes towards LGBT teammates, with former Ranger Sean Avery stating, “I’ll stand beside him in the dressing room while he tells his teammates he is gay” (Murphy, 2013, para. 8).

Contemporary media responses towards homonegativity in sport are primarily in line with the cultural shift towards acceptance and visibility for LGBT-identifying individuals. The narrative set forth by the mainstream press through opinion pieces and reported statements from league officials indicates that homonegativity is alive and well within the NHL. Homonegative language and behaviors have been identified by the media as the primary cause behind the lack of openly gay players in the NHL (Murphy, 2018; Zeigler, 2017). The themes that appear when examining the discourse of the mainstream press are that the NHL has inconsistent responses to homonegative language and behaviors that is damaging to LGBT individuals and their LGBT-inclusive league image, and homonegativity is the factor most impacting player decisions to come out as publicly gay. The final theme identified is quite contrary to the previous two: media-

conducted player interviews appear to indicate that many individuals participating in the league would be welcoming of LGBT teammates. The narratives put forward by the mainstream press indicate that while homonegative language and behaviors in the NHL are damaging to the LGBT community, as well as to the credibility of the league's LGBT inclusion campaign, there may be a growing number of ally advocates within men's ice hockey.

Personal Narrative Reports of GB Individuals in Men's Ice Hockey

The autobiographical narratives and personal statements of former and current men's ice hockey players and referees who have self-identified publicly as gay offer inside viewpoints on the sport climate as it pertains to LGBT inclusion. The examination of these narratives allows for influential facets of ice hockey culture to be identified for the role they played on each individual's decision to publicly come out as gay. The narratives below were written about the experiences of players Brock McGillis, Joey Fisher, and NCAA referee Alex Valvo (McGillis, 2016; Valvo, 2018; Zeigler, 2007). The primary facet identified in the three narratives below as impacting their coming-out decisions was the fear of homonegative social rejection. Each individual experienced homonegative language and behaviors while in the sporting context. These experiences caused a fear of homonegativity and a fear of social rejection that impacted each individual's choice to be open with their sexuality.

Brock McGillis is a former collegiate player turned semi-pro who remained closeted during his playing career out of a fear of not being accepted in the sport environment. McGillis was raised in an inclusive household, and described his family as supportive, nonjudgmental, and positive - however he describes his hockey-based relationships as the opposite (McGillis, 2016). Describing the climate of hockey, McGillis (2016) says,

I can't count the amount of times I heard phrases like: That's gay or what a homo in the dressing room over the course of my hockey career. Words like fag, p---y, and b---h are part of the daily banter. Those words are used to belittle players, to weaken and feminize them, because hockey is hyper-masculine, meant for the manliest of men (para. 4).

McGillis (2016) then describes relationships he held with women in an effort to maintain his group image, as well as to repress his sexuality. He describes himself as a womanizing individual who suffered silently from depression because of his desire to be accepted by his teammates (McGillis, 2016). In this case, McGillis was required to perform hegemonic masculinity by conforming to heteronormativity. McGillis (2016) also felt pressure to engage in homonegative behaviors in order to be accepted by his ice hockey peer group. He remained closeted throughout his entire career, and it was only after beginning a career as an ice hockey personal trainer that McGillis (2016) began to live openly as a gay man and confront instances of homonegativity. McGillis (2016) says that his decision to openly identify as a gay man has resulted in former friends ceasing contact and being blackballed from working with teams which is indicative of a culture of sport that still embraces heteronormativity and homonegativity as a viable method for reinforcing hegemonic masculinity.

University of Georgia's club ice hockey team goaltender Joey Fisher made the decision to come out to his teammates during his junior year of college (Zeigler, 2007). Fisher decided not to disclose his sexuality to his teammates at first because of the homonegative language he had heard his teammates use in the locker room, which he described as a method by which they asserted their masculinity (Zeigler, 2007). This use of homonegative language as a form of heteronormative posturing is a method by which male athletes can demonstrate a successful performance of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; Messner 1992). Fisher reported that he

decided to use social media as a method by which to come out to his teammates, and that he was surprised by the positive response he received from teammates and coaches alike (Zeigler, 2007). Despite the positive responses of his teammates and coaches, Fisher fully anticipated gay slurs being directed at him on the ice, especially if other teams became aware of his sexuality; this is indicative of a sport climate wherein homonegativity is used as a method by which males can be subjugated for non-conformity to heteronormative ideals associated with hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 2002; Gregory, 2011; Messner, 1992; Zeigler, 2007)

Alex Valvo (2018) is an NCAA referee who has recently come out to the public as gay. He reports that in his very first experience as a referee for a Pee Wee game, he was on the receiving end of a homonegative taunt from one of the coaches (Valvo, 2018). Valvo (2018) continues to describe how in his school, individuals who identified as gay were not socially accepted, and that combining a desire to be socially accepted with a hypermasculine sport like hockey led him to remain closeted. Despite meeting members of the LGBT community who were prideful of being openly gay, the first three years of Valvo's (2018) collegiate experience involved continuing to deny his own sexuality. For Valvo (2018), the decision to come out to more than his family and close friends - namely, his fellow hockey officials - was spurred by the 2016 United States Presidential Election. To his surprise, he was greeted with overwhelming support from his fellow ice hockey referees (Valvo, 2018). Coupled with McGillis' (2016) statement about homonegativity belonging primarily to the older generations of ice hockey may indicate that as the sport grows younger there will also be a growing departure from homonegativity as a popular method with which to demonstrate dominance and masculinity (Valvo, 2018).

Limitations and Conclusion

As this literature review explored the climate of men's ice hockey in relation to LGBT coming out experiences, it is necessary to discuss the limitations of the current paper. A primary limitation is that there is, to date, very little research into the climate of men's ice hockey as it relates to LGBT inclusion. As such, conclusions about the climate of men's ice hockey were drawn at times by examining the general climate of male sport, meaning that this literature review may not encompass every facet of ice hockey that may be influential to LGBT individuals. A further limitation of this review of literature is that the personal narratives within the mainstream press were released by individuals who remained active within ice hockey, and who made the decision to come out publicly as gay. These individuals may not be representative of the gay population in men's ice hockey, due in part to their willingness to come forward. Individuals who have decided to remain closeted because of negative personal experiences may have entirely different narratives than the narratives explored in this literature review. A final identified limitation is that the sample sizes of the mainstream press narratives is relatively small and could be expanded to show any thematic shifts over time.

Sport in general appears to be following the general social trend towards acceptance of people who identify as LGBT, and men's ice hockey in particular appears to on the surface be making strides towards fostering inclusion. Despite this, elements of contemporary men's sport still appear to interact in a way that may negatively impact the coming out decisions of LGBT individuals. Heteronormativity coupled with homonegativity are used in masculine team sport settings to establish and maintain a hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity that is further supported by, and supportive of, peer group relationships as described by Messner (2002). Mainstream press narratives about men's ice hockey identify unchecked homonegativity as a method by which peer groups determine social roles, establish masculinity, and keep closeted gay men in

their subjugated roles. Yet, current sport literature coupled with mainstream press narratives suggest that while homonegativity is beginning to lose favor with younger generations, there is still work to do before true inclusionary practices for LGBT individuals are universally adopted.

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