

****Why aren't sports clubs more inclusive?****

Article. Spaaij, R. Knoppers, A. & Jeanes, R. (2020). “We want more diversity but...”. Resisting diversity in recreational sport clubs. *Sport Management Review*, 3, 363-373.

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Aim. This research sets out to understand why recreational sports clubs in Australia often struggle to become more diverse and inclusive, despite frequently stating that they value these goals. The study specifically looked at how clubs address issues of race, gender, and disability.

Methods. Researchers spoke with 101 people involved in five popular Australian sports – football, soccer, netball, cricket, and basketball. These included club leaders, coaches, players, and volunteers. They also observed interactions within these clubs. The researchers then carefully analyzed the conversations and observations to identify common patterns in how diversity was discussed and handled.

Key Findings. The study reveals that even with good intentions, several common behaviors and ways of talking can actively hinder real progress towards inclusion. These include simply talking about diversity without taking concrete action, setting unspoken rules about who fits in, and prioritizing the existing club culture over change. Leaders sometimes downplayed or ignored issues of discrimination, or even blamed external factors – like a lack of resources – for their lack of progress. A concerning pattern was also found where clubs would justify discriminatory practices by framing certain groups as different or problematic, or by making assumptions about people based on their appearance. In some cases, people who raised concerns about discrimination were silenced or blamed.

Limitations. The research focused on recreational sports clubs in Australia, so the findings may not be directly applicable to all sports or countries. The research also primarily focused on the views of club leaders, a more complete understanding would require hearing more from a wider range of participants, particularly those from underrepresented groups.