



TITLE: ‘We’re not a babysitting service’: Understanding how voluntary sport clubs respond to diversity

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This paper explores how community sport clubs respond to diversity. Volunteers are the central spine to many sports clubs in western societies, and the delivery of sporting provision is placed upon them. They are further faced with growing ambitions in delivering an array of social outcomes such as social and cultural diversity. The capacity of voluntary sports clubs to deliver such ambitious agendas is contested. The paper draws upon preliminary findings from an ongoing funded project, ‘Participation versus performance: Managing (dis)ability, gender and cultural diversity in junior sport’. It draws on qualitative research at voluntary sport clubs in Victoria, Australia to explore sports clubs’ experiences of diversity within community sport. Early findings indicate that a club’s willingness and capacity to address diversity issues is influenced by the attitudes of volunteers within the club. There are often expectations in clubs that all (adult) members should volunteer their time. This can lead to tensions within clubs, creating forms of ‘othering’ whereby acceptance of diversity can become contingent upon one’s ability to conform to these expectations. In doing so, certain forms of diversity are privileged over others, with the latter being constructed as a burden to the club.