"We Just Treat Everyone the Same": LGBTQ Aquatic Management Strategies, Barriers and Implementation

Austin R. Anderson
University of Southern Indiana, aranderson2@usi.edu

Eric Knee
Indiana University-Bloomington, enknee@indiana.edu

William D. Ramos
Indiana University - Bloomington, wramos@indiana.edu

Tiffany Monique Quash
Indiana University - Bloomington, tmquash@american.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ijare

Part of the Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons, Gender and Sexuality Commons, Health and Physical Education Commons, Leisure Studies Commons, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Commons, Recreation Business Commons, Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration Commons, Sports Management Commons, Sports Studies Commons, and the Tourism and Travel Commons

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Abstract

This study examined the management of aquatic venues in a number of areas (facilities, programming, human resource management, marketing, policies) as it pertains to LGBTQ participants and participation. The study utilized in-depth semi-structured interviews with 16 aquatic managers to examine steps that are currently being taken (or lack thereof) when it comes to creating environments that are perceived to be open, or closed, to LGBTQ participants. A grounded theory-based process of data collection and analysis resulted in emergent themes. These themes included: (a) gendered spaces, (b) non-aquatic initiatives, (c) staff knowledgeability, (d) departmental and organizational mission, (e) aquatic-specific programming and regulations and (f) barriers to inclusion. Management strategies around these emergent themes are discussed, with implications for aquatic managers regarding the creating of inclusive environments for LGBTQ participant populations.

Keywords: inclusion, diversity, LGBTQ, homophobia, heterosexism, management

Despite legislative nondiscrimination employment policies that have been implemented along with educational resources available to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals, there remains minimal literature on managing staff in employment settings (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.), particularly within recreation, sport, and aquatic environments. Additionally, research on the quality of recreation and aquatic programs for the LGBTQ population remains minimal. To this end, the present study examined the management of aquatic spaces in several areas (facilities, programming, human resource management, marketing, and policies) as it pertains to LGBTQ participants and their engagement in programs and services. The purpose of the study was to examine the steps that current aquatic managers are taking to create environments that are inclusive to LGBTQ participants. The study also sought to examine the barriers that current aquatic managers face in implementing such steps and provided for the examination of different perspectives of aquatic administrators toward managing LGBTQ participants and participation.

Existing literature on the LGBTQ community has indicated an increase of overall diversity in workplace settings (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). While often ambiguous, the term "diversity" reflects a recognition of individual difference including, but not limited to, that of race, gender, and sexual orientation (Bell & Hartman, 2007; Edelman & Petterson, 1999). With the changing demographics within the United States, understanding and meeting the needs of diverse populations represents a concern for recreation and sport organizations (Allison & Hibbler, 2004). Noting that recreation facilities can be defined as public, collegiate,

and nonprofit in nature; addressing and implementing practices toward the needs of diverse communities they service can create a positive relationship with patrons and among workers.

Simultaneously, with this type of awareness can also come resistance to change in the working environment and community (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). For instance, Allison and Hibbler (2004) found that recreation organizations face five barriers to creating actual organizational change, including: (a) the changing demographics of the community, (b) changes to management and staff, (c) programs deferring diversity responsibility, (d) language barriers, and (e) negative attitudes or existing stereotypes held by management. Together these barriers inhibit organizational diversity and create cultures of exclusion. With the implementation of policies and an increased understanding of the population they serve, staff and management within recreational organizations can engage in educational opportunities and establish a rapport with the communities they serve (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999).

Within recreation settings, and aquatic settings specifically, under-represented groups have historically seen a lack of diversity when it comes to participation patterns (Waller & Norwood, 2011; USA Swimming, 2016). Specifically, research has noted that the experiences of individuals from the LGBTQ community have largely been negative within these settings when compared to those who are heterosexual and cisgender (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010; Patchett & Foster, 2015). With members of the LGBTQ community encountering bullying and/or harassment in spaces that have been designed to encourage positive health and social interaction, it raises the need for questioning of education and training of patrons and staff members in these settings (Artinger et al., 2006; Forrester, 2014; Patchett & Foster, 2015). As Theriault (2017) stated, "recreation professionals have moral, fiscal, and legal incentives to ensure that individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) have access to safe, beneficial services that respond to their unique needs" (p. 122). The realities of actual practices used by recreational professionals, legal ramifications, historical events, and experiences of LGBTQ participants in recreational/sport settings have indicated otherwise.

Historically, the representation of LGBTQ participants in recreation, sport and aquatic settings have indicated that "gay men are underrepresented in mainstream club sports and traditional 'masculine' team sports and over-represented in [commercial] fitness [activities]" (Elling & Janssens, 2009, 71). Most non-heterosexual participants have sought mainstream sport spaces where they are not confronted with homonegativity (Elling & Janssens). When gay and lesbian participants are active within campus recreational club sports, they

encounter some varying levels of homophobia from other participants (Anderson & Mowatt, 2013). What is neglected in the literature to date are the experiences of transgender collegiate students and their involvement in campus recreation facilities and programs (Patchett & Foster, 2015). Methods for higher educational institutions to combat negative on-campus experiences have been to provide inclusive housing and to utilize inclusive language (Theriault, 2017; Patchett & Foster, 2015; Krum, Davis, & Galupo, 2013;). As a result, some LGBTQ individuals choose to participate in recreational activities in a form of "discreet" participation in which no disclosure of sexual orientation is made nor solicited. LGBTQ participants are conscious of barriers in educational and public recreational spaces, often indicating that inclusive practices have lacked communication between the serving organization's staff and the LGBTQ community.

Method

Participants

Researchers employed qualitative semi-structured interviews with managers in aquatic settings (n=16). Purposeful sampling techniques (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003) were employed for initial interviews which were conducted with previously established professional relationships from members of the research team. Together, each member of the research team generated a list of potential interviewees based on prior knowledge of their work as a manager in the aquatic sector. After vetting this list, the primary investigator sent an initial recruitment email and scheduled interviews with those that responded. Following these interviews, a snowball sampling approach was employed using recommendations and professional contacts from interviewees. To be included in this study participants had to serve as an aquatic manager (as defined by position responsibilities including staff supervision, programming responsibilities, and facility operations) at the time of interview and be over the age of 18 years old. Interviews continued until data saturation was met (Guest, Bruce, & Johnson, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Sampling resulted in nine cisgender male aquatic managers and seven cisgender female aquatic managers. One manager identified as non-white, resulting in 15 white[1] and one multi-racial research participant. Participants in the study ranged in age from 26 years old to 54 years old and had, on average, over 11 years of aquatic management experience. To ensure applicability of research findings to aquatic settings in the United States, managers from multiple aquatic settings were purposively recruited, resulting in six from campus recreational sport settings and 10 from community, public, and nonprofit settings. Institutional Review Board approval was granted from the principal investigator's university.

Procedures

Study participant interviews consisted of semi-structured questions examining the management of aquatic spaces in a number of areas as they pertained to LGBTQ participants and engagement in programming and services. These areas included: (a) facilities, (b) programming, (c) human resource management, (d) marketing, and (e) policies. See Table 1 for a summary of interview topics and example questions.

Table 1 Interview topics and sample interview questions

Policies
- To your knowledge, does your department have an inclusion statement or official policy in place that addresses LGBTQ participants?
- From your point of view, what would an inclusion statement addressing the LGBTQ population include?

Facilities
- Does your facility have any aquatic spaces that have been designed and/or altered for use specifically by LGBTQ participants?
- Have your participated in any discussions on how to design new facilities or renovate existing facilities with consideration towards LGBTQ participant use?

Programming
- Have you implemented any programming activities targeted specifically to LGBTQ participants?
- Have there been any requests from participant groups for targeted programming for LGBTQ participants?
- What types of programming do you think can be offered at an aquatic facility that would take into account the needs of LGBTQ participants?

Human Resources/Staff Management
- Are there any administrative concerns that come with managing a staff with diverse identities?
- Do you have any training in place for staff to meet the needs of LGBTQ participants?
- What do you think should be included in a training session about meeting the needs of LGBTQ participants?

Marketing
- Have you implemented any marketing aimed specifically at LGBTQ population groups?

- Do you think such marketing efforts would be beneficial for your participation groups?

A semi-structured interview guide was developed by the research team and individually tested by each author via four pilot interviews with aquatic professionals meeting the above inclusion criteria. Initial interview questions were developed based on previous literature defining the current state of LGBTQ inclusion in recreation settings (Allison & Hibbler, 2004; Anderson & Mowatt, 2013; Patchett & Foster, 2015; Theriault, 2017), core competencies for recreation and aquatic professionals, and a generally inductive approach which introduced initial opening questions about the existence of policies/programs (see Table 1). It also relied on participant narratives of their experiences, policies, knowledge, understanding and comfort with LGBTQ participants in aquatic settings, which were prodded for following these general questions. The interview guide was further refined based on the results of the pilot testing and implemented for this study. Interviews were conducted over the phone and lasted between 20 minutes to one hour, with a median length of 47 minutes. Interviews were conducted by all four members of the research team following training led by the primary investigator. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Research team members coded all interviews individually, then came together to review, discuss, and come to agreement on final themes.

Analysis

A grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis was implemented in this study in a similar method as previously used in aquatic settings (Anderson, Ramos & Middlestadt, 2014). This approach prioritizes the relationship among categories of behavior and speech in order to understand social realities (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This type of analysis allows important issues to emerge from the participants and their experiences in a particular area of interest (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Specifically, the constant comparison method of data analysis was implemented (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Each member of the research team independently conducted open coding. This coding was initially explicit and verbatim in nature, firmly grounding the developed themes in the data and resulted in emergent relevant thematic categories.

Following initial open coding, members of the research team then collaborated to analyze the individual emergent, create an overarching group of larger thematic elements representing the totality of the data, and refine existing categories based on inter-coder agreement. Following agreement, the research team engaged in repeated close readings of the transcribed interviews to segment textual data into the selected emergent thematic categories. Consistent with constant

comparison, the research team then refined the existing thematic categories and corresponding data into finalized global thematic categories based on previous clustering (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These themes are related to managerial meaning-making and management practices as they are associated with the LGBTQ population and the aquatic setting.

Results

The experiences of the aquatic managers, related to the overall management of LGBTQ participants and their participation, varied based upon their individual demographics and the nature of the aquatic facilities themselves. Results from the data clustered around clearly defined themes emerging from the analysis of the data. These themes included: (a) gendered spaces, (b) non-aquatic initiatives, (c) staff knowledgeability, (d) departmental and organizational mission, (e) aquatic-specific programming and administration and (f) barriers to inclusion.

Gendered Spaces

In the discussion of management strategies related to inclusion and the LGBTQ community, all study participants mentioned the importance of the gendered spaces (bathrooms, locker rooms, etc.) within their facilities when it came to inclusion practices. The gendered spaces within the aquatic facility were referenced by participants in both positive (aided in inclusion of LGBTQ community) and negative (hindered inclusion of LGBTQ community) ways. For example, the presence of non-gendered bathroom and locker room spaces were often cited by participants as evidence of LGBTQ inclusionary practices, while the age and unchangeable design features of facilities were often cited as physical space constraints that were harmful to inclusion.

Bathrooms and locker room spaces were often the dominant physical spaces referenced by participants, as they were seen as areas that could both enhance and inhibit LGBTQ inclusion in important ways. Several participants noted that these spaces provide evidence of inclusionary practices. One participant noted, "We do have some things in place to make our space a little more inclusive, such as gender-neutral changing areas. It's got a shower, lockers, and a bathroom." Another manager stated,

> I think the best thing that you can do is just creating a gender-
> neutral locker room facility space. Whether that's going to be used
> by the LGBTQ community, used by families as a changing area,
> it's a multi-use type space that allows people to, you know, change
> where they feel comfortable and then come out and enjoy…

Bathroom and locker room spaces were also noted as areas of concern for potential conflict by participants, and a management area that is relatively new within aquatic facilities. One participant stated, "We may have had a transgender individual who went into the women's restroom, this was years ago…but there was controversy, but, you know, I just went with female [goes into the] female [restroom], but it did, at that point [create a problem]…" Another participant indicated that the changing legal landscape regarding transgender bathroom usage also created conflict in these spaces saying,

> Basically, if the person is going into the male and/or female
> facility, which they are allowed legally to do here, if they do go in
> one of those other restrooms and there is a conflict that may occur
> in the men's or women's [restrooms], then we will [direct] that
> person to our family or unisex changing room[s].

When addressing the relative novelty of such management concerns, one participant said,

> I have been in construction design for probably 30-plus years and
> like I mentioned earlier, 15-20 years ago, we didn't really have the
> situations…where we had to build facilities to accommodate
> that…I think so far in the 2000s to today, roughly 15-18 years, we
> actually [have] start[ed] designing building[s] to accommodate
> these groups.

When addressing the other physical spaces within their aquatic facilities, many managers mentioned the inability to change the physical design of their spaces as a hindrance to creating inclusive and inviting environments. Often, aquatic spaces in particular are designed with a primary purpose in mind, whether that be for competition-based or recreational-based programming, which can serve to create an environment that implicitly caters to a sub-set of aquatic participants. One manager stated, "I mean, we're just coming up on being open for six years, and, you know, when the facility was designed, it was really designed with competition in mind, first and foremost." Another said, "…but it's very limiting in this shell that we have right now. So, we've been very intentional with creating new spaces that will be more inviting…" Often, aquatic spaces were seen as too difficult to modify to meet the needs of specific populations, with one participant noting, "We have other [non-aquatic] facilities that we can modify or use in different ways to meet different needs if we need to."

Participants often addressed the potential for the creation of inclusive spaces within aquatic facilities as part of future renovation projects, including the need for

updated and increased numbers of gender-neutral locker room and bathroom facilities. One manager stated, "I definitely want more individual rooms for people, for sure…we could just use a lot more, maybe 5, 6, I don't know. Just individual rooms for people." Participants also noted that issues of inclusion were discussed intentionally during renovation processes, with one saying, "We actually tore down one of our main buildings and are rebuilding it and now that we've been rebuilding we have been very intentional with creating those types of spaces for the LGBT[Q] community."

Non-Aquatic Initiatives

The aquatic managers participating in the study also regularly referenced initiatives that were in place within their facilities or organizations outside of the aquatic arena. Often, participants made references to these overarching initiatives as ways that their organization strives to create equality (treating everyone the same), regardless of equity (promoting fairness). The managers would often rely on their aim to "treat everyone the same" regardless of differences, to the point of the exclusion of equity-based initiatives. For example, one participant noted,

> I wouldn't say we haven't done a specific LGBTQ program itself. I would say it's more of…we've tried to incorporate it into our every program. Does that make sense? Like were not necessarily making a specific 'if you're LGBTQ then you have to go to this program', we're incorporating those practices into all of our programming in the way that we train our staff to run those programs.

Often, when it came to initiatives outside of the aquatic department, managers expressed a general sentiment as follows, "But I feel that the way we are inclusive, we would be on the stance of everyone, 'Everyone is welcome here.'" While these equality-based initiatives are laudable, they can often mask a reluctance to create initiatives to include under-served populations, as one participant stated, "I'm not sure I would like to create a program that's just specifically created to one population. I think, I enjoy when the population is mixed, you know. We're a melting pot. [chuckles]."

When non-aquatic initiatives were specifically employed by the aquatic managers in the study, they were often aimed at the creation of safe, inclusive spaces for LGBTQ participants. In one instance, a manager described their organization's inclusion initiatives as follows:

> I think [not only] actually naming LGBTQ participants [in our initiatives], but also naming just how inclusive we are. I think inclusion's a big part of it. That we're sort of a safe place. They're welcomed. We value that as part of our culture.

Often these initiatives were highly general in nature, without specific objectives other than an overall inclusive environment, one participant described their initiatives in this way: "I think, you know, my idea's just to, be more about inclusion, to feel participants [are] included into activities, so they feel comfortable."

While most participants in the study indicated that their organizations had an inclusion initiative, others expressed a lack of a need for inclusion policies specified for the LGBTQ community. In some cases, managers seemed to be reactive in their responses to community needs stating, "Currently, there's really no conversation about it. We've not, I've not had anybody reach out to me or anyone in our department about LGBTQ issues and we don't have a large LGBT[Q] community." In the same vein, some managers did not identify the issue as one that is problematic for their organization noting, "We haven't come up with the issue. Um, I don't see it as a problem." In other cases where initiatives were not in place, managers expressed a reluctance to develop specific initiatives, stating, "I don't think it [LGBTQ inclusiveness] has to be singled out."

Staff Knowledgeability

The majority of the managers who participated in the study made references to training that was in place for their staff aimed at increasing knowledge surrounding diversity and inclusion practices. Most often, the training that was provided to aquatic staff members was highly general in nature, lacking specifics for any under-represented group, including LGBTQ participant groups. When asked if their staff undergoes diversity training, one participant stated, "I wouldn't say specifically [covering] LGBTQ participants, but just general diversity training, how to communicate with people. I think just general, nothing specifically though." Within aquatic settings, ongoing training often occurs with staff in-service meetings, which provide aquatic managers with opportunities to train staff on job-specific items. Often, this training was described in general terms as well, with one participant saying, "We have training that we do on a regular basis with our staff so that way they are aware of things going on. Basically, it's information and education. Informing people about what's out there and what's going on." Another stated,

We just do bystander intervention training. So, if you see
something, say something or do something kind of thing. And that
can be related, but I don't think anything in the training
specifically says this is what you should do with [a] LGBTQ …
type of situation."

In select cases, managers noted the use of these trainings for diversity and
inclusion purposes, but not specifically toward LGBTQ populations. One
participant noted, "We have talked about that [inclusion], I mean, we have in-
service, we have 4 hours of in-service every month, and that is a topic that we have
talked about quite openly, and, it's been great."

Managers participating in the study most often referenced LGBTQ
specific training for employees revolving around issues of gender and facility use.
One manager referenced the training they implemented with their staff as follows:

Also, we do talk about it [the LGBTQ community] a lot, especially
during training because we have like family locker rooms on deck
and whenever we talk about evacuations and going to your gender
appropriate locker room we make sure that we say that if you
identify as *something different* (participant emphasis) you can go
into the family locker room.

Managers within the study also seemed most likely to address LGBTQ
issues in staff trainings when members of their staffs expressed that they belonged
to the LGBTQ community, or it was believed that staff members belonged to the
LGBTQ community. One manager noted,

We have staff, um, [pause] you know; we've had staff who
identify, well, have not disclosed their identity, but they are female
[biologically]. We have granted that as far as, you know, they
wanted the male shorts, instead of the female shorts because the
female shorts—they wore a female suit, but they wanted the male
shorts because they are longer.

Although managers in the study referenced generalized training that takes
place for their staff around diversity and inclusion, many did express the need for
more formalized training around the LGBTQ community and participants. One
manager expressed an openness to directly seek out more information about how
this community can be served stating,

> I think even like a round table or … I think those have been really successful…I think we could do something similar with the LGBTQ population, just to understand their needs and how we can better serve that population better from all levels, and as management and administrators, how can we better serve that population.

The need for training centered on the use of language and terminology toward aquatic participants, as noted by one manager saying,

> I think the biggest thing that I've seen, and our professional staff, is examples and definitions that can help them better understand what it means [to be LGBTQ]. I think…everyone kind of comes at it with their own definition and you as department can kind of say, this is what we're talking about when we say LGBTQ.

The need for training in this area was also related to the overall age of the aquatic staff within some organizations, with managers expressing concerns when dealing with young staff members. One manager stated,

> I think it would be good because I have a lot of high school students. So maybe for them to, you know, understand the community better, how to be more sensitive, especially if they're coming from different backgrounds. So, it probably would be a good one.

Another expressed a similar sentiment saying, "I think things that would be beneficial are, I know that sometimes high school boys and college boys and girls, they can say stupid things sometimes, so sensitivity training to how they approach things and how they say things."

Departmental and Organizational Mission

When the managers in this study made reference to the overarching mission of their departments or organizations; they often did so regarding the general inclusion patterns of their organizations, and not the LGBTQ community explicitly. One manager expressed this by stating, "Our goal is more, I don't know, I have always come across as, you know, as treating everyone…just being inclusive to everyone and not singling people out, necessarily." When probing further, most participants saw the potential for benefit in departmental or organizational statements that expressed inclusion of the LGBTQ community in specific ways. One manager stated,

> I do see some benefit to it. I think anyone who's unsure about participating or getting involved, those types of statements might relieve some barriers or some anxiety they might have. You always want to see yourself in … 'Can I see myself doing that?' or 'Can I see myself participating in that?'

Another manager confirmed these potential benefits by saying,

> I could see it being more inviting maybe to them. I would hope that there's no concern initially even coming forward to join some of the programming here already. But, I mean, I guess if there was something in place I could see it being more inviting to them.

Several managers indicated that their departmental and/or organizational mission statements did not explicitly address the LGBTQ community or participants, but they did not feel it was necessary to address that population group specifically within their locality.   One manager noted, "The majority of my staff has worked with, you know, the staff that fall in that community for a long time. You know it's kind of a nobody cares type situation with us." Another confirmed this sentiment by stating, "For the most part, we have a so many little, small pockets of different cultures that everyone pretty much just accepts each other, you know?" In similar instances, some managers did not see the need to address this community in the mission of the department because there hadn't been any concerns brought to their attention. One manager said, "Um, right now I haven't, I haven't seen any, any discrimination toward any of the…population. So, right now I don't think it is a problem." Another indicated, "I've been in management for 15 years…and we've never come across this problem. So, until we come across that problem, and it becomes something that's an issue, I don't think anybody's really going to deal with it."

In cases where the LGBTQ community was explicitly addressed in departmental or organizational mission statements, this generally occurred at levels above the managers participating in the study, which the study participants supported. One participant noted, "Our corporate agency is in the process of creating, recreating, whatever, all of our personnel policy manuals." Another expressed this reliance on organizational policy by stating, "…we have a very inclusive [policy], and it's on our website, our mission, our goals, we have a very strong inclusive policy."

Aquatic-Specific Programming and Administration

When discussing specific aquatic programming that was being implemented at their facilities, many managers noted that there was a lack of programming and/or outreach aimed specifically at LGBTQ participant groups. Managers generally noted that this lack of specific programming was the result of one of three processes: (a) not having thought about implementing programming for the LGBTQ community, (b) a lack of need for such programming, or (c) implementation of programming with the aim of inclusion for *everyone*.

When managers were pressed about programming for the LGBTQ community, some remarked that they simply had not considered implementing such targeted programming initiatives. One manager said, "I have not. I don't know why not." Another noted that a lack of familiarity with programming options for the LGBTQ community impacted this lack of discussion stating,

> I would say we're not familiar with those programs that are out there, you know, other programs. There's not much as far as resources, and programming. Generally, the topics tend to deal with transgender (issues) and locker rooms…I haven't really seen much discussion about programming for individuals in the LGBTQ community.

Many participants in the study indicated that a lack of programming aimed at the LGBTQ community was a result of the lack of perceived need for such programming. One manager stated, "You know, we haven't felt the need or haven't really gotten any feedback saying that we need to have a specific program for that group or for another group or whatever." Another manager emphasized this reactive approach to programming saying, "Um, right now I haven't, I haven't seen any, any discrimination toward any of the, uh, of the population. So, right now I don't think it, um, is a problem."

Often, managers referenced the general inclusion aim of their programming when referencing a variety of diversity, not just the LGBTQ community. Managers often relied upon the aim of having programming that is open to everyone, as opposed to programming aimed at specific participant groups. One manager summed up this programming philosophy as follows:

> You know, I try to be as inclusive with everybody as we possibly can. I just, you know, my whole philosophy on programming is bring people together no matter, no matter what. No matter, you know what they believe… anything like that. Just bring people

together. I think, to me, that lends a little bit more towards, you know, inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness. I just like to get together as many people as we can.

Another manager underscored this viewpoint as well, with an explicit reference putting the emphasis on participants to understand the inclusionary nature of their programming,

You know, I don't think it has to be singled out that this is what we, you know, that we specialize in this or that or we are open to this, with our mindset. I would hope that people understand the non-discriminatory policies in place and that these are done. Non-discriminatory, we don't discriminate, or make any judgment, discriminatory judgment kind of thing…

When it came to marketing initiatives, almost all managers indicated that their departments did not have any specific marketing in place that reached out, directly, to LGBTQ participants. There were a variety of reasons indicated for this, including a lack of perceived need for such specific marketing, however most managers also noted that direct marketing initiatives could help to make the LGBTQ community feel more welcomed at their facilities, if it were to be undertaken. When it came to a lack of perceived need for specific marketing, one manager stated, "… again I disagree with, with just going into one specific group. I actually see it as something negative when we start dividing each other so much." Another agreed by noting, "putting out there, that, you know, we target the Asian community, we target the LGBT community, I don't think it needs to be that point[ed]."

Although specific marketing to the LGBTQ community was not in place throughout interviews, most managers noted that there could be benefits in introducing such initiatives. One participant noted,

I think yes, it would help. I don't know what it would look like. But I think absolutely… I think just … If someone can see it and say 'Hey, I belong there' or 'I'm going to be accepted there,' I think that any sort of attempt to do that would be a good step in the right direction.

Another manager agreed when they similarly stated, "I mean yeah, it would just be like one extra thing to make sure everyone knows that they are welcome."

Many managers within the participant group also stressed the future programming initiatives that they felt they could put in place at their facilities to better serve the LGBTQ community. Some participants referenced other initiatives that were already in place at their facility, in an attempt to connect future programming to those, for example,

> Maybe just some kind of like… we have breast cancer awareness
> month, we do a bunch of things like pink around our facilities, we
> have like 'Movember' like with the moustache kind of thing for
> the men, but I think if we had some type of like Pride [event]…I
> don't know I guess making sure that we tailor to that group as well,
> that would be helpful.

In other cases, managers pointed to programming that was happening at other facilities in hopes of recreating those programs,

> I think just like, the [LGBTQ Pride] pool party that that one school
> had talked about is a very great, just introduction to the pool area.
> Like, both locker rooms are gender-neutral, it's only for the
> LGBTQ community, it can be an event, like for that group itself.

Barriers to Inclusion

When addressing the overarching actions toward inclusion of LGBTQ participants within the aquatic spaces they manage, participants identified some specific administrative barriers in place when attempting to create inclusive aquatic environments. These barriers tended to revolve around addressing inclusion as a whole (inclusion for all/assimilation), and not group-specific inclusive efforts, and the awareness levels of managers and staff when addressing concerns of the LGBTQ community.

As it pertained to all-inclusive efforts, managers often pointed to these as evidence of their inclusion of the LGBTQ community. One manager stated, "You know we haven't felt the need or hadn't really gotten any feedback saying that we need to have a specific program for that group or for another group or whatever. You know...our programming is for everybody." Another explicitly referenced the overall inclusive nature of their programming by saying, "No matter where you are in your life, or what's going on in your life…we're not going to do anything differently based on, uh, who you are."

All managers participating in the study also acknowledged their own discomfort or lack of competency to address the specific needs of the LGBTQ community or an overall implication that LGBTQ participants wouldn't have any

needs or concerns that weren't shared by the larger community of participants. One manager stated, in reference to their own concerns when addressing the LGBTQ community, "…how to, you know, appropriately talk to all staff, regardless of sexual, sexual identity, um, gender, all of that." Another expressed a general concern that they may not know enough about if their own programming was meeting the needs of the LGBTQ community stating, "I think a better understanding of what those needs are or where those barriers might be. And they might be important. We've got a lot of different programs." Related to these ideas, one manager pointed out the (in)visibility of the LGBTQ community as a barrier to specific inclusion efforts saying,

> Because I know, like, um, I know, like a lot of divers or swimmers that are gay or lesbian and they use the facility just like a straight person would. I don't know if they, no one has ever vocalized anything to me, specifically, regarding the pool in order to make it more accommodating.

Discussion

Aquatic managers expressed varying experiences and viewpoints towards managing the needs of LGBTQ participants within their organizations. However, managerial responses clearly fit within six thematic categories: (a) gendered spaces, (b) non-aquatic initiatives, (c) staff knowledgeability, (d) departmental and organizational mission, (e) aquatic-specific programming and administration and (f) barriers to inclusion. These findings provide important insights into the current state of LGBTQ inclusion within the aquatics sector, and as such provide implications for recognizing current blind spots in the practice of managing for LGBTQ inclusion and practical information to inform professionals on best practices moving forward.

The most obvious managerial consideration derived from this study is the importance placed on gendered physical spaces in the promotion of LGBTQ inclusion. Older facilities were largely discussed as barriers to promoting inclusion given the high expense of initiating renovations. Conversely, LGBTQ inclusion was discussed as central to recent, current, or upcoming renovations to aquatic facilities. Discussions around inclusive spaces are representative of current popular discourse and political discussions on gender-inclusive spaces in the United States (Larsen, 2016); here this discussion is centered on bathroom and locker room spaces. Underlying this discussion by the mangers is the assumption that creating gender-inclusive spaces is the "solution" to LGBTQ inclusion. This supports previous research by Patchett and Foster (2015) that found that current collegiate

recreation departments are more likely to have gender-inclusive spaces than training initiatives or policies specific to transgender participants.

The general willingness of managers to discuss the importance of gendered physical spaces underscores the understanding that the current needs of LGBTQ participants are actually defined as needs related to gender-identity. While certainly an important aspect to ensuring inclusion, assumptions of LGBTQ oppression only being represented in physical spaces based on gender-identity lacks a more complete recognition of LGBTQ subjugation. Participants were asked to discuss the managerial implications for the LGBTQ population in general, however consistently the specific concerns discussed were related to gender-identity. Otherwise, managerial concerns of cisgender lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals were largely left unmarked in favor of generalized discussions around diversity and inclusion. This occurred through universal discussions of inclusion via recreation initiatives, human resources and staff training, organizational mission statements, programming initiatives, and marketing efforts.

Aquatic managers were persistent in their desire to create environments that are inclusive to a diverse array of participants under the auspice of all being welcome. While this sentiment is certainly admirable, it does not reflect the realities of the LGBTQ population, necessarily. The assumption among managers was that having LGBTQ-specific programming was itself discriminatory. As such, discussions of inclusion initiatives showed that assimilation into the existing aquatic structure was the goal as opposed to a recognition of LGBTQ-specific needs and the structural nature of inequities; equality of access was favored over equity. This was also reflected in the use of general diversity trainings and mission statements that reflect the importance of diversity and inclusion without specific mention of the LGBTQ population (among all other marginalized identities). In fact, only seven (of 16) managers indicated that an inclusion statement was in place; with three of these specifically referencing LGBTQ populations. Previous research has referred to such sentiment as "happy talk" in which individuals recognize the value of diversity without fully understanding or acting upon it (Bell & Hartman, 2007). In other words, goals of diversity and inclusion remain unspecific and undefined.

The generalized assumptions of assimilation underscores mal-defined diversity and inclusion initiatives that have the potential to negatively influence LGBTQ participants. For example, research has shown that LGBTQ sport and recreation clubs create safe spaces for sexual minorities, have positive social psychological benefits, and also challenge the heteronormative assumptions behind mainstream sport and recreation through which heterosexual participants promote a more inclusive masculinity (Jarvis, 2015; Krane, Barber, & McClung, 2002;

Ravel & Rail, 2006). Offering a space in which such outcomes can flourish is particularly important in offsetting the negative outcomes from existing stigma and heterosexism found in previous studies of recreation and sport settings (Petty & Trussell, 2018; Anderson, 2017; Anderson & Mowatt, 2013). Universal goals of inclusion create a non-critical normative view that (potentially) benefits segments of the LGBTQ population who can bargain their other privileged identities (Chen, 1999; Duggan, 2002) to the detriment of other segments for whom assimilation is either not possible or not desired (Knee, 2018; Tilsen & Nylund, 2010).

Implications

Aquatic managers largely recognized existing barriers to promoting LGBTQ inclusion. These professionals also expressed significant levels of discomfort with their competence towards issues affecting the LGBTQ community and the intersection with aquatic environments. Furthermore, a lack of systematic knowledge on the extent to which existing aquatic programs were inclusive or exclusive was openly discussed by managers. Thus, increased training on LGBTQ issues is essential for aquatic managers and their staff. This is particularly true given the (mis)understanding among aquatic managers that LGBTQ issues are absent within their community or organization. Specific training on the systematic nature of oppression, localized LGBTQ issues, appropriate language, and so forth can provide an important start to creating safe spaces, promoting diversity awareness and acceptance, and a means to challenging heteronormativity within the formal workplace structure (Steck & Perry, 2018).

Interestingly, aquatic managers largely expressed concerns over the importance of gendered spaces in successfully promoting LGBTQ inclusion. Those who have recently engaged in or who are currently engaging in renovations of their aquatic infrastructure noted the importance of gender-inclusive bathrooms and locker rooms to their renovations. Such efforts should continue in capital project planning. However, older facilities were discussed as prohibitive to gender-inclusive spaces. While the feasibility of undergoing major renovations is often lacking, older facilities can ensure inclusive behaviors through re-designation of existing spaces, LGBTQ-specific marketing efforts, programming, and staff training.

Marketing and programming efforts are particularly important for managerial consideration. While LGBTQ-specific marketing was absent, mangers recognized the potential benefits of auditing current marketing for inclusion. Attention to potential hidden messages, heteronormativity, and bias in current marketing efforts can aid in promoting LGBTQ inclusion (Lenskyj, 2013). In

addition, marketing campaigns geared to the LGBTQ population may effectively remove some participation constraints.

Aquatic managers were largely resistant to LGBTQ-specific aquatic programs. Such programs were viewed as not necessary, discriminatory, or difficult to accomplish. However, this understanding reflects an assimilationist approach to inclusion. While admirable, this approach does not necessarily reflect the realities of the heteronormative social structure and LGBTQ oppression. Further, research supports that LGBTQ-focused programs can positively influence outcomes for this population (Gillig, Miller, & Cox, 2017; Jarvis, 2015; Krane, Barber, & McClung, 2002; Ravel & Rail, 2006).

While results from this study provide insights into the ways in which aquatic managers consider and take action toward LGBTQ inclusion, there continues to be a lack of extensive literature on the intersection of aquatic programming and services in relation to LGBTQ issues. Research would benefit from the study of specific realities within the different aquatic sectors (i.e. campus recreation, public recreation, private recreation, and nonprofit recreation). Further research is also needed to study the effectiveness of existing diversity and LGBTQ programs, particularly within recreation and aquatic spaces to promote best practices. Through both research and practice, the continued recognition of the importance of identifying the role that aquatics plays in constraining participation of marginalized populations and conversely the potential role that aquatics can play in creating spaces that are open, safe, and challenging to hegemonic norms is important to creating sport and recreation organizations that act as agents of social change (Cunningham, 2015).

Note

[1.] While "white" is capitalized according to APA style guidelines when describing race, it seems inconsistent with social justice to privilege whiteness with capitalization given the nature of this article and the topic of this special issue of *IJARE*. We would like to see it in lowercase. [Editor's note: I agree with authors' rationale. I personally strongly prefer some other taxonomic nomenclature for identifying ethnicity, heredity, or background rather than skin color which has prejudicial and racist origins.]

References

Allison, M. T., & Hibbler, D. K. (2004). Organizational barriers to inclusion: Perspectives from the recreation professional. *Leisure Sciences*, *26*, 261-280.

Anderson, A.R. (2017). Recreational sport participant attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: Impact of participation, religion, socio-economic status and sexual identity, *Recreational Sports Journal*, *41*(1), 27-41.

Anderson, A. R., & Mowatt, R. A. (2013). Heterosexism in campus recreational club sports: An exploratory investigation into attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. *Recreational Sports Journal*, *37*, 106-122.

Anderson, A.R., Ramos, W.D. & Middlestadt, S.E. (2014). A narrative investigation into dimensions of experience at an outdoor aquatic facility: A pool is more than a place to swim. *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education*, *8*, 143-156 DOI: 10.25035/ijare.08.02.04

Artinger, L., Clapham, L., Hunt, C., Meigs, M., Milord, N., Sampson, B. & Forrester, S. (2006). The social benefits of intramural sports. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *43*, 69-86.

Bell, J. M., & Hartmann, D. (2007). Diversity in everyday discourse: The cultural ambiguities and consequences of "happy talk". *American Sociological Review*, *72*, 895-914.

Chen, A. S. (1999). Lives at the center of the periphery, lives at the periphery of the center: Chinese American Masculinities and bargaining with hegemony. *Gender & Society, 13*, 584-607.

Cunningham, G. B. (2015). LGBT inclusive athletic departments as agents of social change. *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, *8*, 43-56.

Duggan, L (2002). The new homonormativity: The sexual politics of neoliberalism. In R. Castronovo & D. D. Nelson (Eds.), *Materialising Democracy: Towards a revitalized cultural politics* (pp. 175-194). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Doherty, A. J., & Chelladurai, P. (1999). Managing cultural diversity in sport organizations: A theoretical perspective. *Journal of Sport Management*, *13*, 280-297.

Edelman, L. B., & Petterson, S. (1999). Symbols and substance in organizational response to civil rights law. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, *17*, 107-135.

Elling, A., & Janssens, J. (2009). Sexuality as a structural principle in sport participation: Negotiating sports spaces. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *44*, 71-86.

Forrester, S. (2014). *The Benefits of Campus Recreation*. Corvallis, OR: NIRSA.

Gillig, T. K., Miller, L. C., & Cox, C. M. (2017). "She finally smiles … for real:" Reducing depressive symptoms and bolstering resilience through a camp intervention for LGBTQ youth. *Journal of Homosexuality*, doi:10.1080/00918369.2017.1411693.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine.

Guest, G., Bruce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, *18*, 59-82.

Jarvis, N. (2015). The inclusive masculinities of heterosexual men within UK gay sport clubs. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *50*, 283-300.

Knee, E. (2018). Gay, but not inclusive: Boundary maintenance in an LGBTQ space. *Leisure Sciences*, doi:10.1080/01490400.2018.1441767.

Krane, V., Barber, H., & McClung, L. R. (2002). Social psychological benefits of Gay Games participation: A social identity theory explanation. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *14*, 27-42.

Krum, T. E., Davis, K. S. & Galupo, M. P. (2013) Gender-inclusive housing preferences: A survey of college-aged transgender students. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, *10*, 64-82.

Larsen, H. G. (2016). The antecedent of fear in the public discourse: From Donald Trump's nativism to transgender bathroom access. *International Journal of School and Cognitive Psychology*, *3*, 177.

Lenskyj, H. J. (2013). Reflections on communication and sport: On heteronormativity and gender identities. *Communication & Sport*, *1*(1-2), 138-150.

Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). The development of constructivist grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *5*(1), 25–35.

Patchett, E., & Foster, J. (2015). Inclusive recreation: The state of campus policies, facilities, trainings, and programs for transgender participants. *Recreational Sports Journal*, *39*, 83-91.

Petty, L., & Trussell, D. E. (2018). Experiences of identity development and sexual stigma for lesbian, gay, and bisexual young people in sport: 'Just survive until you can be who you are'. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *10*(2), 176-189.

Rankin, S., Blumenfeld, W. J., Weber, G. N., & Frazer, S. (2010). *State of higher education for LGBT people*. Charlotte, NC: Campus Pride

Ravel, B., & Rail, G. (2006). The lightness of being 'gaie.' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *41*, 395–412.

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Elam, G. (2003). Designing and selecting samplings. In: J. Ritchie, & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 77-108). London: Sage.

Starks, H., & Brown Trinidad, S. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, *17*, 1372-1380.

Steck, A. K., & Perry, D. (2018). Challenging heteronormativity: Creating a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ students. *Journal of School Violence*, *17*, 227-243.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tilsen, J., & Nylund, D. (2010). Resisting normativity: Queer musings on politics, identity, and the performance of therapy. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, *3*, 64.

Theriault, D. (2017). Implementation of promising practices for LGBTQ inclusion: A multilevel process. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, *35*, 122-134.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (n.d.). What You Should Know About EEOC and the Enforcement Protections for LGBT Workers: https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/wysk/enforcement_protections_lgbt_workers.cfm

USA Swimming (2016). LGBTQ Cultural Inclusion Resource Guide. Retrieved from USA Swimming: https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/diversity-inclusion/resource-guides/lgbtq-resource-guide.pdf

USA Swimming (2011). Recommended Practices for the Inclusion of Minor Transgender Athletes. Retrieved from USA Swimming: https://www.usaswimming.org/resources-home/resource-topic/resource-subtopic

Waller, S., & Norwood, D. M. (2011). What African Americans can do to bridge the swimming gap: A call to action. *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education*, *5*, 449-475. DOI: 10.25035/ijare.05.04.10