



DISCRIMINATION BY AVOIDANCE

A study of mechanisms that contribute to the under-representation of Indigenous players in leadership positions within the Australian football institution.

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Abstract

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- Purpose:** The aim is to explore diversity management in the Australian football institution, its clubs and state organisations, and its work to improve the representation of Indigenous players in leadership positions, such as coaching, board and executive levels. Indigenous players are over-represented as football players and yet under-represented in leadership positions.
- Theory:** This study approaches the institution of Australian football through Institutional Theory and Critical Race Theory, which allows for the consideration of mechanisms that hinder Indigenous players from reaching leadership positions. Whereas Institutional Theory examines the practices, processes and outcomes of diversity management, Critical Race Theory examines underlying mechanisms situated in the context and dominant structures of whiteness. It is within such structures that documented patterns of ethnic penalties in the labour market must be understood.
- Method:** A qualitative study using a grounded theory approach and theoretical sampling of semi-structured and open-ended interviews with managers of Australian football clubs and state organisations, organisational documents and a mixture of complementary online news articles from the mainstream media.
- Findings:** The overall mechanism that help explain the continued underrepresentation of Indigenous players in leadership positions and appears as a result of the grounded theory coding, is avoidance (i.e. avoiding underrepresentation). This mechanism can, in turn, be divided into three sub-mechanisms that appear as central. These mechanisms have been conceptualised as *claiming equality for all* (i.e., caring as a duty or assuming a climate of inclusion), *legitimising practices* (i.e., using diversity management to improve the brand of the organisation or the active undertaking of image-making), and *silencing* (i.e., diverting attention away from the issue of under-representation or exercising internal control over discussing e.g., racial abuse in public). Thus, these mechanisms contribute to *avoiding under-representation*, and introduces this study as a case of discrimination by avoidance that contributes to maintaining the under-representation of Indigenous Australians in leadership positions within the Australian football institution.

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List of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFL	Australian Football League
AFLPA	Australian Football League Players Association
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision

1.0 Introduction

“...but it’s a really unusual beast, the business of football, so it’s not like any other business.”

– a respondent of this study

The field of sport has long believed to be a vehicle whereby racism can be challenged and cultural diversity flourish. Government institutions promote sport as being a social element that brings together diverse and widespread communities, creating a society that is broad and unified (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC, 2006). The context of sport is different to other sectors of the labour market as it reflects the economic, legal, social, and political systems of a nation (Tatz, 1995). This means that, although sport can be a place for social cohesion, inclusion, and mobility, it also mirrors the inequalities found in society, especially in relation to issues of race, identity, and discrimination (Browne-Yung, Ziersch, Baum & Gallaher, 2015; Kearney, 2012). One example is the racial vilification that players from ethnic minority groups experience on the field (Gorman, Lusher & Reeves, 2016a). However, little is known about the barriers they face when trying to advance their careers beyond the playing field to positions of leadership, such as coaching after their playing careers. Further, the structural inequalities, power hierarchies and exclusion of certain groups are a reflection of attitudes and stereotypes that have prevailed throughout history (Apoifis, Marlin, & Bennie, 2017; Bradbury, 2013; Hallinan & Judd, 2009a; Spaaij, Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2015). This is reflected and reinforced in the culture and institution of sport (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a). Some have therefore argued that managers of sport organisations have to combat discrimination by actively working with diversity management (Cunningham & Fink, 2006). Diversity management practices have been examined in different sectors of the labour market, such as sports, and in relation to gender and race (e.g., Coleman, 2012; Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006; Tolbert & Castilla, 2017).

In Australia, sport is seen as an essential part of the nation’s identity and Australian Rules football (hereafter called Australian football) is considered the national game (Coyle, 2015; Gorman et al., 2016b; Mewett, 1999). It shapes the lives of Australians and engages in the nation’s complex history of race-relations as it has become a social, political, cultural, and economic institution (Gorman et al., 2016b). Australian sport has been marked with inequality

and marginalisation of its Indigenous population, reflecting the disadvantages faced by this group in Australian society (Kearney, 2012; Gorman et al., 2016a). Research has focused on the experiences of Indigenous coaches and players in sport, as well as the underlying assumptions of recruiting managers (e.g., Hallinan & Judd, 2009a), rather than the role managers play in establishing diversity practices. Less is also known about the impact of these practices on ethnic minority groups such as Indigenous peoples (Yang & Konrad, 2011). Indigenous Australians are those who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2015; Hampton & Toombs, 2013). They are the largest ethnic and racial minority group in the country (ABS, 2017a), and make up about 3.3% of the country's population (ABS, 2017b). Indigenous Australians remain excluded from resources and opportunities, and from a socioeconomic view, are the most disadvantaged group in Australian society (Biddle, Khoo, & Taylor, 2015; Browne-Yung et al., 2015). For example, the life expectancy of Indigenous Australian men and women is 10.6 - 9.5 years lower than that of non-Indigenous men and women (ABS, 2013a). This group suffers from a long history of racial discrimination, an issue that continues today and is a barrier for Indigenous Australians to secure meaningful employment (Cameron, Stuart & Bell, 2017; Hunter, 2003). The opportunities on the labour market for this group is in line with Heath's (2007, p. 641) finding that "Indigenous and involuntary minorities tend invariably to come at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy in their respective countries."

One area of society where Indigenous Australians have been disadvantaged and marginalized due to institutional racism and prejudice is sport (Adair, Taylor & Darcy, 2010; Browne-Yung et al., 2015). Despite Indigenous Australians being over-represented as professional athletes, only 173 or about 0.8% of them fill the 21,333 full-time coaching roles within all of the sport leagues (ABS, 2012). There are no full-time, permanent Indigenous Australian head coaches on the teams in the professional sport leagues. This is in spite of several sport organisations, such as the Australian Football League (AFL), presenting themselves as inclusive and committed to policies that aim to increase the participation of Indigenous Australians at all levels of the game (Apoifis et al., 2017). This reflects a blueprint (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018), which states that positions of senior leadership in Australian business are not representative of cultural diversity as the majority are of Anglo-Celtic background. These statistics call for an investigation into the barriers and opportunities to coaching and leadership

pathways for Indigenous players (Apoifis et al., 2017). A number of causes for Indigenous labour market disadvantage are known, however less is known about the impact of other factors, such as the role that employer practices and policies play (Gray, Hunter & Lohar, 2011). In light of this, an audit was conducted on the type of information presented publicly by the AFL in relation to policies, procedures, opportunities or roles provided or implemented for Indigenous people. Findings revealed a limited Indigenous representation on boards and in leadership roles, such as coaching positions. This study indicated the need for further research to explore the management of diversity and employment opportunities for Indigenous players within the Australian football institution post-playing (Ferrer & Turner, 2017).

1.1 Outline

This thesis is divided into eight parts, beginning with objectives, research questions and central concepts. The second part covers the background of the study, which presents the historical context, the state of Indigenous people in modern Australian society, the role of sport, and finally the relationship between the AFL and Indigenous Australians. This is followed by previous research on the management of diversity, unequal opportunities in the labour market and the sport sector, as well as the representation of Indigenous Australians within the AFL. Thereafter, the theoretical framework building on Institutional Theory and Critical Race Theory and the study's grounded theory approach and other relevant methodological concerns are presented. This is followed by the findings and analysis of the study, which are concluded and discussed thereafter.

1.2 Objectives

The gaps in current research indicate that little is known about the ways in which diversity is managed within the sport sector and what hinders Indigenous players face as they reach for higher positions. The aim of this study is therefore, to identify and investigate the implementation of diversity policies, practices, and strategies within organisations related to Australian football to come to terms with the lack of Indigenous representation in leadership positions, such as coaching. The sport sector is of particular interest as an under-researched area of the labour market that has seen an increase in the participation of historically disadvantaged minority groups. It is a sector that prides itself on being inclusive of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, such as Indigenous Australians (Bradbury, 2013; Hallinan & Judd, 2009a). With

Indigenous Australians representing approximately 11% of the AFL players (AFL, 2017a), the question still remains why there are so few Indigenous coaches and leaders, which many have drawn attention to before (Gorman, 2012; Hallinan & Judd, 2009a, 2009b). This is particularly relevant as the AFL is expected to be Australia's single biggest corporate employer of Indigenous people (Gorman, 2012). It is therefore important to examine how they aim to create a diverse and inclusive climate for their employees, such as their players.

Furthermore, organisational managers are the change agents who have the most crucial role in creating more diverse and inclusive workplaces (Arenas, Di Marco, Munduate, & Euwema, 2017; Bradley et al., 2007). This is because they translate policies and activities into practice. The focus of this study is therefore on the managerial perspective. Not only is there a need for more research to examine the perspectives of the organisational managers who carry out the diversity management activities, but it is also important to find out what organisations are doing before asking the employees about whether they are doing it well (Kulik, 2014). This means that there can be an investigation into the role that the processes and structures of sport institutions play in maintaining power relations that are exclusionary (Burdsey, 2014). Thus, a qualitative study of the diversity strategies employed within the AFL and the management of these can have important implications for organisations, both within and outside the sport sector. This study will shed light on the processes and practices of diversity, and contribute to research within sport management, organisational studies, and human resource management. It will also contribute to the scholarship on the mechanisms involved in the under-representation of Indigenous Australians in leadership positions.

1.3 Research questions and central concepts

This study is approached as a case of discrimination by avoidance studied through the under-representation of a historically disadvantaged group within the sport sector, a context and institution closely linked to Australian nationalism and national identity. Based on gaps in previous research and reports on the under-representation of Indigenous players in leadership positions, including coaching, executive and board levels within the football institution, the research questions seek to understand mechanisms that contribute to the lack of representation here. The football players are of particular relevance as they are over-represented on the field yet do not advance or get promoted within this institution and are missing from leadership

positions. The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate the mechanisms contributing to this under-representation by exploring the approach and management to diversity within Australian football and the hindrances that Indigenous players face in advancing to leadership positions. The focus of this study is therefore to respond to following research questions:

What mechanisms contribute to the under-representation of Indigenous players in leadership positions within the Australian football institution?

- a) How is diversity approached and managed within the state organisations and clubs of the Australian football institution?
- b) What hindrances stand in the way of Indigenous players and prevent them from reaching leadership positions?

The important term ‘mechanism’ is used as an analytical tool to assess hindrances for underrepresentation on the institutional and organisational level in relation to workplace inequality. A mechanism is defined as a specific factor, process or practice that contributes to workplace inequality, in this case the under-representation of Indigenous players in leadership positions as a specific workplace outcome (Reskin, 2003). This definition includes the practices of managers and activities, as well as the production of something (Illari & Williamson, 2012) that may promote or prevent a particular outcome in the workplace. For example, an employer may favour some groups over others as they base opportunities and rewards on an employee’s characteristics. Mechanisms are relevant to study when the aim is to investigate “how” the under-representation is being (re-)produced (Reskin, 2003).

Further, the lack of representation of certain ethnic and racial groups is often discussed in terms of discrimination (see Heath & Cheung, 2006) and can be defined in a number of ways and in relation to how it occurs (e.g., direct or indirect), the level on which it occurs (e.g., institutional), and central factors, such as ethnicity or race. For the purpose of this study, discrimination is defined as occurring when members of a certain group do not have the same opportunities and therefore are in effect treated differently compared to members of other groups. Discriminatory behaviour can be direct (e.g., denial of employment) or indirect (e.g., by way of approach or tone of voice). The concept of avoidance discrimination has been used in previous research with reference to avoiding contact with other racial groups (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004).

However, this study defines discrimination by avoidance in another central way, namely the avoidance of problems and issues, such as unequal opportunities in the labour market. This is also called ‘ethnic penalties’ by Heath and Cheung (2006), which refers to the discrimination and disadvantage that follows when avoiding these problems.

Further, various definitions are provided in the literature on the term ‘diversity’. One of the most cited studies is that of Roberson (2006), who found that diversity is focused on differences and the organisation’s demography. Inclusion, on the other hand, is focused on the employees’ full participation and contribution through the removal of barriers in the organisation, and the integration of diversity into the systems and processes of the organisation. The formalised systems, processes or practices in an organisation developed and implemented to manage diversity effectively are called ‘diversity management practices’ (Yang & Konrad, 2011). This study considers the promotion of inclusion through the management of diversity and the concept of inclusion inherently implies exclusion. Inclusion may therefore be a process or condition whereby people who were formerly unintentionally or intentionally excluded from certain areas are gained access. An inclusive organisation can therefore be sensitive to power relations that have developed through historical inequalities, as well as be undertaking change efforts (Dobusch, 2014). Furthermore, it is important to note that diversity is a broad term not used in this study to simply denote ethnicity. Although diversity implies differences between people, both visible and less visible, issues arise when these differences are used to apply stereotypes and place judgement on others. Stereotypes are often negative and are used in different sectors of the labour market. For example, in relation to leadership in Western countries, which tends to be associated with being ‘white’, male, heterosexual, middle class and middle aged. Those who wish to become leaders and do not fit this stereotype are therefore considered ‘outsiders’ as they do not belong to the dominant group. The degree of ‘minorityness’ these outsiders represent will determine the extent to which their presence causes stress and anxiety to the dominant group (Coleman, 2012).

As noted above, diversity is related to concepts, such as ethnicity and race, which are clarified here. It is difficult to use appropriate terminology that is non-stigmatizing when writing about ethnicity or race (Bradley & Healy, 2008). The term ‘ethnicity’ will be used to refer to people who belong to “social and cultural groups based on common regional origins and cultural

traditions” (Hampton & Toombs, 2013, p. 5). Similar definitions have been used in other studies (e.g., Booth, Leigh & Varganova, 2012). The term ‘race’ is also mentioned in this report and will be accounted for in the term ethnicity. It is a poorly understood but common term that refers to groups of people who are similar in terms of physical characteristics and genetics (Hampton & Toombs, 2013). For example, the terms ‘white’ and ‘black’ are used in many research studies (e.g., Bradbury, 2013). Further, ethnicity is commonly used together with the term ‘minority’, which in the context of this study is used as a reference to ‘non-European’ groups in Australia that are distinct in regard to ethnicity, culture and religion, such as Indigenous Australians. As the term minority is used to mark differences between groups of people, it is important to be aware that it can be applied both in a positive and negative sense, with the latter being more common (Bradbury, 2013). The presence of a minority implies that there is a majority, which is why this study considers the minority in relation to power relations and their differences in relation to the majority. Finally,, the term ‘non-Indigenous’ refers to groups from backgrounds other than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), 2016). It is often used when comparing statistics between all other groups and Indigenous Australians. However, this term is problematic as it includes other ethnic minorities who may also experience labour market discrimination. Therefore, the term ‘white Australian’ will be used to refer to Anglo-Australians, as they are the majority group in the country. This has also been used in other studies (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a; Hallinan, Bruce & Burke, 2005).

2.0 Background

Presented here is information relevant to the background of this study's case. A brief account of Australian history is provided, which is crucial to understand why Indigenous people have traditionally been and are excluded from the labour market. Some statistics on Indigenous Australians are also provided. The second part discusses the role that sport plays in society and the final part illustrates what makes the case of Indigenous players in the AFL interesting.

2.1 Historical context and current disadvantage of Indigenous Australians

When the British colonized Australia, no treaties were signed with the Indigenous people, which had been the case in North America and New Zealand. The British believed the Indigenous Australians had no rights to the land as they did not own and cultivate it, referred to as Terra Nullius or vacant, unoccupied land (Armitage, 1995; Broome, 2010 in Biddle et al., 2015). Although the Indigenous Australians did in fact possess, treasure, and use their territory to live (Armitage, 1995), the British used violence to take over the land. This destroyed the essential foundation of the Indigenous peoples' lifestyle as the colonial government repressed their systems of culture and knowledge. The Indigenous Australians were slowly becoming extinct due to low quality food that led to physical illness and death. These actions were justified by the British as promoting white Australia and through this racist discourse they used several mechanisms of terrorism and genocide, such as shooting and burning, to eliminate the Indigenous people. The British also named the Indigenous people 'Aborigines', which was a way to characterize them as backward, inferior, and other. It was used to dehumanize them and to create a racial divide between white Europeans and black Australians (Jalata, 2013). The result of this racial stereotyping is the stigmatisation and marginalisation of Indigenous Australians as a group (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a). One way to marginalise them has been to subject them to numerous government policies, with the aim of controlling and suppressing their opportunities (Cameron et al., 2017). From the year of settlement (1788) until the late 1960s, Indigenous Australians were subjected to a number of policies collectively referred to as the 'White Australia Policy' (Armitage, 1995; Gorman et al., 2016). One example includes regulating every aspect of their life, from where they had to work to who was defined as an Aboriginal person (Armitage, 1995). The assertiveness of the Indigenous Australians and the collaboration of supporters were some of the reasons for the change that came in the 1970s. A referendum led to liberal democratic policy, emphasising Indigenous self-determination and

community self-management (Armitage, 1995; Sutton, 2001). However, from the beginning, Indigenous Australians were viewed by the British as marginal people who needed to be managed. Some things may have changed over time but the change in white social attitudes has been little, and Indigenous Australians still remain as outsiders in Australian society (Armitage, 1995).

Compared with non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians face several social disadvantages (Stronach, Adair & Taylor, 2014), such as barriers on the labour market and in their career development (Helme, 2010). The unemployment rate of Indigenous Australians between the age of 15-64 years is 20.8%, while the same rate is 5.8% for non-Indigenous Australians (ABS, 2016). Compared with 23% of non-Indigenous people, it is less likely that Indigenous Australians are employed as professionals (13% of those employed), and less likely to be employed in the private sector (84% compared with 74% for non-Indigenous; Commonwealth of Australia, 2017). The large gap in higher education outcomes between non-Indigenous Australians and Indigenous Australians is striking (Helme, 2010), with 24% of the former group having attained a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 5% of the latter (ABS, 2011). Indigenous Australians are also more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to suffer from health-related problems (ABS, 2013b), and the rates of incarceration for Indigenous Australians are 13 times the rate for non-Indigenous Australians (SCRGSP, 2016). These statistics and a number of other factors demonstrate the discrimination against Indigenous Australians. The root of these issues stems from historical, political, cultural and social contexts (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015; Reading & Wien, 2009).

Furthermore, from 2002, reports called *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* have been produced that measure the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians to track their progress in overcoming disadvantage (SCRGSP, 2016). The Council of Australian Governments has also committed to achieving Indigenous equity through the *Close the Gap* campaign, launched in 2007. The campaign targets areas, such as reducing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in employment outcomes (Gardiner-Garden, n.d.). The government supports Reconciliation Australia, an independent not-for-profit organisation that aims to reconcile the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians through five dimensions. These are race relations, equality and equity, unity, institutional integrity, and

historical acceptance. Organisations can adopt and develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to support the national reconciliation movement. The program supports the business plan of an organisation while also supporting the development of respectful relationships and creating opportunities with Indigenous Australians, as well as advancing the five dimensions of reconciliation (Reconciliation Australia, 2016). The next section describes Indigenous involvement in sport.

2.2 The discriminatory side of the sport sector

Sport was chosen as a significant context for this study for several reasons. The role of sport is believed to have historical importance in all societies as an agent of inclusion and citizenship. The basis of sport is participation, enabling it to attract, mobilize and inspire people (UN, 2014). In different geographical, cultural and political contexts, sport is seen as a vehicle that promotes social integration and economic development. It also plays a role in establishing behavioural norms that the remainder of society, in particular young people, can follow. Whereas other areas within society may struggle, the sport sector can break down barriers and encourage participation through the opportunities that come with it (HREOC, 2006). It has been argued that this view of sport is a way for national and international governing organisations to pursue their social agendas, with sport as an important integration tool for communities that are excluded or marginalized (Spracklen et al., 2015). However, sport also reproduces elitism, exclusion, othering, and a masculinity that is heteronormative and hegemonic (Kearney, 2012; Spracklen et al., 2015). This includes a set of normative behaviours with shared values and norms created through an interaction between the sport institution and its managers, coaches and players, which players have to accept and follow to gain membership. In order for this similarity between players to exist, difference has to be invisible. Therefore, in countries, such as Australia where whiteness dominates, any player of an ethnicity other than non-white has to assimilate and be neutralised to be a member of the sport (Kearney, 2012).

Furthermore, although sport may be a separate field, it is important to consider it in relation to other social spheres, such as politics (Spaaij, 2013). The emotions associated with sport has been used by politicians to bring support for the nation. Acting as a substitution for nationalism, the symbolism of sport has assisted in the promotion of national identity. Games, such as Australian football, are “nation-specific” and therefore play an important part within the

Australian culture. The idea of what a certain nation is, was, or should be is affected by different sporting heroes and heroines, and changes in social, cultural, and political contexts. It has been argued that to understand Australian sport, it must be placed in the contexts of racism, colonisation, post-colonialism, as well as the portrayal, representation, and empowerment of Indigenous players in Australia (Jarvie, 2003). For Indigenous Australians, sport has not only been a path to acceptance and self-empowerment but also a place of intense resentment and inequality (Hallinan & Judd, 2012; Maynard, 2012). The control and management of certain aspects of Indigenous lives, as mentioned earlier, also applies to their participation in sport, which has been marked by racist barriers and prejudice. Behind the high levels of institutional and individual racism in Australian sport is the ideological framework of masculinity, patriotism, and national identity, which are processes that sport plays a major role in. The Australian identity that ruled the 20th century was a heroic and masculine white Australian (Maynard, 2012), a role still appreciated by many Australians as forming their national identity. In contrast, Indigenous history and myths are seen as less important by Australians (Tranter & Donaghue, 2014), and modern Australian discourses have neglected them (Adair, 2009). This type of selective discourse serves the purpose of perceiving the nation as one (Elgenius, 2018).

Further, Indigenous Australians have hardly been relevant to the idea of what an ‘Australian’ represents (Mewett, 1999), and are therefore excluded and marginalized from the conception of ‘Australianness’ (Austin & Fozdar, 2016). This is because they challenge the normative cultural and social structures of a society dominated by white men, where white masculinity is accepted (Kearney, 2012), and ‘whiteness’ is equal to success (Coyle, 2015). This marginalized masculinity is played out in sports, such as Australian football, where the discourse includes racial stereotypes of Indigenous players as ‘natural’ and ‘magical’ yet unsuitable for roles in leadership and/or management (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a; Kearney, 2012). By referring to traditions and historical circumstances, and using stereotypes of racial qualities and cultural differences, the lack of representation and involvement is normalized in sites of power, such as decision-making committees, and professional development and management teams (Carrington & McDonald, 2001). Racial equality in sport is therefore prevented due to the lack of recognition and understanding of the dominant white hegemony (Long & Hylton, 2002) and the suppression and marginalization of groups, such as Indigenous Australians (Adair et al., 2010). The next section describes this in relation to Australian football.

2.3 The relationship between Australian football and Indigenous Australians

There is a historical link between Australian football and Indigenous Australians. Several researchers suggest the basis for Australian football to be the Indigenous game called ‘Marn-grook’, while others argue that there is no evidence of this (Hallinan & Judd, 2012; Tatz, 2000). Early historians have presented the game as an outcome of colonialism, with little or no mention of Indigenous people, as it was considered a white Australian game (Hallinan & Judd, 2012). The game began in the state of Victoria during the gold-rush era of the 1850s (Coyle, 2015), with the establishment of the Victorian Football League in 1897 (Tatz, 2000). The league became a key institution of white Australian national identity, a reflection of the political and social context of that time, which meant there was no place for Indigenous Australians (Hallinan & Judd, 2009b). The name of the game changed to AFL in 1990 as it expanded across Australia (Gorman et al., 2016b; HREOC, 2006). Some argue that this historical relationship between Australian football and the Indigenous people makes research into the practice of race and identity important (Coyle, 2015). Further, in 1995, the AFL introduced a Discrimination, Racial and Religious vilification code, now called ‘Rule 35’, due to several acts of racial discrimination against Indigenous players both on and off the field. These acts have often been racially motivated and reflect the history of race relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Gorman et al., 2016a). The code specifies that threatening, vilifying or insulting actions or speeches directed towards another person based on their race, religion, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, ability/special ability and sexual orientation, preference or identity are prohibited basis for vilification. The vilification framework applies to everyone within the AFL industry (AFL, n.d.).

Furthermore, the AFL is responsible for the management and administration of the sport (HREOC, 2006). It is a non-profit organisation that supports its 18 league clubs, seven state and territory bodies, regional offices, community football staff, Auskick centres (children’s program), and the community clubs and their teams, coaches and umpires (AFL, 2018; HREOC, 2006). The AFL has broad national objectives and strategies for game development spanning across six core areas, including participation, coaching and sports first aid, umpiring, community development (such as multicultural programs) and Indigenous programs and events

(HREOC, 2006). The programs targeting Indigenous Australians focus on outcomes of engagement, talent and education. They aim to develop the football and leadership skills of Indigenous participants, as well as exploring their cultural identity. Participants are educated on the leadership curriculum of the AFL Indigenous Programs, which includes resilience, decision making, communication and identity (AFL, 2017a). As part of its diversity engagement talent programs, the AFL delivers a Diversity Coaching Academy for Indigenous Australian and Multicultural participants (AFL, 2017b). The organisation is committed to creating an inclusive industry and promoting change to society through its RAP program, which also aims to develop and support the members (AFL Players Association (AFLPA), 2015).

3.0 Previous research

Relevant previous research is presented in three parts, including the management of diversity with focus on the unequal opportunities of ethnic minorities in the labour market, and the lack of ethnic minority representation in sport leadership position. Specific focus is on the representation of Indigenous Australians in the AFL.

3.1 Diversity management and unequal opportunities in the labour market

For an organisation to have an effective diversity management strategy it is suggested that good human resource (HR) practices and procedures be in place for the organisation to reap the positive outcomes. If organisations do not promote an equality climate, low organisational performance and higher employee turnover may follow (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, & Monga, 2009). It is important how this climate is created as it has been argued that most diversity programs (in the US) fail. This is due to the same approaches being used since the 1960s by organisations to reduce bias (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). The tools that are not increasing diversity include diversity training, hiring test and performance ratings, and grievance systems (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Kalev et al., 2006; Benschop, Holgersson, van den Brink, & Wahl, 2015). The aim of these tools have been to challenge managers' thoughts and action; however, studies have shown that these can have the opposite effect, i.e. activate bias. Instead, effective solutions include engaging the managers in problem-solving, increasing their contact with minority workers on the job, and increasing their desire to be open-minded. Successful interventions suggested to increase diversity in organisations include targeted college recruitment, mentoring programs, self-managed teams, and task forces (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). However, others suggest that addressing power is central to diversity practices, when done through exposure, reflection and change in structures of privilege and disadvantage. If ignored, interventions, such as mentoring, may perpetuate deeply rooted inequalities due to their emphasis on that which diverse employees' lack (Benschop et al., 2015).

Furthermore, a discussion on inequalities in organisations starts with the employers as they and their agents possess the power to influence and determine the extent of these inequalities (Bradley & Healy, 2008). This is in line with Acker's (2006) notion of inequality regimes, which states that class, gender, and racial inequalities are due to and maintained by the interrelated processes, practices, and meanings within an organisation. As mentioned earlier,

these inequality regimes are a reflection of society, politics, history, and culture. Bradley and Healy (2008) argue that employers create the organisational culture through behavioural standards, which they monitor and uphold through punishments and reinforcements. Their research has revealed that, unless required to do so, employers are unlikely to challenge the inequalities existing within their organisations, and even then, they take minimal steps. It was concluded that although employers have good practice, they take limited action and should not be seen as agents of transformation (Bradley & Healy, 2008). The agents who play an important role in redirecting change toward increased diversity include organisational leaders and other partners (Arenas et al., 2017). It is argued that HR managers are the change agents of inclusion within organisations as they carry out the HRM practices and manage the discourse (Arenas et al., 2017; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2009). However, in a study exploring Australian managers' (from HR and other areas) understanding and attitudes to workplace diversity management, the majority of managers were uncertain about their organisation having such a strategy or policies. HR managers could not with certainty say what diversity management was about, support its benefits or agree that it was important, despite being more aware and informed of its issues and documented benefits. It was concluded that in Australian organisations, the understanding and appreciation of diversity management is lacking and is not a business priority (Davis, Frolova & Callahan, 2016). Others argue that the role of diversity managers and their actions, decisions, and strategies be considered in relation to the context of social and organisational fields. For example, the necessary resources are provided to diversity managers in organisations that are inclusive, whereas organisations characterised by inequality regimes can place barriers on the actions of managers. However, diversity managers also have a responsibility in understanding and being aware of diversity issues and the structural inequalities and discrimination that may exist in their organisation (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2009).

Others suggest that a single focus on increasing diversity in the workforce is not enough. As a human resource management (HRM) strategy, diversity management needs to include the creation of an inclusive workplace climate in order to improve work outcomes (Mor Barak et al., 2016). The self-esteem of employees in relation to their work has shown to be promoted in inclusive environments and they are willing to work harder than required (Cottrill, Lopez & Hoffman, 2014). Diverse and inclusive organisations are characterized by work practices that are inclusive and outcomes that are related to diversity. Highlighted within the concept of

inclusion is the employees' involvement in processes of organisational decision-making, made possible through broader initiatives by HR. However, research has shown that the practices of diversity management may not change as an organisation moves from diversity to inclusion, rather it is simply a change in language (Roberson, 2006). The organisational change process tends to be slow and gradual and for there to be inclusion, policies need to be aligned with the organisation's broader values, strategy and priorities. Issues related to inclusion and discrimination should be discussed in the process, which is done best through communication that is open and effective. Most importantly, norms and values that have evolved slowly through context, and historical disadvantages need to be challenged. In inclusive organisations differences are valued, however the inclusion of minority or vulnerable groups is not something most organisations have managed to do. This is despite having HRM policies on diversity and making it one of the main strategies. The practices of HRM can exclude or include ethnic minorities and therefore enable or reinforce discrimination. An organisation cannot be considered inclusive if there is a lack of work opportunities and growing inequalities (Arenas et al., 2017).

Further, a critical review of how diversity is managed through HRM in various countries found certain features of HR diversity practices that stood out. One example is that minority employees are often recruited for lower positions and provided with limited opportunities for promotion, indicating that inequality and discrimination still exists. The review showed the diversity practices were not valued, developed or used in effective ways, rather focus was placed on complying with legislation, such as equal employment opportunity (Shen et al., 2009). Employer attitudes to various ethnic minority groups in Australia have also been examined to determine whether or not there is discrimination in hiring processes. In a field experiment, attitudes to white Australians were compared with attitudes to minority groups, such as Indigenous Australians. The white Australians received higher call-back rates than the Indigenous Australians, indicating ethnic discrimination by employers (Booth et al., 2012). It is well documented that ethnic minorities suffer from labour market exclusion more than the white majority, including both economic inactivity and unemployment. For example, the likelihood of Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Black Africans being unemployed in the UK is three to four times greater than the white population (Bradley & Healy, 2008; Heath & Cheung, 2006). The age, education and foreign birth of these minority groups are factors that cannot

explain these differences. Labour market disadvantages of unemployment, earnings and occupational attainment are also experienced by the second generation from certain ethnic groups despite being born and accessing schooling. As previously mentioned, Heath & Cheung (2006) refer to this ethnic disadvantage as ethnic penalties, with race as the underlying factor behind the unequal treatment. Regarding occupational attainment within the private sector, semi-routine and routine occupations were found to be where ethnic minorities are over-represented, while they are under-represented in professional and managerial occupations (Heath & Cheung, 2006). This is in line with research conducted in Australia, where Asian migrants, regardless of educational level, experience several barriers to achieving a high income and occupational status. The outcome is ethnic labour market segmentation and social exclusion. They were also less likely than new migrants from Northern Europe to enter into positions of professional or managerial positions with a high income. Attitudes of racial and ethnic superiority may therefore be permeating Australian institutions and organisations as there is a noticeable lack of ethnic minorities in leadership positions (Pietsch, 2017). These findings reflect the ethnic penalty and ethnic hierarchy that Heath (2007) points out is similar across countries. At the top of the hierarchy are North-West European groups and at the bottom are non-European groups. Of all the ethnic groups in Australia, Indigenous Australians come at the very bottom.

Furthermore, some have examined the extent to which diversity is implemented in sport organisations, such as clubs. Findings show that, rather than a strategy response or policy adaptation, the diversity work is unintentional and disorganised in the beginning. This is due to a combination of pressures and processes, both external and internal, that the club responds to. External policy drivers are less likely to pressure clubs into responding directly with diversity practices, rather it is often due to an individual or a small group of people that the club takes action and makes a commitment to work with diversity. These individuals perform behaviours extra to their role in order to make the diversity initiatives succeed (Spaaij et al., 2018). Other studies revealed that creating change in relation to diversity in sports clubs was reduced when they were unsuccessful in efficiently ingraining it into the organisation's structure (Cunningham, 2007; Doherty, Fink, Inglis & Pastore, 2010). The next section delves deeper into diversity and inequality within the sport sector.

3.2 The under-representation of ethnic minorities in leadership positions

It is widely acknowledged that in all areas of social, economic and political life, ethnic minority groups are under-represented in positions of leadership and other key decision-making roles. Some of the mechanisms behind this have been outlined above, one being discrimination at the individual, societal and organisational level (Bradbury, Amara, García & Bairner, 2011; Bradbury, 2013). Due to this, ethnic minorities are limited in their access to positions of leadership, particularly in relation to decisions on hiring and promotion. They are disadvantaged in the appointment of head coaching positions as they have to face stereotypes regarding their leadership capabilities (Cook & Glass, 2013). Discrimination, stereotypes and other issues regarding the under-representation of ethnic minorities and women in leadership in sectors, such as sport, has been studied extensively in Western countries (e.g., Apoifis et al., 2017; Bradbury, 2013; Cunningham, 2010). The sport sector has received attention regarding its lack of ethnic minority representation in leadership positions, despite presenting itself as being inclusive and diverse. Some have argued that it is worse than governmental or business sector organisations (Bradbury, 2013). In terms of a social reality and a normative principle (Spaaij, 2013), one of the most important issues this sector has to confront is diversity (Cunningham & Fink, 2006). For over 20 years, academics, policy makers and practitioners have devoted attention to diversity in sport (e.g., Adair et al., 2010; Cunningham & Fink, 2006; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). The policy rhetoric of cultural diversity within sport organisations emphasises the need to include people from ethnic backgrounds through the creation of environments that are safe, welcoming and culturally appropriate (Spaaij, 2013). To further these efforts of diversity, policies on equal opportunity and/or affirmative action have been introduced by sport organisations (HREOC, 2006). However, the extent to which these policies have been translated into sport management practice is questionable as the marginalisation of ethnic minorities still exists (Adair et al. 2010; Cunningham, 2009; Spaaij, 2013).

Change can be difficult to create and sustain, particularly in relation to diversity as there needs to be a transformation in culture. Unfortunately, within sport, the conduct and management has been resistant to such change (Cunningham, 2009). One example includes European football, where research has shown that at professional clubs or national federations, ethnic minorities make up less than 1% of senior administrators and executive committee members (Bradbury et

al., 2011). Despite making up 30% of the professional players in English football, ethnic minorities only make up about 3.3% of the management and head coaching positions. Although there has been an increase in the levels of ethnic minorities in senior coaching positions since 2014, this has largely been due to clubs having a history of hiring coaches from ethnic minority backgrounds (Bradbury, 2017). Further, in one qualitative study using Critical Race Theory, racial inequalities in sport organisations were maintained due to processes and practices associated with whiteness and the institutions adopting three colour-blind ideologies. These were diversity as inclusion, with diversity in participation being equated to inclusion; meritocracy and agency, whereby inequalities were denied as merits and personal responsibility were emphasised; and framing whiteness, whereby whiteness was the norm and its dominance was not recognised (Rankin-Wright, Hylton & Norman, 2016).

Furthermore, ethnic minority players are impacted by racialized representations early on in their careers through the practice of ‘stacking’ or over-representation (Hallinan et al., 2005; Spaaij et al., 2015). The idea is similar to that of hierarchies in organisations, where the more dominant positions are occupied by the white majority (Perchot, Mangin, Castel, & Lacassagne, 2015). Stacking is when players are assigned to certain positions in a sports team, not based on their performance but on attributes, such as speed and power, most often associated with race (Spaaij et al., 2015). The aim is to determine the basis for the decisions behind which player qualities that are associated with certain roles in sport games. This includes typical characteristics associated with success, stereotypes associated with the attribution of skills to athletes, and skin colour. This concept can therefore be used as an indicator of discrimination (Perchot et al., 2015). More specifically, central positions in a game that require more leadership interaction and decision-making impact tend to be occupied by white players, while peripheral positions of the non-central or non-leadership type tend to be occupied by black players (Hallinan et al., 2005; Perchot et al., 2015). Studies in Western countries have examined this concept and found that in comparison to white players, ethnic minorities (most often Black players) are assigned to positions that require more physical rather than mental ability (Bradbury, Van Sterkenburg, & Mignon, 2016; Cunningham, 2010; Hallinan et al., 2005; Spaaij et al., 2015). This myth serves to undermine the success of ethnic minority players as their achievements are reduced to natural talent while the athletic success of white players becomes associated with hard work.

They argue that this is a way for sport and societies in general to have social control and maintain racial hierarchies (Spaaij et al., 2015).

Other mechanisms involved in ethnic minority under-representation in sport leadership positions include access to professional and informal networks, which may increase their hiring chances and advance their careers (Cook & Glass, 2013). This social capital is an important resource in sport, however it tends to work in the interest of the powerful who use it to protect and advance their interests against minority groups (Bourdieu, 1986, in Spaaij, 2012). Exclusion from professional networks can have a negative impact on the social mobility of ethnic minority professionals. One qualitative study found that in European football, 'closed' recruitment practices were used. This means using a pre-existing 'knowledge bank' of potential candidates to target team managers and coaches, amongst other positions. This results in the exclusion of minority populations as potential applicants if they are outside the football industry's dominant social and cultural networks. Networking is a method of coach recruitment that professional football clubs in Europe rely heavily on. This is often based on key agents of power, such as club owners and senior executives from within dominant white social and cultural networks, providing their personal recommendations and support when senior coaching staff is being appointed (Bradbury, 2013). Compared to other areas of the labour market where approaches to equal opportunities have become more formalized, the methods of coach recruitment that are traditionally networks-based in sports tend to be less transparent and significantly different. Ethnic minorities (mainly Black) have expressed feeling overlooked as potential applicants in these networking processes because there has been preference for candidates from the dominant (white) social and cultural networks with less experience and fewer qualifications. Also, players who occupy a team captain position become more 'visible' and 'favourable' as they have access to more personal contact and networking opportunities with senior decision-makers at professional clubs. Drawing on Critical Race Theory, these deeply racialised and dominant power relations position minority coaches as outside and excluded from professional coaching environments, maintaining the under-representation of minority coaches over time (Bradbury et al., 2016).

Similarly, the most important factor for sport club directors to 'fast-track' or accelerate elite athletes into their first role as head coach was their ability to gain and maintain the respect of

the players. The directors believed this to depend on personality, 'habitus' or socialised norms (Bourdieu, 1990 in Blackett, Evans, & Piggott, 2017), and cultural fit. It therefore seems essential to coach recruitment processes that players engage in considered specific 'habitus' or social capital socialization. Another factor was the extent to which the prospective coaches had the same or similar coaching philosophies and practices that were valued by the directors. Any formal coaching qualifications were therefore not valued to the same extent as these factors. Most importantly, the directors were white males and the findings showed that the athletes were more favourable if they had a shared habitus with the directors (Blackett et al., 2017). Although this study did not examine the lack of ethnic minority representation, it sheds further light on the underlying mechanisms linked to under-representation, which in this case may be likened to normative pressures.

3.3 Indigenous participation and representation in Australian football

With Indigenous football players far exceeding the national proportion of Indigenous Australians, the AFL has been referred to as a 'level playing field' characterized by fairness and opportunity (Hallinan et al., 2005). Despite the over-representation of Indigenous players in the AFL, they are missing from other positions within the organisation, in particular leadership positions, such as team or club management (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a). To illustrate, only two out of 150 coaches are Indigenous, there are no Indigenous board members on the clubs, and on the club executives, only one person is Indigenous. Apart from the players as employees, there are approximately 1300 employees within the AFL, of which only five are Indigenous (Mifsud, 2012). The over-representation of Indigenous Australians on the AFL's playing lists reflects the efforts on behalf of the organisation to increase the participation of Indigenous players at the elite level. The sport organisation, motivated by reconciliation, has publicly supported a positive relationship with Indigenous Australians, making them stand out among national institutions (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a). However, these efforts together with the aim to prevent racism through Rule 35 may remove attention from deeper structural inequalities within the AFL. Ingrained in the everyday Australian life are stereotypes of racial difference, making them the norm and basis for these structural inequalities (Hallinan, Bruce, & Coram, 1999; Hallinan et al., 2005). These stereotypes and racialized representations have an impact on the perception of those who have the power to hire and promote ethnic minorities. Although the participation of Indigenous footballers is seen as positive by recruiting managers and

journalists, it is limited to playing roles and not positions of leadership or decision-making. When asked about the reasons behind this lack of post-playing opportunity, managers provided explanations of Indigenous ambition in line with race and racial difference. Historical racial and cultural stereotypes have shaped the way people perceive the ability and inability of others to perform certain jobs and this is manifested today in ways that are new and less obvious. This results in an under-representation of Indigenous Australians in leadership positions (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a).

Furthermore, stacking has been found to occur with Indigenous players as they are assigned to certain field positions based on stereotypes. One Australian study examined position assignments of Indigenous players in the AFL through the use of player lists and commentators' descriptions of attributions and skills. In this way, the researchers were able to account for the fluidity of the AFL's field positions, categorized as central, non-central and non-starting. At the time of the study, the AFL had 43 Indigenous players listed (6.4% of the total number of players). They were found to be over-represented in non-central positions (66% compared to 38% non-Indigenous players), and under-represented in central positions (7% compared to 34% non-Indigenous players). The non-central positions were characterized by speed, anticipation, spontaneity and talent, while the central positions were characterized as most difficult, dominating, crucial, and calm. Indigenous players were completely or mostly missing from the central positions, which is in line with the racial stereotypes attributed to them as having 'innate' skills. However, and contrary to research from other countries, the non-starting interchange/emergency positions were equally distributed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous players. Another important finding was that never during the season were Indigenous players assigned to play fullback, centre half-back or centre half-forward (all central positions). This exclusion leaves Indigenous players at a greater disadvantage than black athletes in other sports, who have not been totally excluded from certain field positions (Hallinan et al., 1999).

In line with these findings are studies showing the ability and talents of Indigenous AFL players to be reduced to racial and cultural determinants instead of traits, such as perseverance and dedication (Apoifis et al., 2017; Hallinan & Judd, 2009b). In one study, the career experiences of Indigenous coaches equated to feelings of exclusion from coaching positions at top-level due

to their Aboriginal identity, as well as feelings of invisibility as the sporting organisations had not recognised their talent and potential. Many of these experiences occurred within organisations with targets for increasing the number of Aboriginal coaches, administrators and managers (Apoifis et al., 2017). The career opportunities of Indigenous Australians are reduced as a result of this ‘invisibility’ (Stronach et al., 2014). This is due to discriminatory stereotypes and racial and cultural prejudices of Indigenous players as great performers on the field but not suitable for roles characterized by decision-making, management or leadership (Hallinan et al., 2005; Hallinan & Judd, 2009a, Kearney, 2012). Judd (2010) argues that racial and cultural discourse in Australian football aim to place limits and boundaries on the positions that Indigenous Australians occupy. Through notions of anti-racism and reconciliation, the participation of Indigenous players is promoted as being on equal terms as non-Indigenous Australians, but what this type of discourse does is limit Indigenous participation to certain roles. For example, the historical nationalist narratives dominated by stereotypes of Indigenous Australians as ‘intellectually lacking’, ‘physical’, and ‘savage’ (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a), are present in Australian football as they view Indigenous players as well-suited for the sport and therefore actively encourage their participation. However, that participation does not extend to roles that may indicate a real or imagined threat to the white Australian dominance. Through this limitation, the divide between the white Australian and the black Australian is maintained (Judd, 2010).

4.0 Theoretical framing

The theoretical framing is outlined here to highlight central concepts that have guided this study. In order to understand the mechanisms underlying the under-representation of Indigenous Australians in leadership positions, it is central to consider the institution of Australian football at the outset. Institutional Theory and Critical Race Theory have aided the examination of practices and processes of diversity within the organisations, and the existing hindrances that may provide a greater understanding of the lack of representation. Central to this study are related concepts, such as discrimination on the grounds of ethnic penalties. Drawn from these theories are central aspects to be able to understand the under-representation in this case. The ways in which the theoretical framing of this study is further developed is discussed in the subsequent section in relation to the Grounded Theory (GT) and abductive approach used here.

4.1 Institutional Theory

Institutions influence the way organisations are managed and constitute a central part of Institutional Theory, which highlights the social structures made up of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that create meaning and stability through certain social activities and material resources. Institutions decide what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable by imposing restrictions through the legal, moral, and cultural boundaries that they define. Activities and actors can also be supported and enabled by institutions. There are three institutional pillars; *regulative* (e.g., laws and regulations), *normative* (e.g., social and professional norms) and *cultural-cognitive* (e.g., cultures and ethics). In order to gain legitimacy (i.e. the acceptance and approval of internal and external stakeholders), organisations wish to conform to three pressures exerted from these institutions. These pressures are *coercive* (stemming from societal expectations and organisational interdependence), *normative* (stemming from professionalization), and *mimetic* (stemming from environmental uncertainty). The processes whereby organisational forms and behaviours that are socially appropriate become assumptive is called “institutionalisation”. Also, organisations engage in *ceremonial structural conformity*, which implies the changes they make in their formal structures to show that they conform to the pressures while the actual internal activities and behaviours do not conform (Scott, 2014). Institutional Theory highlights the need

to examine whether adopted formal policies and practices are decoupled from being implemented in daily organisational activities (Tolbert & Castilla, 2017).

The outcomes of these institutional pressures can be illustrated in relation to organisations. For example, the adoption of diversity management practices due to coercive pressures from government regulation and legislation include government programs, such as affirmative action and employment equity programs (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Klarsfeld, 2009). Organisational practices and policies, such as hiring discrimination, are affected by coercive pressures, whereby organisations do not discriminate in order to gain legitimacy (Harcourt, Lam, & Harcourt, 2005). Other practices, such as formalized staffing systems, are developed due to these pressures to reduce discrimination in compensation, promotions, and career advancement (Dobbin, Sutton, Meyer, & Scott, 1993; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995). When these pressures are exerted in similar ways upon organisations within the same field the result tends to be that similar sets of administrative structures are developed. The consequence is therefore organisational homogeneity (Scott, 2014). Regarding mimetic pressures, the extent to which organisations will replicate the effective practices of other organisations depend on the ambiguity of their goals or the amount of environmental uncertainty they experience. It can therefore be argued that sport organisations are likely to be influenced by the diversity efforts of legitimate or successful organisations. In relation to normative pressures, models, structures, and practices of organisations are similar due to the similarities in the educational and professional experiences of the managers (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

With reference to the Australian football institution, it is essential to consider that nationalism and national identity can be understood as contributing towards a normative system, in which norms and values, and their associated rules, introduce an aspect into social life that is enforced, narrow, and evaluative. This includes social norms that a group of people in one nation share an understanding of and conform to (Miller, 1995). Therefore, constraints on social behaviour are imposed by nationalised systems that also grant rights and privileges. Nationalism can also be associated with the regulative pillar as nations use naturalisation laws and rules to create national belonging and social cohesion (Jensen, Fernández, & Brochmann, 2017). It also extends to the cultural-cognitive pillar as expressions and symbols of culture within independent states are standardised, which leads to an understanding of who is or is not a

member of the nation (Elgenius, 2011, 2018). One can argue that as Indigenous people historically have not been considered 'Australian' (Mewett, 1999), they may not be considered members of Australian institutions, such as the AFL. Therefore, the national identity aspects inherent in the Australian football institution must be considered as a central part of the institutional factors likely to perpetuate the under-representation of Indigenous Australians in leadership positions.

Furthermore, if the assumed way of doing things are the traditional people management practices, then they have become institutionalised. This could explain why organisations experience barriers to change as they try to develop more effective approaches to manage diversity (Yang & Konrad, 2011). By continuing to follow institutionalised activities, organisational practices become more fixed and maintained. This means that certain behaviours will be considered normative by new members who enter as they socialize and learn the language of the organisation (Cunningham, 2010). In relation to sport, one of the many institutionalised practices and of special relevance for this study is racism (Long, Robinson & Spracklen, 2005), acting as a barrier for ethnic minorities to reach coaching and administrative positions (Cunningham, 2010). Further, some suggest that to identify whether the diversity management practices of an organisation are ceremonial or not, qualitative research is the most useful. Narrow diversity management practices that are separated from other organisational systems and processes in their implementation are suggested to be ceremonial. It is not ceremonial however, when there is an integration between the diversity management practices and the organisational subsystems. Institutional Theory can therefore be used to understand what diversity management practices an organisation adopts and how they come to decide on certain practices, what norms are developed for diversity management, and whether the practices have been ceremonial (Yang & Konrad, 2011).

4.2 Critical Race Theory and Institutional Racism

Critical Race Theory was introduced in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a response to critical legal studies and radical developments in education in the US. The theory has, and continues, to highlight the racism that exists in society and its institutions, such as sport (Houh, 2012; Hylton, 2010; Singer, 2005). The ways in which racism works can vary and include institutionalised practices, such as foundations within leading administrative structures of sport

that are racialised (Hylton, 2010; Long & Hylton, 2002), or “institutional speech acts” which are symbolic anti-racism commitments (Ahmed, 2006, pg. 104). It has been suggested that Critical Race Theory and qualitative research techniques preferably be used for research issues, such as the one in focus for this study, i.e. the lack of diversity within leadership and management positions in sport and sport organisations (Singer, 2005). It is an effective framework highlighting and challenging the foundations of racism discussed in terms of skin-colour and privilege, that is the ‘whiteness’ of the majority juxtaposed to the disadvantage and ‘blackness’ of the minority. The term ‘whiteness’ is used in Critical Race Theory to describe the processes and privileges associated with this, rather than the social constructing of whiteness or white people. Thus, the theory is useful in examining social policy and established practices by acknowledging the marginalized voices and confronting the assumed or alleged ‘race-neutrality’ (Hylton, 2010), referring to the appearance of neutrality in laws and discourse when it is in fact ingrained by ‘whiteness’ (Brown & Jackson, 2013). For example, the racial discrimination, oppression and domination that has existed historically in sport are institutional arrangements and practices confronted by Critical Race Theory (Hylton, 2010).

Further, the previous sections have identified institutional racism and the processes, practices and outcomes of it, which Critical Race Theory puts into context by examining underlying mechanisms. Ingrained within senior organisational levels in sport is the invisible, central and normative white hegemony (Bradbury, 2013; Bradbury et al., 2016). Due to this powerful position, dominant organisations and institutions do not refer to their practices as creating, shaping and maintaining the lack of minority representation in coaching and leadership positions. Rather they shift focus to wider societal exclusions or to the cultural characteristics of minority groups, which tend to be negatively attributed (Bradbury et al., 2016). These power relations that are racialized and deeply ingrained, reproduce and perpetuate more forms of institutional racism and do not challenge or change the dominant white hegemonic structures within sport (Hylton, 2010; Long & Hylton, 2002). Furthermore, by focusing on sport organisations and the activities of managers, the role of policy development and HRM structures and practices can be questioned in regard to the extent which they perpetuate and contribute to the issues faced by sport managers (Frisby, 2005). By building on the Critical Race Theory framework in this study, the dominant structures described above can be identified, analysed and changed. The theory will allow for a greater understanding of the

practices and processes impacting on the career opportunities of Indigenous players in Australian football, and the changes that need to be done to improve their social conditions (Singer, 2005).

The framework of Critical Race Theory is based on five principles. The first principle states that racism is not rare but rather inherent in societies' institutions, processes and practices. Racial projects are therefore integral to societies' institutions through ideas that nurture difference and exclusion on the grounds of perceived physical and intellectual abilities, as in this case of sport coaches. These projects can be both behavioural and discursive, covert and explicit, exist on multiple levels (individual, institutional and societal) and occur from habit or be improvised. The second principle states that dominant ideologies of colour-blindness, objectivity, meritocracy, 'race-neutrality' and equal opportunity should be challenged. The third principle represents the core goals of the theory, which are social justice and transformation. The aim is to have racialized power relations disrupted and transformed in a positive way. The fourth principle is giving space and time to hear the voices of those who are marginalized. Finally, Critical Race Theory is transdisciplinary, which means it draws from many disciplines and contexts (Hylton, 2010).

To illustrate these principles, directly excluding ethnic minorities from leadership roles is one example of a process that influences racial relations and can therefore be identified as a racial project (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a; Hylton, 2010). The nature of these projects makes them challenging, which is why the core business of sport should include anti-racism (Hylton, 2010). To achieve this, sport organisations need to be aware of race and the dominance of whiteness. To notice racial discrimination or a lack of diversity in the organisation, the ability to mention race and ethnicity is necessary in discussions about groups that are under-represented. Illustrating the second principle are dominant ideologies present in sport organisations when meritocracy, individual choice and personal responsibility are used as justifications for the lack of diversity in sport coaching. This includes when progressing in and gaining access to qualifications of sport and coaching are justified as being open to all. Through these responses, sport organisations do not accept their responsibility in creating and maintaining racial inequalities and exclusion (Rankin-Wright et al., 2016). Regarding the third principle, in sport, colour-blind approaches may deny that the under-representation of ethnic minorities is a

problem. This is why it is important for policy and practice not to be blind to racialized relations (Hylton, 2010). For example, sport organisations sometimes associate diversity with inclusion. In other words, the number of ethnic minority groups as participants and coaches are used as evidence to represent equality and inclusiveness, thereby denying the existence of racial inequalities (Rankin-Wright et al., 2016). The fourth principle is addressed by naming realities through narratives, storytelling and counter-storytelling, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complex lives, experiences and histories of minority groups. The last principle indicates that Critical Race Theory can be used in conjunction with other theories, such as Institutional Theory (Hylton, 2010).

4.3 Combining theoretical tools

The theories mentioned above, Institutional Theory and Critical Race Theory, provide central complements to each other and may be merged in useful ways for this study. The three pillars of Institutional Theory (regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive) are noticeable in the national institution of the AFL and can be related to some of the disciplines of Critical Race Theory. In both historic and contemporary Critical Race Theory, the regulative pillar has been a reason for its development as it directs criticism toward inequalities existing within institutions, such as legal and educational systems. Institutional Theory can point to the antecedents and outcomes of diversity management, and relevant to diversity are the concepts of ethnicity, race, and minority, which Critical Race Theory focuses on within the context of institutions. One example of this is when conforming to pressures to stay legitimate means that dominant ideologies are adopted as a way to avoid and deny the existence of structural inequalities. Both theories are lacking a direct focus on the role of nationalism and the majority national identity as contributing towards institutions and racial hierarchies that contribute towards the disadvantage of ethnic and racial minorities.

This study will therefore make use of two central concepts that will help bridge these theories, institutional racism and ethnic penalty. For instance, Institutional Theory has traditionally not explored the outcomes for ethnic and racial minorities, which is crucial in reproducing historical disadvantages in the contemporary period. Critical Race Theory helps to alert us to such reproduction. Moreover, the insight added through the conceptualisation of ‘ethnic penalties’, as discussed by Heath and Cheung (2006) and others, demonstrate the role of discrimination in

Western labour market in relation to ethnic and racial hierarchies within. Thus, discrimination is produced and reproduced within all pillars of institutions and needs to be brought forward more clearly. Discrimination can, for example exist within the law and be negotiated in different ways, such as othering, stigmatisation, excluding by default, marginalisation, as well as other ways in which under-representation is not dealt with hands on. Having said this, this study does not set out to analyse the discrimination within the pillars of Institutional Theory as such, rather to add towards these theoretical analyses through a grounded theory approach.

5.0 Method

This qualitative study has the ambition to develop the theoretical framework and had therefore adopted a grounded theory approach. This process, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness are presented here.

5.1 Rationale for the qualitative research design

The aim of this study was to identify and investigate the diversity policies, practices, and strategies used by clubs and organisations within Australian football, to come to terms with the lack of Indigenous representation in leadership positions. To meet this aim, the views and experiences of individuals need to be captured and understood, which is possible by studying the phenomenon in-depth. The individuals being studied were therefore the basis for a qualitative method and to understand and interpret their perspective of reality was the focus (Bryman, 2012; Hakim, 2000). Also, the phenomenon can be examined within its context as a qualitative method emphasises an understanding of the individual's social behaviour in their environment, i.e., institutions (Bryman, 2012). Another advantage of this method is that an open-ended and in-depth exploration is provided about matters individuals have substantial experience and insight in (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, in order to gain a deeper understanding of individual experiences and attitudes, a qualitative design is necessary. Further, in qualitative research, the number of people to interview is not easily calculated as there is no single formula or criterion to adopt (Luborsky & Rubenstein, 1995). Compared to quantitative research, the sampling sizes in qualitative research tend to be smaller as the data collection is purposive. Thus, one of the criticisms is that findings are not generalizable (Hakim, 2000). Yet, there are qualitative approaches with theoretical ambitions (Bryman, 2012, Charmaz 2014), which this study has.

5.2 Collaborations

This study was conducted in collaboration with Dr Justine Ferrer and Dr Paul Turner at Deakin University in Australia and some adaptations to their project has been necessary. Their project is currently titled 'HRM policy view of career inclusion and diversity in the AFL'. Their study aims to gain insight into the AFL's current diversity and inclusion efforts in the context of career development. More specifically, they aim for a deeper understanding of the league's efforts to promote career opportunities of players with diverse backgrounds. One limitation of

this collaboration was the ethical restrictions placed on the study that made it less possible to ask certain questions relevant to this study (more information provided in the discussion). However, being part of their project has been crucial for the data collection of this study as ethics approval was already in place and the authority of a local university provided easier access to respondents. The researchers' knowledge of AFL and HRM in Australia also provided insight. To compensate, a very active role was taken in finding respondents by contacting them via email and/or phone, making regular follow-ups, booking interviews, and corresponding with the researchers. The researchers were also offered assistance if they required it for the project to move forward, and a small gift was provided.

5.3 Grounded theory process

A GT approach is appropriate when examining the bigger picture and 'what is really going on' with the data, as is the theoretical sampling and ambitions (see below). It is useful in research addressing social processes, hidden populations, topics that need theorising, and social issues and policies. The methods of this approach are useful in providing a frame and guidelines for conducting a qualitative research design. The GT process tends to be non-linear and Charmaz (2014) presents guidelines that form the research process and the researcher can adopt and adapt these in ways that will suit their study. One method is the simultaneous process of data collection and analysis, meaning that the analysis is conducted in parallel to the collection. This also allows for theoretical sampling. The method of data analysis includes analysing the actions and processes of the respondents through coding, which is crucial. During coding, the data is broken down into smaller parts to make sense of what is happening in the data. This is conducted through different steps, beginning with initial coding and followed by focused coding. In initial coding, the researcher stays close to the data and codes the data with action words, and in focused coding, the initial codes are examined to determine what they imply and to make sense of large parts of data. Comparative methods are used throughout these steps, which means that both similar and dissimilar data are compared to each other. This allows the data to be viewed in different analytic ways, so theory can emerge. Labels are assigned to the codes that conceptualise the data on an abstract level and act as a link to the emerging theory that explains the data. The codes are then referred to as categories. Throughout data collection and analysis, the researcher writes memos, which include any insights or thoughts about the case and the categories. Central to the GT approach is theoretical sampling, which is used as a

guide and to elaborate and refine the categories when it is difficult to know which categories will emerge. Initial sampling is a way to get started by establishing criteria for people, however questions or gaps may develop during the research process that lead the researcher to collect other data to fill the gaps and clarify any uncertainties. It is through abductive reasoning that the researcher is led to theoretical sampling, which differentiates GT and gives it strength. As the researcher interprets the findings and discover they are puzzling and difficult to explain, more data is gathered to provide possible theoretical explanations. Theoretical sampling can also be used to ‘saturate’ the categories, which in GT refers to a good understanding of the concepts in the emerging theory and the extent to which they can be supported by the data.

5.4 Initial sampling

As the purpose of this study was to examine managers’ work on diversity, participants were selected through purposive sampling. The aim was to recruit managers from clubs and organisations within Australian football who work within the HRM area and are involved in the organisations’ policy development. The Australian football industry gives these managers various titles, such as People and Culture, Community, Welfare, or Development (see table 1). A list of possible interviewees was created based on employee information (e.g., work email) provided on the websites of football organisations and clubs. Initial contact was made via email (Appendix 1) with people identified as relevant based on their area of work within the organisation. The email included information about the purpose of the study, how it would be conducted, and contact information to the researchers. It also included an invitation to participate or to refer someone who they thought would be more appropriate. A snowballing technique was therefore used to find respondents. Follow up calls were made if there was no reply after this initial contact. If the reply was positive, contact was made via telephone to arrange for a meeting. Table 1 below presents the total number of respondents interviewed in each role, and titles and descriptions of the respondents’ positions.

Table 1. Sample frame of Interviewees

Number of respondents	Position title	Description of role
1	Player Development, Career and Education Coordinator	Works with players' career and personal development. Responsible for supporting players in managing their careers on and off the field. Reports to the Player Development Manager and football operations department.
1	HR Manager	Works closely with Player Welfare and Development Manager. Responsible for the HR component that affects the football department staff. Reports to the Chief Finance Officer.
2	Player Welfare and Development Manager	Works with players' welfare and career development. Responsible for supporting players in managing their careers on and off the field. Reports to the General Manager of Football and the Risk Manager.
1	Indigenous Projects Officer	Works together with the Player Welfare and Development Manager as a point of contact for Indigenous players. Responsible for having contacts within the Indigenous communities and for supporting Indigenous players. Reports to the Player Welfare and Development Manager.
1	General Manager People, Culture, Community, Diversity and Inclusion	Works strategically with internal and external diversity. Responsible for leading and directing the HR department in their administration and diversity work. Reports to the Chief Executive Officer.
1	People and Development Advisor	Works within the HR department. Responsible for looking after and advising employees and some overlap with player development. Reports to the Head of People and Strategy.
1	General Manager Victorian Football League and Player Engagement Strategy Manager	Oversees the league's program, which encompasses all staff. Responsible for overseeing the agenda and strategy for player development within the league and within one AFL club. Reports to the General Manager of Football.
1	Head of Personal Excellence and Wellbeing	Works in the management department and on an executive level. Responsible for player well-being, personal excellence and development both on and off the field. Reports to the General Manager of Football.
1	State Indigenous and Multicultural Engagement Manager	Works with providing programmes that engage people from Indigenous, multicultural, and disability backgrounds to play Australian football. Responsible for driving diversity and inclusion through to AFL clubs within the state.

5.5 Initial interviews

Eight semi-structured and open-ended interviews were conducted with 10 respondents from six AFL clubs and one AFL state organisation located in various parts of Australia. The cities cannot be mentioned here as that could reveal which clubs that participated. No demographics were collected as per the ethical guidelines of the study and to avoid traceability of the respondents. Labels have not been used for the respondents as it was not important to this study who said what. As this study was part of a collaboration with other researchers, half of the interviews were held by two interviewers and the other half were held by one interviewer. This was determined based on who was available to conduct the interview. Two of the interviews were conducted with two respondents present at the same time. The interviews lasted between 55 and 75 minutes and were conducted face-to-face on-site at the respondents' place of work or a café close to their workplace. The respondents were given the option to suggest which setting they found most comfortable to have the interview in. An interview guide (Appendix 2) was used to make sure certain themes were addressed and to establish a sense of direction and purpose (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Questions were constructed in a way that facilitated natural discussion rather than short answers, and probing questions were used in order to gain in-depth data. The questions were revised to reflect the job role of the respondent, for example if the respondent had a position within player development, the questions would reflect their position. Due to the nature of the questions and the discussion that could arise, the interviews were audio-recorded (Saunders et al.), after consent was given from the respondents. The respondent was reassured of their anonymity and informed of how the data would be used. The recordings were transcribed before the data analysis process and if necessary, were edited with the content in mind.

5.6 Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling was conducted to further strengthen the data collected from the interviews and to saturate the categories from the data analysis of the interviews, i.e., to answer the research question. The interviews provided the perspective of those responsible for implementing policies and plans in the organisations. Missing from this perspective were documents supporting the implementation of diversity management practices, as well as the perspective of those subjected to this implementation, i.e. the AFL players. This led to the collection of four organisational documents, which included plans and policies, and five online news articles of

Indigenous players published in the mainstream media (see table 2). The organisational documents relate to diversity and were found on the websites of the AFL and the AFLPA. These organisations were chosen as they inform affiliated clubs and organisations about policies and procedures in areas, such as diversity and inclusion (as expressed by respondents). In search of the AFL’s diversity policy online, one is referred to their vilification framework and policy, which were found to be important and relevant. The AFLPA is the organisation that represents all of the elite AFL players and provides recommendations on how to support players through their careers. Their RAP and best practice guidelines are specific to Indigenous players. The online news articles were found through the search engine Google. Words and sentences used in the search were for example ‘interviews with Indigenous AFL players’ and ‘systemic racism in the AFL’. These articles were used to gain an understanding of the players’ perspective, particularly those of Indigenous and other ethnic backgrounds, which would otherwise have been hard to come by. Both the documents and the online news articles assisted in answering the research questions of how diversity is managed within the AFL industry and what hinders Indigenous players from reaching leadership positions. The documents were used to compare what was said in the interviews to what was written in the discourse.

Table 2. Sample frame of Organisational Documents and Online Articles

Title	Type	Description
Reconciliation Action Plan (AFLPA, 2015)	Action Plan	Outlines a plan to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
Many Stories, One Goal Supporting Indigenous Footballers (AFLPA, 2016)	Plan Best Practice Guidelines	Outlines best practice guidelines for supporting Indigenous players in their AFL careers within all areas of the AFL industry.
Vilification Framework (AFL, n.d.)	Framework Rule 35	Outlines the AFL’s approach to vilification.
National Vilification and Discrimination Policy (AFL, 2013)	Policy Rule 35	Outlines how matters of vilification or discrimination are resolved within the AFL.
An open letter to the football community (AFLPA Indigenous Advisory Board, 2017)	Online Article	A letter to the football community about racial vilification towards AFL players.
Indigenous AFL legend Adam Goodes: ‘Growing up, I knew I was different’ (Guardian sport, 2016)	Online Newspaper Article	The personal experiences of one of AFL’s most well-known Indigenous players.

Nathan Buckley confrontation was the final straw for Heritier Lumumba (Wilson, 2017)	Online Newspaper Article	Highlights a documentary called 'Fair Game' that follows the experiences of a multicultural player within the AFL.
Racism, recognition and reconciliation in AFL: A young player's perspective (Rigby, 2017)	Online Newspaper Article	An interview with an Indigenous AFL captain's and his perspective on racism within football.
Heritier Lumumba hits out: 'The AFL is incompetent in dealing with racism' (Little, 2017)	Online Newspaper Article	An interview with an ex-AFL player and his experiences of racism within football.

5.7 Data analysis

A grounded theory method was used to analyse the data with help of computer software program NVivo. The first step of analysis included the initial line-by-line coding of the interview transcripts conducted for this project, the organisational documents, and online news articles. The focus for this analysis was to identify actions, processes, and hidden assumptions in the discourse. This initial coding allowed for the identification of gaps in existing theory and data, which was part of the process. The meanings of the initial codes were assessed and compared to each other and to the data to determine their analytical value. This resulted in focused codes of a more conceptual character that synthesised larger parts of the data. These main codes were further analysed by examining the connections between them, which led to one main code standing out as encapsulating the rest namely that of 'avoiding underrepresentation'. This was therefore elevated to a category and constituted the basis for the theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling was thus used to understand this category better, and yielded further data to be collected, i.e., organisational documents and online news articles. Figure 1 below will illustrate the category, its main codes, and sub-codes. Memos were also written throughout the processes of data collection and analysis. The process assigning codes to segments of data, comparing codes, analysing their meanings, and defining the links between them led to further ideas, questions and thoughts about the phenomenon of underrepresentation in its whole. This type of thorough engagement and interaction with the data is something that Charmaz (2014) highly recommends. It is also these memos that are used to present the findings of this thesis. Note that due to the nonlinearity of GT, particular steps cannot be specified as data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously.

5.8 Ethical considerations

Several ethical considerations were considered for this study informed by principles of non-disclosure, anonymity and informed consent. Respondents may adjust their answers if they find certain questions to be personal and sensitive. It was therefore important to establish informed consent, to be clear about the confidentiality and to use introductory questions in the beginning of the interview. Informing the respondents of their right to deny any question and to stop the interview also reduced this risk. A second consideration was the interview setting as some respondents may not feel as comfortable answering questions at their place of work or in a loud and open location. Place of interview was therefore determined by the respondent as it was essential that they feel comfortable and relaxed. A third consideration was to ensure no harm was done to the respondents, which has mainly been reduced by using pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Finally, an important ethical consideration relevant to the Australian setting is the sensitivity associated with asking questions about Indigenous groups, particularly when speaking *about* them rather than *with* them. Therefore, due to the ethical restrictions placed on the research project of the collaborators, the questions surrounding Indigenous players were minimal. However, probing questions were used if the respondents got engaged in the topic and a combination of data was collected to account for this.

5.9 Trustworthiness

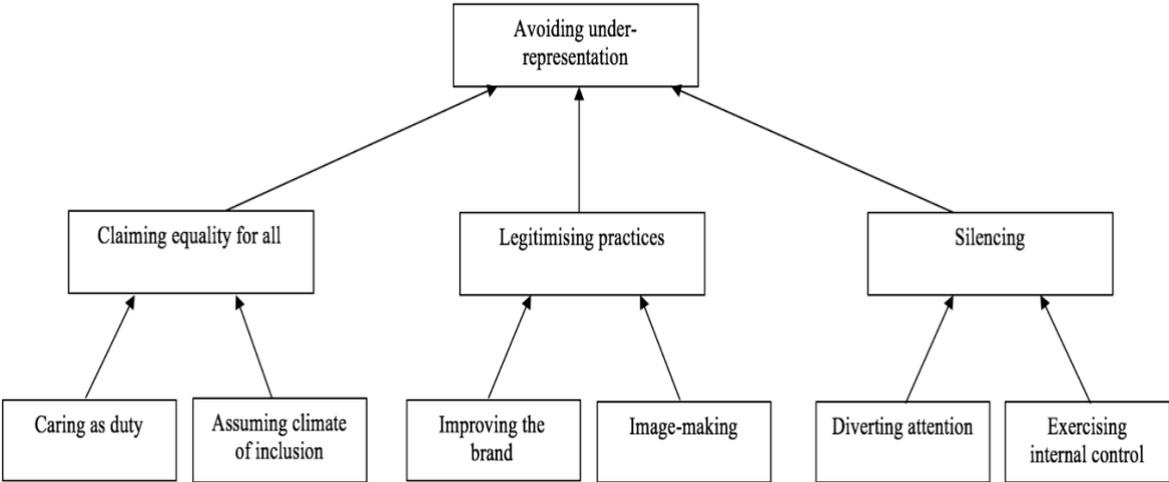
The issue of data quality was chosen to be addressed by trustworthiness, an approach that Bryman (2012) highlights. There are four criteria of trustworthiness, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability that will be addressed here to indicate the quality of this study. The first criterion, credibility, refers to the extent to which the researcher's accounts are consistent with the findings. This study was carried out according to good research practice by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity by recording and transcribing the interviews. The transcriptions were coded and corresponded to the respondent, and care was taken as to not reveal the respondents when using quotations by paying careful attention to words that could expose them. The second criterion, transferability, refers to the extent to which the findings can be generalised to other settings. Transferability is difficult due to the small sample of this study. However, what can be transferred beyond the current case are the findings that the inequity experience of particular groups and the inefficiency of diversity practices of HR both contribute to the reproduction of disadvantage. The third criterion, dependability,

refers to the extent to which the conclusions of the study can be justified. In this study, the level of dependability is determined by its credibility and transferability. Finally, confirmability, refers to the extent to which the researcher has been objective in their approach to the study and its findings. The awareness of preconceptions is acknowledged in the limitations, which are outlined in the discussion. Also, the method of this study has been described to its fullest detail as to not leave anything out for imagination.

6.0 Empirical findings and analysis

The findings here build on the analyses of data collection as presented above (interviews with managers, organisational documents, and a mixture of online news articles published in the mainstream media about the experiences of Indigenous players). The category, main codes and sub-codes that emerged through the grounded theory analysis provides a framework below (see figure 1), and quotations will be used to illustrate and explain their meanings. The findings will be analysed in relation to previous research and theory pointing towards elements that are not explained by this. Moreover, contradictions in the respondents’ interviews were found to be illuminating and will also be presented below to give context and a deeper understanding of each category.

Figure 1. Mechanisms contributing to under-representation.



6.1 Claiming equality for all

This main code developed through the GT coding refers to the equality that the clubs claim to exist for their players. What emerged were two sub-codes that indicate the organisations’ care for their players through the management of the AFL players’ career development during their football careers, and the career opportunities that are available and equal to the players. *Caring as duty* reflects the expectation placed on the organisation to care for their players, such as actively working with their career development plan. *Assuming climate of inclusion* reflects the claims made by the managers that career opportunities are open to all and the players can choose

whichever career they like off the football field. These codes reflect the avoidance of under-representation as the managers of the organisations believe the players to be treated fairly, thus being blind to discrimination and inequality.

6.1.1 Caring as duty

Several respondents, who either work directly or indirectly with the career development of players, expressed 'duty of care'. This involves a career planning process and the implementation of an individualized action plan developed together with the player. The plan outlines the player's development areas, both on a personal and professional basis. This process was consistent across the organisations. Emphasised in the players' career development is their engagement in activities outside the football field, which was conveyed as important for both the player and the organisation. The respondents expressed a sense of responsibility in easing the players transition from football to the rest of the labour market by engaging them in other activities to help them "...move out of the extreme world of football and into the real world." However, whether a career development plan was always initiated, or mandatory was unclear, and respondents provided different answers. Some expressed that "*It's not compulsory, but everyone's got a development plan.*" Another expressed that it is mandatory in regard to the players' football careers but not in regard to off-field careers. One can argue the importance of this in the case of under-representation as Indigenous players without career development plans or plans without focus on developing leadership skills is a way to maintain the status quo. Further, the respondents also expressed the club's incentive to invest in player development;

"...they're (the AFL) basically just setting a benchmark of what you need to pick up on, but they also have a pool of money that they can give the club if they feel that a club is doing good things in player development. They might fund some of your programs if you're seen to be making some good inroads and genuinely putting time into your player development..."

Others described the pressure from governing AFL organisations to implement strategies around the career development of players;

"So certainly, from an industry of point of view at the moment they're the ones that are pushing us along saying we want you to continue, we want you to have a strategic plan,

we want you guys to have an advisory committee across your club that sort of can help you in this area as well.”

Another respondent explained why the duty of care is important to their club; *“But it’s really important for us to have those poster boys as well because we’re trying to make sure that our player development strategy is actually a competitive advantage as well.”* An underlying reason for the duty of care was also expressed; *“...clubs are understanding that in order to keep the players and keep them performing well you need to care for them.”* While another questioned the extent to which clubs actually care about their players; *“I see all of these AFL clubs, they have all of their values as care, (club name) have got it, (club name) have got it, well what does care mean? You know, do you really care about your athletes?”*. Although the AFL highlights duty of care as one of their obligations in their vilification framework to make sure that no one within the industry is harmed, the voices of former and present players tell a different story. They urge for more to be done as they direct attention to the support that is missing when Indigenous and other ethnic minority players are subjected to racial discrimination;

“We also need to support players out there when it does happen.” – Guardian sport (2016)

“Unless the industry, and society for that matter, can show greater respect for diversity then we risk losing the next (names of some Indigenous players)...” – AFLPA Indigenous Advisory Board (2017)

Thus, in line with Institutional Theory, some of the organisations are governed by institutional pressures to deliver career development to the players. The governing organisations within the AFL industry act upon the clubs and state organisations by exerting formal and informal pressures on them. As those clubs are dependent on the governing bodies and the cultural expectations within the AFL industry, they will engage in coercive isomorphism. This seems the case with the pressure to develop a career development strategy. Some clubs also want to increase their institutional legitimacy by using their career development strategy as a competitive advantage. This means they do not only compete for social and economic fitness but also for resources and prestige that will attract more players. The result of this is homogenisation, whereby clubs aim to match the benefits and services of other clubs

(DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This highlights both a normative and a cultural-cognitive system (Scott, 2014). However, there may also be an aspect of nationalism here that Critical Race Theory and Institutional Theory do not consider, which is related to the ‘poster boys’ that some clubs want to use. Who the organisations aim to include is interesting as the Australian national identity has historically been associated with whiteness (Maynard, 2012). Further, based on the criticism towards the AFL’s care and support and in line with Critical Race Theory, to include ‘duty of care’ as an organisational value or in a policy is no more than a symbolic act. Behavioural change is required in order for the organisation’s anti-racism to be considered a practical act (Hylton, 2010).

6.1.2 Assuming climate of inclusion

GT coding led to the emergence of a sub-code whereby a climate of inclusion was assumed by the managers as they expressed that any player could advance their career into leadership positions. One respondent expressed this as “...*there's a whole range of opportunities*” and a majority of the respondents emphasised that “*There are no boundaries but we'll help you explore.*” Managers working directly with players’ career development indicated that they encourage all of the players’ career ideas and wishes, and they assist them in engaging in the activities that lead toward those careers. In terms of possible opportunities to transition from player to coach, the answers differed between the respondents, with one respondent referring to the lack of coaching vacancies as they tend to have the same head coach for several years. While many mentioned that the players could become accredited to be a coach, either through leadership programs within or outside the AFL industry, reference was also made to inherent ability;

“...*you can see the people that have the disposition or the nous in that particular area that 'hey these are opportunities if you want to explore then we could help you with that.'*”
“*Like it sort of comes naturally to a lot of players I think.*”

The answers also varied in relation to identifying coaching talent and the respondents were either uncertain about the existence of a talent identification strategy or they alluded to how it might happen; “...*might be a tap on the shoulder to say, 'this is something that you should be working towards.'*” One aspect of assuming a climate of inclusion was that all players were welcome to engage in networking, with one respondent referring to it as “*The network is*

invaluable". A majority of the respondents spoke about the importance of networking and explained that the players are encouraged to build relationships with contacts. The managers also assist the players in setting up networks, with some clubs using their corporate network to introduce the players to new contacts. However, one respondent took a critical stance toward the idea of networking and pointed out the shift in responsibility from the club to the player; *"The problem is they're setting them up with networks and stuff like that for an apprenticeship, but once they get cut they're still, 'Oh, we've given you the tools, go and do it.'"* This quote can also be linked to caring as duty as it was clear from all the respondents' accounts that a post-career strategy is missing, and that the responsibility is placed in the hands of the individual;

"Well like there is no responsibility to the club at all like yeah, we'll keep in contact with them and be a support there for them if they need it but yeah, it's you live your own life really..."

Thus, the use of Institutional Theory is limited here as it does not consider the dimensions of ethnicity, race and minorityness in the context of institutions, however one could argue that the findings above point towards a normative system. Present in the institution are dominant ideologies of meritocracy, individual choice, and personal responsibility, as per Critical Race Theory. The notion of open to all in terms of access and progression to any career and coaching accreditation is to position it as equal opportunity (Hylton, 2010). The idea that any player, regardless of their ethnic or racial background, can choose to progress into a coaching career is an ingrained belief of the respondents as well as a normative expectation. This shows ignorance on behalf of the organisations to acknowledge and address the existing structural inequalities and their impact on coaching and leadership opportunities (Rankin-Wright et al., 2016). Also, the nurtured ideas that organisational managers have about the physical and intellectual abilities of a sport coach can be called racial projects and these can exclude Indigenous players from leadership roles (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a; Hylton, 2010). Indigenous players may be further disadvantaged if they are not granted access to important (white) networks linked to the recruitment of coaches. Due to the deeply racialised and dominant power relations that exist within these networks, Indigenous players could be excluded from professional coaching environments, therefore maintaining the under-representation of Indigenous coaches (Bradbury

et al., 2016). These dominant ideologies can be argued to be a form of institutional racism, whereby Indigenous Australians pay an ethnic penalty (Heath & Cheung, 2006).

6.2 Legitimising practices

There were contrasts between the organisations in their adoption and implementation of diversity strategies, practices, and processes. Some respondents were more active and passionate about driving diversity, whereas others were in the early stages and quite uncertain of the diversity work. One club had developed their diversity to the extent that it was close to an inclusive culture, whereas most respondents spoke about diversity as a way to legitimise their practices. *Improving the brand* and *image-making* were the sub-codes that emerged, reflecting the reasons behind the clubs' work on diversity. These codes also reflect the avoidance of under-representation as the diversity practices are justified as creating a diverse and inclusive climate where everyone is welcome, and no one is excluded.

6.2.1 Improving the brand

The brand and perception of the clubs, as well as the players that represent it, was expressed as important by several respondents. Part of the players' personal development at the club is to learn how to brand themselves to the public. Several respondents spoke about what they are promoting, how they want to present themselves, and how important it was to be "*Protecting their brand, making sure that they're (clubs) not, yeah, doing something stupid that's going to give them a bad name in the community.*" Reference was also made to the traditional and historic perception of clubs and how the clubs attempted to change this by engaging in diversity. Respondents referred to their club's perception as "*men's club*" or a "*boys' club*", as well as "*Anglo-Saxon*" and "*white*", by respondents who had developed their diversity strategies the most. In effect, the respondents are describing the culture of their organisation with the common frame being the domination of whiteness and masculinity, which symbolise those who represent the organisations. These elements of culture may be institutionalised to different degrees and they may to some extent be linked to other elements in the organisation. They also point to the normative system of the institutions (Scott, 2014). To engage in diversity for the single purpose of changing the club's perception will not simply change any deeply rooted assumptions and actions without first acknowledging the structural and cultural aspects maintaining the subordinate and dominant racial positions (Acker, 2006; Singer, 2005).

Further, the work on diversity seems to be “*an issue across the whole (AFL) industry*”, expressed by one respondent as the trigger for examining what initiatives they could put in place other than their RAP. Another mentioned that diversity “*...hasn't been much of a priority or a focus...*” until the club received media attention, which is what pushed them to introduce policies, programs, and initiatives on diversity. Whereas some respondents referred to their diversity action plans consisting of a number of pillars, such as multicultural, LGBTI pride, disability, women, and Indigenous, others expressed that they adapted their policies from the AFL by “*...seeing what kind of policies they had and what things they're pushing or driving and then we kind of try and replicate it.*” However, most of the organisations seem focused on gender equality as the introduction of a women's AFL has made them reconsider their image as men's clubs. The respondents spoke positively about their work on promoting gender equality, whereas implementation of the RAP seemed challenging in certain aspects;

“...so, one area of the RAP is mostly government run and sanctioned as there are some compulsory elements to the RAPs. One of them is increasing the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses in your supply chain which we didn't think would be that hard but it's turning out to be quite difficult.”

The respondent explained that this was due to the Indigenous businesses being few and quite small in scale, so the club had not been able to create a difference in that area. Further, cultural awareness training was regularly mentioned by many respondents as part of their diversity work, which is also included as an activity in the AFLPA's RAP and best practice guidelines. Although this indicates consistency between discourse and action, few respondents explained what implications the training had, other than greater knowledge of Indigenous culture. It became clear that talking about this training was a way to show that the clubs are working with diversity. For example, when asked about what challenges the club faces in terms of diversity, one respondent instead expressed that; “*It's just sharing stories. Like we're really open about bringing people in and encouraging our players to sort of share their stories as well. Like we've done cultural awareness training.*” Whether this training is effective can be questioned as criticism has been directed toward the way that the AFL has handled cases of vilification, with a former player expressing his concerns about the lack of understanding in such matters;

“I lost complete confidence approaching anyone in the AFL on issues of race... There was no one to go to and protocols were outdated... The players' association visit the clubs once a year. They don't talk about racism, they talk about racial vilification.... Their total lack of education about racism leads to a total lack of education among the players.” – Wilson (2017)

The AFL's vilification framework (n.d.) states that *“The AFL industry does not tolerate vilification in any form and is committed to ensuring safe, welcoming and inclusive environments for all people involved in Australian Football.”* One respondent was however, critical towards the AFL's commitment to diversity and expressed that image seems to be more important than taking action;

“...the AFL has a media arm...– I don't know if you saw the media AFL launches at the start of the year about the start of the season, it was all their multicultural (players), so they rolled out [name], an African, Sudanese boy being in refugee camp, and it was all about him, it was all about a Muslim girl playing club footy at Bankstown, all these things. And so, I mean, yeah, that's great, but what are we actually really doing about it? AFL do nothing there, the states, all the people on the ground in game development are doing that.”

Thus, the findings reveal that greater importance is placed on promoting the right organisational brand than creating an inclusive climate that attracts and retains players and employees. The pressure of gaining and maintaining legitimacy is clear in most of the organisations as it is important that they protect their brand and portray an image of a diverse and inclusive culture (Scott, 2014). However, using the word 'commitment' is not always a sign of action, rather it is simply meant to signal to the public that the institution is being active in their commitment. Both the vilification policy and framework of the AFL mention several regulations and laws, which implies that the institution is complying with the law and are therefore required to be committed. Although the vilification framework states that vilification is not tolerated within the AFL industry, it is a way for the organisation to show they are against vilification yet conceal that it occurs within the industry. It could also be a form of organisational pride, which as a sign of commitment increases the value assigned to the organisation (Ahmed, 2006).

Further, the decoupling of the diversity policies from their implementation in daily organisational activities means that the organisation is engaged in ceremonial structural conformity. Some of the organisations are changing the formal structures of their organisation to conform to pressures while there is no conformity in the actual internal activities. This is evident in the lack of support given to vilified players. Also, with the adoption of a RAP comes coercive pressures from the government that leads some organisations to engage in certain activities to gain legitimacy (Scott, 2014), while the strategy of replicating policies from the governing AFL bodies is due to mimetic pressure. The organisation is uncertain of how to begin their work on diversity and therefore model the work of others, although this does not necessarily have to be negative as it serves as a solution to the organisation. The diversity decisions of the managers can be due to mimetic and normative pressures as they behave according to taken-for-granted assumptions instead of making choices that are consciously strategic (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

6.2.2 Image-making

This subcategory refers to the ways in which the organisations use various methods to create a favourable view of themselves. This was sometimes done through a numerical representation of diverse employees in the organisation, whereby several respondents mentioned the number of Indigenous employees and players they had, although that question was never asked. There was also mention of reaching targets as part of the diversity plan, such as the percentage of male and female employees at different levels of the organisation. For example, some talked about reaching an equal amount of men and women; *“...I think managerial group composition is 50% women target. I think we’re at 48%. So, it’s only going to take one male leaving and one female replacing, and we hit it...”* Diversity was also referred to as something that *“happens organically”* within the organisation and that an increase of diverse employees would be good as *“...it makes a good business case - the more broad and diverse the pool of talent can be, the better in terms of generating the best outcomes for the business...”* Another respondent explained the effects of their image-making methods. Their diversity policies and plans had been mentioned positively in work interviews and they had attracted more diverse applicants as a result of the changes made to their job advertisements; *“...including them (Indigenous Australians) in the advertisements when we advertise for roles that we encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants and that we are an equal opportunity employer...”*. Further, one respondent described how the AFL had asked them to *“...grow Indigenous and*

multicultural participation...” and explained that it would not make a difference if the clubs did not become “...culturally safe...”. Similarly, a former AFL player expressed their opinion about why the AFL is looking to increase the number of participants from diverse backgrounds;

“Now the AFL is reaching out to culturally diverse and Indigenous communities because they realise it was an opportunity to expand their market. Not because they want to create harmonious communities. Not because they want to deconstruct racism.”

Some respondents talked about targets as something positive and that they are “...ahead of most spots in the AFL”, linking back to the code about improving the brand. Others however, described the pressure from the government to introduce quotas and why they decided to reject it;

“So, you know there’s a push from some Government departments to increase your quotas, you know, like to win some tenders that we would look doing. They talk about quotas on the Board, quotas of staff and whatever, and we’ve made a decision as a club that it isn’t about quotas, because if you create the right setting people will come.”

In relation to tokenism and quotas, one respondent was critical of organisations using their RAP as a way to show they have included an Indigenous person in one of their boards. They also criticised the AFL and the extent to which they are invested in their diversity work;

“They’re really great at promoting the good news stories. But there’s no investment. Like...the investment that they get back, that they give us...one of the five pillars of the AFL is diversity...If you were to look at the money that went into the diversity pool, compared to what went into all the others, it would be 10%, or less than 10%, that would be my estimate, you know, that’s where it’s at now.”

Thus, the organisations’ aim of numerical representation as image-making is being misunderstood for feelings of inclusion and belonging, or that it would signify the nonexistence of inequality and prejudice within the organisation (Burdsey, 2011). By associating diversity with inclusion, which a numerical and statistical representation does, the organisation denies and conceals the existence of racial inequalities within the institution (Gillborn, 2010; Rankin-

Wright et al., 2016). Any social processes that are discriminatory are therefore left unexposed, maintaining the inequality and under-representation of certain groups (Gillborn, 2010). The unwillingness to recognise the racism that exists within the sport means practices that are discriminatory are left unchallenged, in which the status quo is reinforced and justified (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, in Rankin-Wright et al., 2016). Therefore, leaving Indigenous Australians to suffer from ethnic penalties (Heath & Cheung, 2006). Also, as described above, the organisations are conforming to various institutional pressures in order to gain legitimacy. In the image-making of diversity, normative systems are in place that include norms and values that give rise to roles. As there is a normative expectation from society that the AFL's role is to be diverse and inclusive, the institution will experience it as an external pressure and therefore conform, at least formally, in order to become legitimate (Scott, 2014). The aspects of ethnic racial minorities can once again not be accounted for here by Institutional Theory.

6.3 Silencing

This main code emerged as the question about the lack of Indigenous coaches within the AFL was put aside and not directly addressed, which was a way to silence and thus avoid the issue. The impression was that this was an uncomfortable question for some respondents or they did not know how to approach and answer the question. The two sub-codes that emerged were *diverting attention* by referring to something else and making assumptions about Indigenous Australians, and *exercising internal control*, which refers to those in power within the organisations and the issues that are controlled in order not to give the institution of football a bad name. The online news articles with players also indicated experiences of silencing by the AFL, which one could also identify in the discourse of the AFL's vilification framework and policy. These codes refer to avoiding underrepresentation as the issue is silenced by the organisations.

6.3.1 Diverting attention

Attention was diverted in different ways when asking about the lack of Indigenous coaches. The question arose during discussions about talent identification, which was a way to make the respondents feel more comfortable in answering the question and also to not direct blame towards anyone. What emerged were various explanations that did not directly answer the question. However, some respondents did highlight that they were “...*not the best person to speak to on that...*” and that there are others who work directly with talent identification. One

respondent was quick to explain that the AFL runs programs for future leaders and that they are “...open for anyone to become a part of.” Other respondents referred to the players not wanting to continue with football post-career; “...a lot of them don't want to. By the time they've finished their playing (career) they don't want to be in football.”, which they explained is due to players growing tired of the game. Other diversions included the work that the clubs were doing within the Indigenous space, such as encouraging the Indigenous players to take on leadership roles and providing them with those opportunities, as well as having a RAP and conducting cultural awareness training. A diversion was also made by emphasising pride; “...really proud of its Indigenous history, like we really wear it as a badge of honour.”. Another respondent referred generally to the recruitment process and what characteristics recruiters look for in a coach;

“But the one thing I will say is that character is just so important these days. Like the amount of side profiling and interviews the recruiters will have with talent before they come in is just massive. You can't just be a good footballer these days...testing obviously for their character and past history. But also, resilience, their ability to handle and overcome obstacles that get in their way.”

It was also conveyed that the recruiters would make no difference based on the applicants' ethnicity; “And I'll say that it's pretty similar across the board. Whether it's multicultural, Indigenous, I don't think there's too much difference there in terms of how they attack it.” Another reference to diversion is in relation to the AFL's vilification policy, in which the process for dealing with incidents of vilification and discrimination is outlined. The opening sentences of the policy outline the AFL industry's commitment;

“...committed to fostering and maintaining a sporting environment which promotes understanding, accepts the unique differences of all persons affiliated with or interested in Australian Football, and recognises the need to prohibit certain discriminatory or vilifying conduct.”

The latest issue of the policy is from 2013, yet it was revealed that several players have raised the issue of ongoing racism since then, both to the public and to the AFL. One player describes their experience of the AFL as deflecting attention from the act of vilification;

“It’s disappointing that when I called the leadership into question, they deal with it by feigning concern about my mental health. Not only is it irresponsible, it completely avoids the issue – again, deal with the racism. In my situation, it is clear the AFL is incompetent in dealing with and addressing the issue.” – Little (2017)

In contrast to other responses, one respondent expressed the under-representation of Indigenous coach as an issue and that they had been developing their own strategy to increase the number of coaches, which they had themselves started to implement. They also indirectly criticised another top organisation within the AFL for their strategy of dealing with the lack of Indigenous coaches;

“...something that they're sort of happy to put money towards because we're basically doing their job for them. Yeah, they don't know how to do it, they're not having a lot of Indigenous coaches, ex-players that are sort of getting into coaching so...”

Thus, having a lack of awareness in regard to the systemic inequalities and intersecting challenges that Indigenous players may face when aspiring to become coaches indicates the invisibility of whiteness and its privileged power (Rankin-Wright et al., 2016). Although a few respondents could point out their organisations being dominated by whiteness, others could not identify race as an influencing and intersecting factor in Indigenous players’ access and progress into coaching and leadership roles (Long, 2000; Lusted, 2009). Drawing on Critical Race Theory, this denial of race is a key component of colour-blind ideologies and serves in the interests of those who wish to maintain the current system (Long, 2000), or in the words of a former AFL player; *“When a person of colour speaks about his or her reality, people have an issue with confronting that reality because of the system they're in.”* (Wilson, 2017). Adopting these colour-blind approaches means the under-representation of Indigenous players may not be viewed as a problem (Hylton, 2010). Drawing on Institutional Theory, it may be argued that the organisations do not admit to institutional racism as they need to stay legitimate. Acknowledging any existence of racism within the organisation would contradict the organisations’ commitment to inclusion and give the institution a negative brand. Rather, the statement of commitment can be used as support by the organisation when its actions are

challenged (Ahmed, 2006). Given this, the AFL's vilification policy (2013) can therefore be seen as a way for the industry to engage in ceremonial structural conformity (Scott, 2014).

Some respondents made assumptions about Indigenous Australians when discussing the pathway for Indigenous players to become coaches within the AFL. These assumptions were based on their experiences working with Indigenous Australians and these were mostly about the work they believed the Indigenous player wanted to do once they were done playing football. Most respondents referred to Indigenous players wanting to return to their communities to work there, for example; *"There is, and this is just anecdotal experience, that some of the Indigenous players have come to see themselves working back within Indigenous communities."* This clearly indicates othering whereby an 'us' and 'them' is created. Another respondent referred to cultural differences, such as the importance of family, which they described as being very influential in Indigenous players' career decisions, as well as the Indigenous lifestyle. In reference to why they believe the players decide to return to their communities, the explanation of one respondents was;

"...if we look at some of the players, their lifestyle is quite different to what we would do, you know like it's outdoor, it's hunting, it's swimming, that's their leisure. All we're saying, you know, 'This is what you do at this time; this is what you do at that time; here's how much sleep you should have.' So, it's a real transition. But their natural default, I imagine, would be to, yeah..."

One respondent pointed out that perhaps going from playing to coaching was not for Indigenous players as it is assumed to be for non-Indigenous players; *"So I think there's an assumption that we think that's the natural pathway, because it is for most Anglo, but maybe it's not."* Another respondent expressed that they are yet to find the solution for employing Indigenous Australians, with specific reference to the non-playing side of the club. Upon reflection, the respondent expressed why; *"So sometimes we don't always get it right, but sometimes we're looking at it through a very Anglo lens, 'Yeah, let's give them an internship,' sort of thing."*

Thus, deep physical and cultural stereotypes are held about Indigenous Australians, which appear to be embedded in historical ideas about race and its naturalness, as well as a perception

of their cultural preferences. The framing of Indigenous players' exclusion from coaching positions is dominated by these negative myths and stereotypes (Hylton, 2010). Making assumptions about why Indigenous players might choose work in other sectors, and that 'they' differ in their way of living is a way to avoid the issue of Indigenous under-representation in leadership positions. By shifting focus away from the organisation and onto the individual choice and personal responsibility of Indigenous players, the dominant power relations within sport institutions that privilege whiteness are reinforced. This response also serves to create a diversion from possible systemic racialised discrimination (Rankin-Wright et al., 2016). By referring to Indigenous Australians' cultural incompatibility with the 'Anglo' clubs or their unwillingness to work anywhere but in the Indigenous communities, the blame for under-representation is being transferred onto the minority. It seems to be suggested that it is the 'others' who are not actively 'choosing' to progress into coaches, or perhaps they are not 'fit' to be in power positions because the clubs are, after all, 'open' and 'providing opportunities'. This approach yet again serves to make the status quo legitimate (Long, 2000). By using self-exclusion and cultural differences as explanations for under-representation, justification is given to racist practices, making the colour-blindness that excludes Indigenous Australians stronger (Hylton, 2010). It is clear that both institutional racism and ethnic penalties are present here. Further, the aspect of nationalism is missing from both Critical Race Theory and Institutional Theory, and the dimensions of ethnicity and race are not considered in Institutional Theory. However, one can argue that aspects above indicate the normative and cultural-cognitive systems of the football institution. These systems are present here in the contexts of nationalism and national identity as the managers seem to believe that Indigenous Australians do not share an understanding of or conform to their 'Anglo' norms, therefore not including them as members of their group.

6.4.1 Exercising internal control

This refers to those with the most influence in the decision-making processes of the organisations and the impact they have on others. The internal control exercised within the AFL and affiliated clubs and state organisations has certain effects, for example on the career development of players and the changes (or not) in culture. There is a sense of control over situations and people, which does not necessarily have to be negative, and an understanding that some have another level of authority than others. Some of the ways in which the respondents indirectly referred to control was when they described the rules and responsibilities

of the organisations, which all employees and players have to abide by. The players also have certain duties stipulated within their contracts that they have to fulfil. Then there is the aspect of confidentiality, which is emphasised in the vilification policy and that one respondent mentioned as something that everyone within the organisation has to follow;

“All staff are inducted to ensure that they know what to say and what to not say. And there’s obviously policies that are relevant to playing groups and staff that they need to abide by otherwise there’d be consequences. Because it’s a bit of a confidentiality piece.”

The reason why this may be considered as a form of control is because it can serve some greater power than others. For example, a former AFL player describes his own experiences; *“It was always 'don't say this, you can't say that'...”*, as well as that of another player; *“They [the AFL] completely silenced him from speaking about his case.”* (Wilson, 2017). In cases of vilification, complaints officers are assigned by the league and the club in question to resolve the matter. In the first process of a complaint, the decision is made based on *“the reasonable opinion of the League Complaints Officer/s”* whether or not it is possible to go ahead with an informal resolution (AFL, 2013). Based on the discourse of the policy, no evidence is gathered, and no witnesses are spoken to at this stage of the process. Although it is unknown whether a complaint was filed, the experience and opinion of a former player is that the AFL is not competent in dealing with matters of racism;

“...I raised my concerns with various levels of administration and management about racism within the club and how I was affected by it...This was done on multiple occasions; however, no one was willing to appreciate the severity of my experiences and the impact it was having on me. As such it continues to be dismissed, and that is to the detriment of the club and my wellbeing.” – Little (2017)

A contradictory perspective is that of an Indigenous player who describes a more positive experience regarding the support from the AFL, although this player also states that they have not been subjected to racism in the game; *“It's encouraging to see there's that level of support for Indigenous players and their welfare because it does hit home.”* (Rigby, 2017). The AFL (n.d.) also states in their vilification framework that they aim to conduct research within areas

concerning social issues, such as vilification. Some of the respondents asked the interviewers of this study whether or not the research was being conducted by the AFL or whether they had been approached.

Thus, the content and form of these controls and their implementation are ingrained with assumptions and expectations that are racialised. Through the organisations' hierarchical power and the power from hierarchical race relations, the diverse and complex controls are made possible, hindering the changes made to inequality regimes. Through some of their policies, the AFL and affiliated organisations can exert direct control, which include the rules they enact and the punishments that come with them. It can be argued that one of the reasons behind AFL's silencing of players who speak up about racism is the AFL does not want to lose their legitimacy as a sporting organisation. One way to stay legitimate is therefore to control the narrative. The AFL's need to restrict the information that is channelled is an example of an unobtrusive and indirect control (Acker, 2006). It can also be argued that the AFL's unwillingness to address the issue of racism and white hegemony is a way to stay blind to racial discrimination and the lack of diversity and inclusion in the industry (Rankin-Wright et al., 2016).

Another dimension of control are actors in powerful positions as they may for example be present in the recruitment of coaches and other leadership positions. Certain actors within the organisations are given more authority than others. For example, several respondents referred to each coach as having an important role in making certain decisions. They also highlighted the coach's role in influencing the players' career development, which is why some respondents use the coach as a vehicle to get through to the players; *"...you've got to have the coach understanding and sort of backing you in..."*. One respondent emphasised how crucial it is for managers working with career development to gain the coach's approval in implementing certain strategies; *"...things you need to have success in your program are the support of the head coach, because if he doesn't rate it, no one else will, he's the most important man at the footy club still..."* Further, the CEO is an actor with authority that some respondents mentioned as being the most important change agent in the work on diversity. Some spoke about the importance of having good managers to implement the diversity initiatives in practice, with one respondent describing them as people *"with heart"*. However, it was clear that the change in the organisations' diversity management started with the CEO. The respondents mentioned that

the clubs had recently changed CEOs, which led to a greater focus on diversity management; *“We’ve recently had a new CEO come in so there’s been a focus on kind of rolling out different inclusion strategies, diverse strategies...”* One respondent also mentioned that the CEO is important to have on the RAP committee as it would make it easier to implement certain goals. Apart from coaches and CEOs, one respondent talked about the club as a *“paternal figure”* for the players and what that means for them in their work;

“...we get some of these boys that are straight out of their parents’ house. There’s an obligation there to make sure that their son is in a place that’s going to build them into a solid citizen and a good person with prospects...the club takes that role seriously.”

The clubs are involved in the players’ personal and professional development and therefore educate them in areas, such as how to behave in accordance with club standards and how to portray themselves in the media. Some respondents referred to the club as being a *“family”* for the players, both during and after their careers. The authority of the club can be further illustrated in the experience of a former AFL player who wanted to reach out to the club president regarding a vilification event involving the president but *“...was advised not to by the club.”* When he did, he was faced with certain consequences; *“There were definitely ramifications internally. I was accused of throwing the president under the bus to boost my own profile. It continued to be communicated to me until my last game...”* (Wilson, 2017).

Thus, there are strong authority figures in the football organisations, including the organisation itself. The coach appears to be the most important influence for players and the career development managers, and the CEO is crucial in changing the culture and driving through diversity strategies. According to Institutional Theory, these relational systems can be viewed as governance systems, which in the case of the AFL industry seems to include both normative and coercive aspects. Codes, norms, and rules are created and enforced by the AFL’s normative aspect, for example through their vilification policy, whereas the players’ activities are monitored and sanctioned by the coercive aspect, for example by controlling how they act and portray themselves in the media. The AFL industry with all of its included organisations are institutions that coerce and normalise behaviour through these processes that are regulatory, such as setting rules and making certain that others conform to them. The treatment described

by the former AFL player is an example of how the organisation manipulates sanctions (i.e., punishes) in order to influence the future behaviour of others (Scott, 2014). Drawing on Critical Race Theory, the authority to discipline players is exercised by whiteness, which at the organisations' senior levels, reflect the white establishment that is granting Indigenous players the right to play the white game. The freedom and independence to act is therefore affected by this hierarchy of privilege existing between black and white people (Long & Hylton, 2002).

7.0 Conclusions and Discussion

The following main conclusions can be made based on the findings of this study. First, diversity is managed and approached within the state organisations and clubs of the football institution through legitimising practices. This means that diversity management is used to improve the brand of the organisations and in the undertaking of image-making. Second, *legitimising practices* together with *claiming equality for all* and *silencing* hinder Indigenous players from reaching leadership positions. Third, these are central sub-mechanisms of the overall mechanism of avoidance (i.e. *avoiding under-representation*), which contribute to the under-representation of Indigenous players in leadership positions within the Australian football institution. Finally, it can be concluded that avoiding under-representation is a case of discrimination and this discrimination by avoidance is indirect and a form of ethnic penalty.

Further, the sport sector promotes diversity and takes pride in its ability to include people from diverse backgrounds, however it is also a context that reflects and reproduces society's inequalities, such as racism and discrimination. Indigenous Australians are one group who have been and still are disadvantaged and marginalised in Australian society and in sport. The objective of this study was to contribute to the research and scholarship on the management of diversity in organisations and to gain a deeper understanding of the lack of Indigenous representation in positions of leadership. The sport sector and, in particular the AFL, was chosen as a case due to its high percentage of Indigenous players yet lacking representation in leadership positions, such as coaching and at board and executive levels. The gaps in research revealed that little is known about diversity management within the sport sector, in particular the role of managers and policies, as well as the hindrances Indigenous players may face when reaching for leadership positions. The purpose of this study was therefore to explore the management of diversity and existing hindrances for Indigenous players within the Australian football institution to come to terms with the under-representation of Indigenous Australians in leadership positions. By building on the theoretical framing, this study has revealed three sub-mechanisms involved in the under-representation of Indigenous coaches within the AFL.

One mechanism is *claiming equality for all*, which refers to caring as duty and assuming a climate of inclusion. The former refers to the perception of the football institution as caring for its players by delivering a career development strategy and providing a safe environment

without vilification. Underlying this are institutional pressures in the organisations' field acting on the football institution, which has some respondents question whether the care is genuine and pure. Also, the discrepancy between the discourse of the AFL's vilification policy and the experiences of vilified players indicates that the AFL's stance against vilification and discrimination is merely a symbolic act. This means that the industry cannot be considered anti-racist or claim equality until they change their internal structures, which is a far more practical act than words in a policy. Assuming a climate of inclusion refers to the perception that career opportunities and networks are open to all players. The managers of these AFL organisations therefore miss to acknowledge the challenges that Indigenous players face on the labour market and how they may be disadvantaged by the structural inequalities of the AFL industry. Although the racial projects (such as ideas of physical ability based on race) expressed by the respondents may have been covert and habitual, they are still challenging, making it even more important for the core of the organisation to include racism (Hylton, 2010). Research has also shown that ideas about the abilities of a coach could create an element of favouritism, in which the manager provides opportunities to some and not others depending on the individual's characteristics (Reskin, 2003). In countries, such as Australia, where leadership is associated with being white, those who do not fit the stereotype are automatically excluded (Coleman, 2012). This is further complicated by the discourse on Indigenous Australians as having 'natural' physical ability to play Australian football but not fit to hold roles in leadership (Hallinan & Judd, 2009a; Kearney, 2012). Further, emphasising networking as a tool to gain employment is problematic for Indigenous players due to a number of reasons. Networking can be a barrier for Indigenous players, who are part of a group that has been (and continue to be) subjected to racial stereotypes and discrimination on the labour market (Cameron et al., 2017; Hallinan & Judd, 2009a; Hunter, 2003). The under-representation of minority coaches can be perpetuated if the recruitment of coaches is done through dominant white social and cultural networks (Bradbury, 2013). Thus, the mechanism of claiming equality for all contributes to avoiding the under-representation of Indigenous employees in the Australian football institution through the misguided perception that Indigenous players can easily enter into positions of leadership.

A second mechanism is the *legitimising practices* of diversity management within the AFL organisations, which includes improving the brand of the organisations and image-making. The motivation behind most of the organisations' work on diversity was to change the perception

of their culture and thus the brand, which was found to be dominated by whiteness and masculinity. This was not acknowledged by the respondents as they described their organisation's perception, indicating their lack of work in addressing the structural and cultural aspects that maintain the racialised relations. Some have argued that organisations that are not inclusive, rather characterised by inequality regimes, will place barriers on managers' actions. However, it is also the responsibility of the managers to be aware of and understand the organisation's diversity issues, as well as the structural inequalities and discrimination that may exist in the organisation (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2009). As the organisational culture is created by employers and the behavioural standards they monitor and uphold, the inequalities existing within their organisations may not be challenged unless they are required to do so (Bradley & Healy, 2008). The Australian government does not provide any policies that create incentives for diversity or disincentives for the lack of diversity, which means that the status quo in organisations may be maintained (Spaaij et al., 2014). Although some of the AFL organisations have strategies in place for their diversity work, they are still missing the change in culture research has shown is needed to create an inclusive workplace climate (Cunningham, 2009; Mor Barak et al., 2016). For example, referring to cultural awareness training as a diversity tool indicates there is a lack of cultural awareness within the AFL industry, otherwise it would not be needed. As players continue to be vilified and express a lack of support in these situations, this type of training may be ineffective, rather research has shown it may be more likely to activate bias (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Kalev et al., 2006). However, this training may be ceremonial as some of the organisations viewed diversity from a business-driven perspective by referring to its costs and benefits. This version of diversity is narrow and tends to mean the aim is to simply engage people from diverse backgrounds (Spaaij et al., 2014). To be driven by targets and the numerical representation of diverse players and employees can be argued to reflect organisations that do not have a genuine and meaningful culture in which values of equality, diversity and inclusion are respected and promoted (Burdsey, 2011). Thus, legitimising practices contribute to avoiding the under-representation of Indigenous employees in the Australian football institution by creating the illusion of a diverse and inclusive climate.

A final mechanism is *silencing*, which refers to diverting attention by avoiding the issue of under-representation and making assumptions, as well as exercising internal control through powerful actors and discourse. According to the respondents, the barriers to coaching and

leadership are due to the cultural traditions of Indigenous Australians, as well as their reluctance to adapt to the practices that are dominant (Lusted, 2009). These responses may indicate a lack of awareness that exists in some organisations. This may be intentional or unintentional, nonetheless, when systematic inequalities are invisible, any effort to achieve greater equality is hampered. The extent to which individuals are aware of inequalities determines the visibility of inequality (Acker, 2006). The respondents expressed colour-blind ideologies that will continue to maintain the dominant white system and act as a barrier for Indigenous players to become coaches. It is therefore important for racialised relations to be included in policy and practice, however a critical anti-racist lens is required in order to recognise those relations and their implications (Hylton, 2010). Such a lens was not evident in this study. Further, the control and authority of the sport organisations as institutions, as well as their associated actors, maintain the system. There seems to be aspects of control exerted onto situations and people, as well as an understanding that some have a higher level of authority than others. The control and compliance in these organisations can be viewed as mechanisms that aim to maintain inequalities (Acker, 2006), which the organisations do by imposing certain rules and norms (Scott, 2014). Also, the power of the CEO in creating change and being the driving force of diversity was contradictory to previous research suggesting organisational managers, such as HR managers, to be the change agents that play the most crucial role in diversity (e.g., Arenas et al., 2017). The powerful role of coaches and CEOs could be argued to impact the recruitment of coaches, although this was not examined here. However, if Indigenous Australians are missing from these positions, the football institution might lack the necessary insight and diversity needed to include them in leadership positions. Thus, silencing contributes to avoiding the under-representation of Indigenous employees in the Australian football institution by minimising the issue.

To conclude, this study sheds new light on mechanisms involved in the under-representation of Indigenous players within the Australian football institution. By using GT as a method, this study has been able to integrate and build on Institutional Theory and Critical Race Theory. Institutional Theory has been shown to lack dimensions of nationalism, ethnicity, race, and minority, whereas Critical Race Theory lacks the dimension of nationalism but places the latter dimensions in the context of institutions. Highlighted in this study are structural and cultural issues of the Australian football institution that maintain the status quo. Through ideologies of

colour-blindness, individual choice, and personal responsibility, these organisations maintain the dominant white system and do not recognise their role in creating and maintaining racial inequalities and exclusion. By managing diversity with a focus on legitimising practices, the football organisations lack the core cultural change needed to create an inclusive climate, upholding racialised relations. This study has extended the research and scholarship in the field of HRM and sport management by applying the theoretical framing on a new case, developing theory, and revealing mechanisms involved in the continued under-representation of Indigenous players within the Australian football institution. Thus, as outlined in the introduction, the context of sport as marked by discrimination, power hierarchies, and marginalisation has found to be in line with the findings of this study.

7.1 Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations to this study. First, being part of another research project meant there were certain restrictions, such as the interviews questions that could be asked and gaining access to players. The ethical restrictions placed on the collaborators' project meant that questions about nationalism and racism were out of limits, also because it was not their research focus. Access could not be gained to players as the aim of the project was to explore what activities were being carried out by managers in the area of career development. Also, not all AFL organisations are represented in this study, which presents a limitation to the findings. This is linked to the next limitation, which was gaining access to the right people at the clubs and state organisations. The websites seldom include any contact details and with a variety of job titles for managers, it was difficult to know exactly who the right person would be to speak to. This was also due to another limitation, the time limit of this thesis, which was problematic as the process of gaining access took longer than expected. Finally, an important limitation to consider is preconceptions, which Charmaz (2014) points out is common for all researchers to have and that it is important to be aware of these during the analytical process. Coming in to the research, certain expectations were made of the direction of the findings based on previous research and theory.

These limitations were considered throughout the thesis process and were minimized in the best ways possible. For example, although it was not possible to ask certain questions, if they were alluded to during the interview, probing questions were used to dig deeper. Also, the use of

media texts meant that it was still possible to get some insight into players' perspectives. Being limited in access was accounted for through the snowballing technique, which meant that several respondents were found through suggestions by others within the club or organisations. Finally, being aware of one's preconceptions was a way to question oneself during the analysis. Bryman (2012) highlights the need for self-reflection, which was done as much as possible, although research can never be free from values. It is also important to note that Critical Race Theory encourages the position of taking a critical stance towards the findings and to give voice to those who are marginalized (Hylton, 2010).

7.2 Implications and suggestions for further research

There are still questions needed to be answered regarding the under-representation of ethnic and racial minority groups, such as Indigenous Australians within senior levels of the sport sector. This study has attempted to look at the larger picture in order to understand the mechanisms involved in this perpetuating disadvantage. The findings have revealed several mechanisms that contribute to avoiding under-representation, therefore maintaining the lack of Indigenous players within leadership positions of the Australian football institution. The implications of these experiences for Indigenous employees have not been answered by this study and therefore need to be further examined. Furthermore, in order to change the status quo, the Australian football institution and its clubs and state organisations need to acknowledge and address race and racism, and its existence in the structure and culture of the institution. From there, an examination of the organisation is needed, which includes the policies and plans associated with discrimination, the practices and processes associated with diversity, and the extent to which hindrances can be removed for Indigenous Australians. This study calls for more research integrating and developing the theoretical frameworks of Institutional Theory and Critical Race Theory with focus on institutional racism and discrimination. Also, some of the powerful actors within the football institution have been revealed here, whose role within the recruitment of coaches and other leadership positions should be examined in further research. The concept of othering (see e.g., Jensen, 2011) was also present in the findings, however this was beyond the scope of this study and should therefore be examined in further research on under-representation and discrimination. Finally, there is a need for the scholarship of HRM and sport management to integrate in an effort to further extend the research on

diversity management within sport organisations to examine in what ways and how it can influence the career trajectory of ethnic minority players.

8.0 References

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Appendix 1 – Email invitation

Dear (insert name),

Dr Justine Ferrer and Dr Paul Turner, who are both staff members at Deakin University, are conducting an independent research project into player career development and inclusion in the AFL. Mahsa Khatibi is also on the project as a student researcher.

The research will explore career development in the context of inclusion and diversity, particularly surrounding access to career opportunities for players from diverse backgrounds. The intention is to understand with more depth what inclusion and diversity efforts the AFL and each club/association are engaged in, and the associated links to career development opportunities for players.

If you are able to assist with this project please reply to the project researchers to express your interest and we will contact you directly. If you feel that you are not the most appropriate person to participate in the study but do know another person in your organisation please do not hesitate to forward this email onto them, or alternatively, reply with the suggestion and we will follow up.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dr Justine Ferrer - Senior Lecturer, Department of Management, Deakin University

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dr Paul Turner – Senior Lecturer, Department of Management, Deakin University

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Mahsa Khatibi

Master's Program in Strategic Human Resource Management and Labour Relations

University of Gothenburg

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Appendix 2 – Interview guide

Thank you for allowing us to come and interview you, we know that you are exceptionally busy.

Before we start, we have a few forms here. One is a Plain Language Statement that outlines the project and it is yours to keep. The other is a consent form for you to sign saying that you agree to partake in this interview. Would it be ok with you for the interview to be recorded for transcription purposes?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Begin interview:

1. Can you please state your name?
2. What is your position within the club?
3. How long have you been with the club?
4. What does your position entail?
5. Who do you report to?

Understand career planning all players (indigenous/multicultural)

We want to understand the career planning strategies that are put into place in the clubs.

6. What does career planning look like for the club?
7. Is career planning informed by AFL or AFL Players' Association?
8. What does career planning entail for the club? Specific policy/strategy?
9. What type of role does the AFL or AFLPA have in the career development for players?
10. When does career planning start for players?
11. Are there adaptations to career plans for different groups of players? Multicultural and/or indigenous? What do they look like?

Mechanisms for support

We want to know how players are supported through career planning throughout their playing careers.

12. What does career planning look like to a player? What type of support mechanisms are in place?
13. How do players provide input or feedback? What does a typical schedule look like?
14. Working with young men, it is hard to settle on a career choice. As a player, what if I change my mind? What about the women?
15. What happens when a player changes clubs? Or you get a new player mid-career – do you start again or bring previous plans?

Successes/failures/issues

We want to understand a little more about the career management plans for players, with examples.

16. What happens when things go wrong? In what ways? Do you face issues with different groups? Multicultural/Indigenous/women and career management?

17. What issues does the career planning of players present? For the club? For the players, themselves?
18. Successes? Example of successes?
19. What do players think of the career management system in place?

Post playing

We want to know how career management strategies extend beyond playing careers.

20. What ongoing support is provided?
21. How does the club maintain contact with players?
22. Are there any specific issues post playing with relation to career management?
Indigenous/multicultural issues?
23. Is there a duty of responsibility once the obligation of playing is over? What is the duty?

Talent Identification

We want to know about the way that the Club identifies talent for leadership and coaching positions. Specifically, we want to draw out concerns about indigenous/multicultural player pathways. It is well known that indigenous and multicultural players are underrepresented at the higher coaching and administrative levels of clubs.

24. Does the club have a talent identification strategy? What does this entail?
25. How do you identify talent for leadership positions and/or coaching post playing? Is the talent identified during playing careers or post playing careers?
26. What are the issues with the talent identification process?
27. Do you face any difficulties in talent managing multicultural or indigenous players?
28. How do you ensure diversity in leadership groups? Does the club have specific strategies in place to enhance diversity in leadership/coaching positions?

Wellbeing of players

29. Does career management provide the opportunity to identify well-being issues for players? In what ways? What mechanisms does the club then use to address these issues?

Is there anything else you would like to add that I haven't asked you about today?

Do you think that I should speak to someone else at the club with respect to these issues?

Thank you for your time.