

Is Your Athletic Department Accepting? Attitudes Towards Sexual Orientation at the D3 level



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Is Your Athletic Department Accepting? Attitudes Towards Sexual Orientation at the D3 level

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Abstract

Research on how accepting and diverse athletic departments are at universities around America is limited. There has recently been more light surrounding gay individuals in the athletic field, since more professional athletes are coming out and how teams treat individuals as equal is important. This study is designed to look at the athletic environment and team's beliefs, specifically towards gay individuals, at Allegheny College a D3 liberal arts school. A survey was given to four sports teams to measure their levels of heterosexism and attitudes towards gay or lesbian individuals. Results compared the four team's individual attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals. The teams were split into two categories based on whether they have a high perceived number of homosexuals (HPNH) or a low perceived number of homosexuals (LPNH), and compared attitudes between different teams. Gender was also used as a variable to see if attitudes change depending on the gender of the individual. Individual player perceptions of their team were compared to others' perceptions of their team to see if other people perceived their team differently. What year the individual is was also compared to their attitudes, to see if attitudes change depending on year. Overall, this study found that gender does play a role in how accepting individuals are and certain teams are more accepting than others. It was also found that players on teams with HPNH agreed with the perception they have more gay individuals. Year as well as LPNH compared to HPNH did not show significant effects on attitudes.

Introduction

Ancient athletics and masculinity

Modern day athletics in the West stem from one origin, Ancient Greece. In ancient times, the main culture that readily competed and introduced formal sports with the first Olympic Games, were the Greeks in 776 BC. However, sports in ancient times included jumping, running, throwing and fist fighting, which were all done only by men who did not wear clothing. These games had strict rules that women were not allowed to compete or even watch the games; it was strictly for men to represent their city and prove to be the greatest of the great in order to honor Zeus (McCabe, 2004). Zeus was the all-powerful male god that ruled Mount Olympus and was worshiped by the Greeks, which is still a belief today. The games were about the strongest man proving how masculine he was to the cities involved, and that the concept of masculinity did not involve women. Women did not enter and compete in the Olympic games until the 1900s and were still limited to only two events, tennis and golf (McCabe, 2004). These two sports are both non-contact as well as an individual sport, sending a message from the beginning of accepting women into sports, that if they should be involved in the athletic field it should be in a less physical manner. This shows that the core structure of what athletics was built from was very sexist and that women were excluded from the aspect of competition altogether because they lacked the masculinity men had. Still into modern times, women are trying to level the playing field and prove that being a woman is not something that makes a person unable to compete to the same level.

Western belief on athletes

Currently in the United States, there is not only prejudice towards certain individuals for their sex but for a number of other reasons including race, religion, class, age, nationality, and sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is a topic that has been in the news repeatedly in the past ten years involving the acceptance of gay marriage federally. It has also been a topic circulating more recently in media within professional athletics, specifically involving professional athletes coming-out on both male and female teams. A few of the many openly out athletes include professional diver Scott Cranham, WNBA player Brittany Griner, and NFL player Michael Sam. Homosexual athletes are not new to the game, but many have hidden their identity while being on the team for multiple years. This is because, in all societies, the media and societal construct has tried to manipulate beliefs of homosexual individuals by differentiating them from heterosexual individuals and placing stereotypes on them that may or may not be accurate (Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morpew, 2017). These stereotypes include gay men being weak, or incapable of being as athletic as straight men, or lesbian females being more athletic than straight females because they are more manly (Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morpew, 2017). This can even lead to heterosexism, which is the prejudicial attitude or discriminatory practices against homosexuals by heterosexuals. Not until recently have more athletes started to come-out and prove that being a gay individual and being successful in athletics is just as possible as a heterosexual individual being successful in athletics.

Prejudice is not just prevalent in the United State; research has demonstrated that prejudice is seen in all cultures, time periods, nations and languages (Lee & Cunningham, 2014). This shows that prejudice can carry over from previous time periods and effect views on certain indi-

viduals in present day. This carryover effect can be one explanation of why homosexuals are so discriminated against in athletics. Sports were created for the most manly men to compete against each other in order to prove their dominance. Athletics were developed around a masculine ideal of an athlete, to portray power, strength, and assumed heterosexuality (Sartore & Cunningham, 2008). This ideal is the complete opposite of the stereotypes that coincides with homosexual males who are perceived as weak, meek and feminine (Anderson & Bullingham, 2015). This masculine ideal is even further away from women, allowing women overall to be discriminated in athletics, but having the opposite effect for homosexual women who are perceived as being more manly. Even though homosexual women are seen as more manly, they are still discriminated against for being a woman in a masculine dominated field (Anderson & Bullingham, 2015). Discrimination against women in athletics include not being taken seriously in the sport, not having as many fans as men's teams, invalidating comments such as, "Well, it is a women's sport" trying to say a woman's sport is less important than a men's sport.

Sports retain the role in producing a version of masculinity that emphasizes heterosexuality and penalizes homosexuals, by saying gay individuals are different than heterosexuals making them an other (Zipp, 2011). This causes gay or lesbian athletes to feel they have to conform to the sport's heterosexist norms and, if they do not, it could result in subtle or blatant prejudices and discrimination to the individual (Sartore & Cunningham, 2008). Sartore and Cunningham (2008) conducted a study that sampled 229 men and women at a large public university, who consisted of former and current athletes. These individuals were given a questionnaire including two scales, one with demographic questions as well as one with questions about sexual prejudice (Attitude Toward Lesbian and Gay Men scale). The researchers had a mix of gender and sexual

orientation on teams and results found individuals and the families that were being recruited, elicited more negativity and even some prejudicial attitudes towards the coaches and programs for trying to diversify teams (Sartore & Cunningham, 2008). This is important knowledge because it shows that gay or lesbian individuals on a team can change perception of a team, having gay athletes on their team can be crucial to how the team is perceived by individuals and families they are trying to recruit. This shows how diversifying teams may not always be the easiest and best idea if teams are receiving more negative feedback from doing so.

Intercollegiate athletes

The research concerning the role of gay men and lesbian women in intercollegiate athletics, and in sports more generally, is limited (Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morpew, 2017). It has been found that not only teammates' attitudes towards homosexuals is important on a team in trying to have an accepting atmosphere, but also the coaches' attitudes and sexuality can affect team atmosphere. Wolf-Wendel, Toma, and Morpew (2017) conducted a study that gathered data through interviews, focus groups, document reviews, and observations from five Division I institutions that are representative of the different levels of diversity, that compete at the highest and most visible level in intercollegiate athletics, and that were typically diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. Being diverse in these areas could mean that these teams may be more open to minorities; however, they found that athletes and coaches are overwhelmingly both homophobic and heterosexist. This means that coaches did not accept gay individuals and that they preferred being around and making a team of straight individuals (Wolf-Wendel, Toma, and Morpew, 2017). This study shows that issues involving gay men and women are not limited to certain

schools and these findings can be important to all coaches, student-athletes, and administrators from any division.

Findings that involve not only player sexuality but also coach sexuality can be important. Sartore and Cunningham (2008) surveyed 257 current and former athletes at a large southwest university in the United States on their level of sexual prejudice towards gay or lesbian coaches. The results found that participants were less willing to participate on a team coached by a gay man than a gay woman. However, it was still found that sexual prejudice was strong towards both gay as well as lesbian coaches overall. This shows that being a gay coach in athletics can be as difficult as being a gay player. Even though attitudes towards sexual minorities, as held by many future sport professionals, were overwhelmingly negative (Sartore & Cunningham, 2008), intercollegiate athletics generally provides a powerful model for creating community across difference in terms of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sometimes gender (Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morpew, 2017). This is because many professional athletes come from college athletics which means if the college program they came from is accepting of diverse individuals (e.g., gay, lower income, ethnically diverse) when they move to professional athletes, their mind-set may be more open and accepting.

Not only on the player's side, but also on the coaches side of sports, involving the business aspects such as advertising, recruitment and promotion, being a homosexual is found to be hurtful rather than helpful in building a team (Wellman & Blinde, 1997). A coach's role on a team is far more than just the business aspect. In fact, Weinberg and Gould (2015) found that a coach's behavior establishes formal and informal norms and expectations within a team on how to treat individuals of different sexual orientations on the team. So, not only individual's beliefs

on a team can effect team dynamics, but also the coach's beliefs and how they choose to promote and which beliefs to build a team on is also important.

Stereotypes on Male Athletes

It has been found from a young age that males operate to avoid any suspicion of homosexuality in order to preserve masculinity and avoid being perceived as too feminine (Sartore & Cunningham, 2008). This belief can cause males to hide who they really are in order to fit in to the masculine role males are given (Blashill & Powlishta, 2017). As males age and their sexuality becomes more clarified, Zipp (2011) found that gay males are more likely to avoid heterosexual dominated sports like soccer and play sports like volleyball or wrestling. Sartore and Cunningham (2008) also found that, as males age, higher levels of sexual prejudices are becoming present causing more negative responses to homosexual teammates. This creates a heterosexual dominant atmosphere for males and makes sports less appealing for gay men over time. In fact, researchers have found that even just having an individual imagine being on a team with a gay teammate could create higher sexual prejudice and in group anxiety.

Lee and Cunningham (2014) conducted a study where they had undergraduate students in the United States and South Korea take five minutes to imagine themselves, "Playing basketball with a gay man for two hours. Then, they spend about 30 minutes chatting. During the conversation they found out some interesting and unexpected things about him" (p. 560). The study wanted to have the individual not only play basketball with a gay man but also talk to him to see if there was a higher chance to have homophobic thoughts during the game or during the chat. This study found that students in the United States expressed significantly more intergroup anxi-

ety toward sexual minorities with imagined contact, showing a positive association with sexual prejudice, than the South Korean students. This raises an interesting point as the researchers discuss that results were thought to show that Americans would have less anxiety since they come in contact with the LGBTQ+ community more than South Koreans (Lee & Cunningham, 2014). However, these findings are important because it shows how different sexual prejudice levels are cross culturally and how Americans specifically have higher sexual prejudices.

Research suggests that it is harder to be a gay male in athletics than it is to be a gay female (Anderson, 2017). This can be because of the western belief that an “athlete” is a strong, powerful, heterosexual male. Therefore, when a gay man comes out to his team, he may face more negative reactions than positive ones, especially when the gay athlete is better than a heterosexual athlete (Anderson, 2017). These negative feelings could be caused by the stereotype that gay males are more feminine than heterosexual males and that they could never be as good of as athlete as heterosexual males. Heterosexual males could as feel that their sexuality is being threatened by a gay male, resulting in more negative emotions towards gay male athletes.

Stereotypes on Female Athletes

All female athletes in general face discrimination because the athletic field is a male dominated field. That may be why when there are female athletes who are very good, they are assumed to be gay because they are more man-like since they are successful in a male dominated field. However, Sartore and Cunningham (2008) found that lesbians adopt a heterosexual identity in order to avoid discrimination in environments they feel threatened, just like males do. Zipp (2011) found the sexual minority females had no significant difference in preferred sports as they

age, unlike males who as they age, are more likely to play a heterosexual dominated sport like football. Calzo, Roberts, Corliss, Blood, Kroshus and Austin (2013) also found that gender non-conforming females were more likely to compete in all sports as well as on co-ed teams.

In contrast from males, it was also found that females are more comfortable to come out to their team and coaches, reporting that they received strong support, in 10 out of 12 athletes (Anderson & Bullingham, 2015). This shows that females feel more comfortable in their team environments and are more willing to be open about their sexuality than males are. However, discrimination towards female athletes still occurs as often as it does in males. This can be because society has put an expectation on female athletes to act with feminine manners. These manners include; compassion, passiveness, dependence and gentleness. Since sports bring out a competitive, independent, assertiveness, female athletes have to find a way to balance a feminine aspect in athletics to please social views (Krane, 2001). Balancing femininity in athletics can be tough because if a female becomes too feminine then they are perceived as less tough and become more sexualized. However, if a female strays too far away from femininity they can become perceived as more masculine and become discriminated against because of their sex. It was also found that more physical and contact sports for women, such as basketball or softball, are considered more stereotyped sports and women who participate in those sports are more likely considered homosexual (Oswalt & Vargas, 2013).

Team Perceptions of Sports

Since women in athletics have to balance a specific image in sports between femininity and athleticism, it can lead to different teams receiving different views of them. This means that, teams with more contact that allow women to be more aggressive, assertive and physical can be

known for perceiving females as more masculine (Krane, 2001). Women's basketball specifically has been a sport that has been controversial on how players in this field are perceived. Interviews from players and fans have shown that they believe the way women's basketball is interpreted and portrayed on television does not reflect their experiences (Bruce, 1998). This means the media portrays these athletes in a way that they seem more manly, in hopes to make them more appealing to a masculine crowd. However, the only problem with this is the female fan base and team perception of their team can be altered in doing this. Since the media portrays women's basketball as a more manly sport, the players may begin to adopt more masculine styles, words and traits that reflect a men's basketball team. This masculine perception is not common among all women's sports and in fact some women's sports can have the complete opposite perception.

This opposite perception being the oversexualization of the sport, many non-contact women's sports (e.g., tennis, volleyball, etc.) tend to be more sexualized since there is less aggressiveness involved with them. However, contact sports can still have oversexualization occur to them, an example being women's soccer. Shugart (2003) argues that the athletes on the 1999 U.S. Women's Soccer Team are gendered by the media via sexualizing strategies that are subtler and more sophisticated than those of years past such as promoting teams with pictures of these women with their hair down, makeup on and tighter fit uniforms. The more that these athletes become famous from these images, the more the media portrays them in that way, creating a more sexualized image of the player. Some of the most recent well-known soccer stars are frequently referred to with the talent as well as their looks, an example being Alex Morgan. When a team is more sexualized, the faces of the team start to become the more attractive players since

the media portrays them more than others. This could allow a team to become just as concerned with their looks as they are with their talent as well as have people follow the team because of the attractive players the media portrays.

In male athletics, the thought of having men fit into the role of a dominant heterosexual is common, especially in baseball. An article by Butterworth (2006) states that, “Most notably, gay players have yet to find their place in baseball’s common legacy. In fact, baseball, like most professional sports, historically has been constructed as a site for the performance and spectatorship of a normative, heterosexual masculinity” (p. 140). There has only been two professional baseball players who have openly come out, Billy Bean and Glenn Burke, out of 15,213 major league players to ever play and evidence shows that it was not until after 1980 when they were retired. This shows that baseball was not and currently is not seen as openly accepting to gay athletes, which could mean gay athletes are less drawn to get involved in this sport. Overall, baseball is not portrayed or really acknowledged for having gay men in this field; it is more idealized for being America’s game since it was invented in America and many sports were not. This shows that American society constructs beliefs of certain sports in different ways and can influence a sport so much that it does not include certain groups of individuals, such as gay men in baseball. This could cause perception of this sport to be less open to gay men and cause players to be less accepting of gay individuals as teammates.

In contrast to baseball, Anderson (2011) found that research revolved around openly gay individuals were more so with non-contact athletes, such as swimmers. He found that the atmosphere revolving teams with a heteronormative culture, such as baseball, had a “don’t ask, don’t tell” culture and were less willing to admit to having gay athletes. This shows how a team

like swimming and diving could possibly be more desirable for gay individuals, allowing for more gay swimmers to become openly gay than in other sports. Swimming also involves the individual only wearing a speedo, which goes against the masculine ideal in sports of putting on a uniform and pads to physically assert dominance. Instead, a swimmer shows a more vulnerable uniform, which can be portrayed as more feminine. This may mean that swimming and diving is a more accepting team since the media surrounding them is more positive with gay individuals. An example of the media positively portraying gay divers include headlines such as “The Famous Life of an Openly Gay College Swimmer” or “Tom Daley goes diving with fellow gay Olympian” where many other sports do not even mention sexual orientation in the article. Specially the media portrays Greg Louganis’ story as an underdog from the start as a gay diver that was diagnosed with HIV at age 28, but with hard work and perseverance he was able to win Gold 4 times in the Olympics.

Team Interactions

For women, because of the stereotype that female athletes are more likely to be lesbians, especially among certain sports (e.g., basketball), sexual prejudices can disrupt team dynamics (Oswalt & Vargas, 2013). Team members may gossip about other players and harass one another based on sexual orientation. This can cause players to distance themselves from a lesbian identity or ‘butch’ gender presentation and often they become so focused on presentation of themselves that their performance suffers. This belief is opposite for males, in the way that males who are gay are thought of as more feminine, so the team might shun them because they are not tough enough. In males and females, masking identity can be crucial to effort and team building.

Newheiser, Barreto & Tiemersma (2017) conducted a study where participants who were gay, lesbian or bisexual had to recall or imagine an experience of concealing or revealing their identity at work. They found that a stigmatized identity in the workplace context resulted in lower levels of belonging felt in the recalled or imagined situation, lower job satisfaction, and lower work commitment. Even if one person on a team is concealing their identity, it could affect the overall team work ethic, commitment or satisfaction levels causing them to decrease. Once one person shows less effort, the other teammates could mimic the effort level or even continue to isolate the individual concealing their identity more because they become less committed than everyone else.

However, more recent studies have found that attitudes towards gay individuals may be changing, causing the cultural beliefs around masculinity to shift. This may lead to these stereotypes of lesbians and gay men to be forgotten, possibly allowing team dynamics to be less divided. Less division on a team can promote more teamwork, team thinking and team decisions, which can result in better performance in the sports field as well as enhances an individual reasoning (Maciejovsky, Sutter, Budescu & Bernau, 2013). How a team can work together and overcome obstacles is just as important as the skill the team has, both are needed to achieve successful results. If a team is more focused on the stereotypes placed on teammates or divisions within the team, the team will never be able to focus on the bigger goal which is to achieve together.

Mixed Sexual Orientation on Teams

There are many benefits to having a mix of heterosexual and homosexual individuals on a team that is often not mentioned. Cunningham and Melton (2017) explain that diversifying teams can bring a new competitive advantage to the game that is normally not thought of. This can cause individuals to work harder and want to out-work one another, creating an atmosphere of hard work and intensity. Accepting a diverse group of students can allow for teammates to be around homosexuals more and learn how to work with them and see how they do or do not fit with known stereotypes, enabling people to understand new truths about them. Allowing for stereotyping and discrimination towards gay athletes to decline longterm, and could lead to more motivation and hard work within a team to strive for better results and sets standards to achieve those results, as a more diverse team. Cunningham and Melton (2017) also explain that as interactions take place over time, categorization of in-group and out-groups start to dissolve and bias is reduced, creating a new group filled with diverse individuals with little discrimination. On the other hand, this increased competition between teammates could also cause for a greater divide of in-groups and out-groups on the team, creating an 'other' on the team that one group always has to be.

Not only does diversifying teams help teammates learn stereotypes and dissolve bias on the teams, it also can also improve performance. Another study done by Cunningham (2011) found that organizations with high sexual orientation diversity and that followed a strong proactive diversity strategy outperformed their peers in objective measures of performance. He gathered data from 780 senior-level athletic administrators in 239 organizations at the division 1 level and measured performance by an award given annually to the top-performing athletic depart-

ment, with points based on the performance of the women's and men's teams (Cunningham 2011). This study shows that there is evidence that differences among teams can result in greater decision making and problem solving capabilities, ultimately leading to performance gains. Diversifying teams should be seen as important because it does not just make individuals understand and interact with people they would not normally interact with, but it can also help bring people towards a common goal and improve performance as a whole.

Prejudices in Athletic Departments

There is not a lot of data or studies that have been done relating to athletic department's inclusiveness of gay athletes. There has been some studies in the late 1990s that have documented discrimination, hate crimes, and prejudice that gay men and lesbians experience at institutions of higher education (Oswalt & Vargas, 2013). This can be for a number of different reasons and vary depending on the school. In the last ten years, some schools have tried to promote a more inclusive environment by adding a statement of community to the college. However, the N.C.A.A. (National Collegiate Athletic Association) still sends out surveys on homosexual involvement and inclusivity to coaches at all levels. This shows that prejudices towards homosexual individuals are still prevalent to this day, through all divisions. Some colleges still do not allow employees and/or athletes to be gay and if they come out while employed or a student, they may be asked to leave to college (e.g., Grove City, Geneva, etc.). Clearly, conducting studies for why sexual orientation creates tensions in athletic environments is important.

Oswalt and Vargas (2013) conducted a study that asked three research questions; what are collegiate coaches' attitudes towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals, what is their level

of heterosexism and lastly how do demographic characteristics affect these attitudes and levels of heterosexism? Oswalt and Vargas (2013) surveyed 340 coaches from division one level colleges in the southern United States. The survey encompassed three scales including; Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men-Short (ATLG-S), the Heterosexism Scale, and Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality Scale (ARBS). The results of this study showed overall that the participants had positive attitudes towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. They also found that none of the responses were significantly correlated with age or years coached, but gender and gender of team coached did show significant correlations except with the bisexuality scale. This study inspired the following study to how players respond to these scales along with different demographic question at the division three level, opposed to coaches at a division one level.

Hypothesis

In this study, distinguishing teams' individual attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals was the first goal. Player perceptions of how accepting their team is, was also tested to see how it differs from others perceptions of how accepting their team is. A comparison of attitudes between the two sports considered to have a high perceived number of homosexuals (HPNH) and the two teams considered to have a low perceived number of homosexuals (LPNH), was conducted. Then women's teams were compared to men's teams to see if gender plays a role in attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals. Lastly, this study compared attitudes depending on what year they are at the college. Overall, this study will help Allegheny College athletics department see how inviting and inclusive their teams are, as well as add information into this field.

Participants

Two men's teams (baseball and men's swimming and diving) and two women teams (women's basketball and soccer) were recruited to participate. There were 50 total participants, 26 being female and 24 being male. Participants divided per team include; 15 from women's soccer, 11 from women's basketball, 19 from baseball and 3 from men's swimming and diving. Head coaches and assistant coaches were included in these teams. I was given permission to use these teams by the head coaches of each team (Appendix A). These teams were chosen for having either a high perceived number of homosexuals (HPNH) such as women's basketball or men's swimming and diving or a low perceived number of homosexuals (LPNH) as in baseball or women's soccer. All student athletes attend Allegheny College, with ages that range from 18-22 years and class years that range from first to fourth year. All coaches ages range from 25-55 and are recognized by the college as a coach. Heterosexual and homosexual individuals are represented in both the athletes and coaching staff.

Procedure

The four sports teams were contacted through email to complete a survey anonymously. The only information about the participants that were known are team they chose to select they are part of and the demographic questions they chose to answer on the demographic questions portion. Before the survey could be completed, the participants had to complete an informed consent form to allow for full consent from all participants (Appendix B). The use of human subjects was approved by the Institutional Review Board before beginning any part of the study.

Instrumentation

The two scales, in section one (Appendix C) and section two (Appendix D), were taken from Oswalt and Vargas (2013). These two scales were answered on a five point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Demographic questions were also asked including: Gender, team affiliation, sexual orientation, and amount of years as a student athlete (Appendix E). Also, a question about perceived team attitudes, whether they believe their team is strongly biased towards lesbian or gay individuals, was included in the demographic question in order to see individual perceptions. Age, ethnicity and specifying whether the individual is a player or a coach were not asked in order to maintain as much anonymity for the participant as possible. If any individual felt uncomfortable or did not want to answer a question at any point of the survey, they could leave the question blank and continue to the questions they did wish to answer on the survey. All results of the survey are only accessible to the researcher and no identifying information was recorded.

The first scale, from Oswalt and Vargas (2013), was the Heterosexism Scale, which measured an individual's level of heterosexism through a 17-item scale. Examples of questions include, "All sexual orientations are natural expressions of human sexuality" and "Positive aspects of various sexual orientations should be included in public education." Seven items were reverse coded before computing scores for this scale. The second scale, also from Oswalt and Vargas (2013), was on Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG). This scale consisted of two subscales of five items each; one assessed attitudes towards gay males (ATG) and one assessed attitudes toward lesbians (ATL). Example questions include, "Lesbians just can't fit into our society" and "Sex between men is just plain wrong." Six items were reverse coded before comput-

ing scores for this scale. These two scales were combined to create a 27-item scale to look at overall sexual prejudice and had an alpha coefficient of 0.95.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analyses were used to gain an understanding of the four sports teams related to overall sexual prejudice. IBM SPSS Statistics version 19.0 was used to analyze the data.

Results

The first research question looked at teams' individual attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals; an ANOVA of team affiliation (excluding men's swimming and diving) and overall sexual prejudice (Heterosexism scale and ATGL scale) revealed a significant main effect, $F(2, 42) = 13.23, p = .000$. Multiple comparisons revealed that the difference between women's soccer ($M = 4.53, SE = .086$) and women's basketball ($M = 4.44, SE = .109$) was not significant ($p = .753$). The difference between women's soccer and baseball ($M = 3.53, SE = .198$) was significant ($p = .000$). The difference between women's basketball and baseball was also significant ($p = .000$). This shows that baseball was significantly less accepting than women's basketball and women's soccer, however, both women's team were not significantly different.

The second research question was to test the differences of other people's perceptions on the team and the actual player's perceptions of their team. An ANOVA on team affiliation and the question, "Your team is strongly bias towards gay individuals?" showed a non significant main effect, $F(3,43) = 1.067, p = .373$. This reveals that there was no difference in how strongly biased teams thought they were towards gay individuals.

Another ANOVA was done on team affiliation and the question, “Your sports team is considered to have more gay individuals?” revealed a significant main effect, $F(3,43)=35.644$, $p=.000$. Multiple comparisons revealed that the difference between women’s soccer ($M=2.14$, $SE=.206$) and women’s basketball ($M=4.00$, $SE=.234$) was significant ($p=.000$). The difference between women’s soccer and baseball ($M=1.16$, $SE=.916$) was significant ($p=.000$). The difference between women’s soccer and men’s swimming and diving ($M=2.66$, $SE=.882$) was not significant ($p=.266$). The difference between women’s basketball and baseball was significant ($p=.000$). The difference between women’s basketball and men’s swimming and diving was also significant ($p=.008$). The difference between baseball and men’s swimming and diving was also significant ($p=.002$). Overall this shows that, as predicted, women’s basketball significantly reported feeling like their team is considered to have a higher number of gay individuals on the team compared to all other teams. Men’s swimming and diving was also predicted to report feeling they have more gay individuals on their team, however, results did not support this possibly because of the low number of swimmers who participated in the study.

The third research question tested differences in the attitudes of high perceived number of homosexuals teams (HPNH) from low perceived number of homosexuals teams (LPNH). I combined data for the HPNH teams (men’s swimming and diving and women’s basketball) as well as data for the LPNH teams (baseball and women’s soccer). An independent samples T-Test of PNH and overall sexual prejudice revealed a non-significant effect $t(46)=4.936$, $p=0.31$.

The fourth research question looked at gender involvement, specifically, “If gender plays a role in attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals?” An independent samples T-Test of gender and overall sexual prejudice (Heterosexism scale and ATGL scale) revealed a significant

main effect $t(48) = 20.089$, $p = .000$. Pairwise comparisons showed females ($M = 4.49$, $SE = .342$) and males ($M = 3.48$, $SE = .195$) were significantly different. Males were significantly less accepting than females on these teams.

The last research question tested inclusiveness depending on what year the student is at the college. An ANOVA of how many years the participant has been a student athlete at Allegheny College (for coaches how many years they were a player) and overall sexual prejudice (Heterosexism scale and ATGL scale) revealed a non significant effect, $F(3, 46) = 0.624$, $p = .603$. Showing, year of the individual did not show a significant effect on how accepting they were.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to take a deeper look into four sports teams at Allegheny College; men's swimming and diving, baseball, women's basketball and women's soccer. Men's swimming and diving and women's basketball were considered to have a high perceived number of homosexuals (HPNH) where baseball and women's soccer were considered to have a low perceived number of homosexuals (LPNH). They were examined to see if these perceptions show different attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals. This study also looked to see if, through these four teams, gender plays a role in attitudes towards these individuals. Also, I examined if player perceptions of their team differs from the perceptions of others and shows differences in perception of the athletic department inclusiveness depending on what year they are at the college.

Looking at each team individually, results showed that baseball, a team with a low perceived number of homosexuals (LPNH), was significantly less accepting compared to both

women's soccer and women's basketball. Research has shown that baseball is known to have less gay individual but results from this study could raise the question: Is baseball known to have less gay athletes in the field because they are less accepting toward gay individuals? Or, pulling from a gender perspective, this study found that males were significantly less accepting than females, so is baseball less accepting because it is a male sport? Supporting past research, the result of males being less accepting is not surprising; Oswalt and Vargas (2013) also found that males in their study were less accepting and that, "Differences based on gender, specifically heterosexual men, tend to exhibit greater sexual prejudice and negative behaviors toward GLB individuals than heterosexual women" (p. 127).

It is important to mention that the other male team in this study, men's swimming and diving, which research suggests to have a high perceived number of homosexuals, failed to have enough individuals complete the survey to test certain hypotheses. This could raise the question of, if a team is more open to having gay individuals, are they less likely to fill out a survey on being accepting? Or, did this team not want to fill it out to be labeled as a more accepting male team, because they are males? Even though research suggests this male team is more accepting, did they not want to confirm the perceptions others have on their team? On the other hand, women's basketball is also suggested to have a high perceived number of homosexuals and results showed that they are very accepting of gay individuals. Could this be because females overall were found to be more accepting, or does this team promote that they are accepting of all sexual orientations, which is why they are suggested to have HPNH? This study was done completely at will of the participant, so it could be said that the people who chose to participate in the study were comfortable to complete a survey on gay individuals and their stance on how open

they are and their team is. It could be people who are not as accepting of gay individuals, especially being in the athletics field, chose not to be a part of the study.

Women's soccer was suggested to have a LNPH; however, results found that they were almost as accepting as a women's basketball. This could be due to the fact that they are both female teams and females overall were more accepting. However, compared to the other LPNH team, baseball, they were more accepting. Unlike women's basketball, maybe this team does not promote how accepting they are but results prove they are just as accepting as the other women's team.

Looking at HPNH teams compared to LPNH teams, results showed a non significant effect. This could be due to the fact that the sample size for the groups were different. LPNH group had a sample size of 34 compared to HPNH, which had a sample size of 14, which is double the size. If the sample sizes were closer in size, results could have revealed different results. These sample sizes have to take into account of the size of teams I asked to participate. Baseball has a total of 44 players, so getting 19 is not even half their team compared to women's basketball who only had 11 total players, men's swimming and diving who only had a total of 14 and women's soccer who had a total of 22. Baseball had the largest team, so the fact that their team had the largest sample size overall is not surprising. Since baseball made up more than half of the LPNH group, their biases could have overshadowed the women's soccer team beliefs, who were found to be more accepting.

Results showed that year was not significantly related to how accepting an individual was. This is interesting because since this school is a liberal arts college, one could argue that a student enrolled here would be more educated on accepting different sexual orientations in their

fourth year than in their first year. This does not mean the school makes individuals more accepting by the fourth year, but it should promote acceptance and get a student to think of how the atmosphere of their team is, more so than a first year. A possible confound could also be the number of participants from each year being so different, first years had the most with 23 participants, sophomores had 8, juniors had 7 and seniors had 12 total participants. Another reason these results were not significant could also be because maybe the people who are on the baseball team and are more accepting end up leaving the team by their senior year because they don't feel comfortable. This could change the results to show that first years are more accepting just because the upperclassmen who are also accepting felt they did not fit in on a team who was not accepting. Since results were not significant, an argument can be made that the athletic department needs to be more aware of acceptance on teams, specifically involving sexual orientation, and engage individuals to be thinking of these issues as they go through each season at Allegheny College.

Results for player perception of team did not have a significant main effect with the question, "Your team is strongly biased towards gay individuals?" This may be because of the wording of the question, if the word "strongly" was not added into the question teams might have been willing to admit they are "some-what" biased instead of strongly biased. However, a significant main effect was found when asking the question, "Your sport is considered to have more gay individuals?" This supported the research I found in saying that women's basketball, a team suggested to have a high perceived number of homosexuals, strongly agreed that they are perceived to have more gay individuals on their team more than the other teams looked at. Results also show men's swimming and diving were only significantly different from baseball but not

women's soccer, so their team considered themselves to have more gay individuals than one of the LPNH teams, not both. Women's soccer showed significant results that their sport is not considered to have more gay individuals compared to women's basketball, which supported the research that they had less perceived number of homosexuals. Baseball did not consider their team to have more gay individuals and were significantly less than all other teams, which also supported the research that they had less perceived number of homosexuals.

The difference between contact sports compared to non-contact sports may play a role in perceptions of team. The level of contact can influence perception on the sport and the traits individuals have who play the sport. A high level of contact can be associated with traits like physicality, power, aggressiveness, toughness and can portray a person to have these traits compared to individuals who participate in low-level contact sports. More physical and contact sports for women, such as basketball or softball, are considered more stereotyped sports and women who participate in those sports are considered to be more likely homosexual (Oswalt & Vargas, 2013). Whereas less physical and contact sports for men, such as volleyball and swimming, are more stereotyped and it is believed men who participate in those are more likely to be homosexual (Zipp, 2011). Even though baseball is a low contact sport, it was still found to be less accepting than the other teams looked at, so there are more variables that go into acceptance than just looking at whether a sport has contact.

Hypotheses resulting in non significant results could also be due to some of the limitations of this study. One limitation being that all participants voluntarily chose to complete this study, those who did not feel comfortable with this topic did not have to participate. All answers were also completed at the participants discretion and they were able to skip as many questions

as they wished. If every team member had to participate or if the participants had to complete all the questions it could have yielded different results. Future research could look at every team member on more, if not all, teams at Allegheny College, since only four teams were analyzed in this study. This could allow for Allegheny College specifically to get a better sense of how accepting their athletic department is as a whole. Future research could also compare Allegheny College's athletic department to other division three schools in the North Coast Athletic Conference (NCAC) which could be interesting to see how accepting Allegheny is compared to other schools in the same conference. Comparison between Allegheny College, a liberal arts school, to a non-liberal school could also be done in order to see if Allegheny is or is not more accepting. Also, Allegheny College could be compared to schools in other divisions (division one or two) to see if acceptance is better at a smaller or larger division.

Looking at this topic more broadly, it is important to explain that even though certain sports have been found to have a high perceived number of homosexuals or a low perceived number of homosexuals; there is a large range of how many gay athletes are involved in every sport, not to specific sports. Every sport, male or female, can have a gay individual on it whether the individual is out or not. Many gay or lesbian individuals do not feel comfortable to out themselves to their team because the atmosphere is not accepting and feel it could hurt their career. This is why many athletes out themselves after they retire from the sport instead of while they are playing. It is crucial to create an accepting environment to allow individuals to be themselves, rather than hiding their identity. Masking identity can cause more stress on the individual and could possibly cause them to perform less than their potential. Even though some teams can have a non accepting environment, not all teams have this atmosphere.

Not all homosexual athletes are discriminated against and some teams are better at accepting individuals than others. Anderson (2017) found that many gay athletes were treated very well and felt their team and coaches were very accepting. This shows that more teams are conscious of diversity and how it is viewed and therefore try to find ways to be more accepting. Teams in the North Coast Athletic Conference (NCAC) have been publishing 'You Can Play' videos that explain how their school has been working to accept individuals in the LGBTQ+ community. Schools in all divisions have also been working on completing a statement of community, which sets up a guideline for how the school wants to treat all individuals of every walk of life. However, there is no way to force teams and organizations to be more accepting of homosexual individuals; but sharing the knowledge of the issue and creating statements of community to better accept individuals is a small start to a change.

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(Appendix A)

Coaches Permission for Team Use

I, Brandon Carson (print name) allow Amanda Beebe to survey the athletics and coaching staff for my team, the Allegheny women's/vmen's Baseball for her senior comp. Enabling her to examine relationships between high/low stigmatized teams and their attitudes towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals in this athletic department. This survey will be completely confidential for everyone who completes it.

Signature [Signature]
Date 9/19/2017

I, JANELLA WILSON (print name) allow Amanda Beebe to survey the athletics and coaching staff for my team, the Allegheny women's/vmen's Softball Team for her senior comp. Enabling her to examine relationships between high/low stigmatized teams and their attitudes towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals in this athletic department. This survey will be completely confidential for everyone who completes it.

Signature [Signature]
Date 9/19/17

I, KATE CROSBY (print name) allow Amanda Beebe to survey the athletes and coaching staff for my team, the Allegheny women's/men's Swimming & Diving, for her senior comp. Enabling her to examine relationships between high/low stigmatized teams and their attitudes towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals in this athletic department. This survey will be completely confidential for everyone who completes it.

Signature

Date 1/11/12

I, Kirk Kumbel (print name) allow Amanda Beebe to survey the athletes and coaching staff for my team, the Allegheny women's/men's Swimming & Diving, for her senior comp. Enabling her to examine relationships between high/low stigmatized teams and their attitudes towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals in this athletic department. This survey will be completely confidential for everyone who completes it.

Signature

Date 1/12/12

(Appendix B)

Consent Form: By selecting 'Next' you are agreeing that you are over the age of 18 and that you give full consent to complete this survey.

(Appendix C)

Section One

Please read each of the following statements and rate them according to how accurately they describe your attitudes and beliefs. Please respond honestly and answer every question according to the rating scale below.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

- _____ 1. All sexual orientations are natural expressions of human sexuality.
- _____ 2. Positive aspects of various sexual orientations should be included in public education.
- _____ 3. I believe that the lives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals could not be as fulfilling as those of heterosexual individuals.
- _____ 4. Only heterosexual individuals are appropriate religious leaders/ Heterosexual couples make better candidates for parents than do same-sex couples for adoption.
- _____ 5. Heterosexual couples make better candidates for parents than do same-sex couples for adoption.
- _____ 6. No one sexual orientation is better than any other sexual orientation.
- _____ 7. In general, heterosexual individuals are more psychologically adjusted than lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.

_____ 8. Legalization of same-sex marriage will dismantle the fundamental foundations of society.

_____ 9. I think society will benefit from fostering equal opportunity employment for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students.

_____ 10. I would accept my sibling's partner regardless of his or her sex **(please select NA if not applicable)**

_____ 11. An anti-discrimination law is incomplete without the inclusion of sexual orientation.

_____ 12. There is no reason to restrict lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals from working in the military.

_____ 13. I think lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals are unfit as teachers.

_____ 14. My relationship with my son or daughter would remain the same even if I found out that he or she was romantically involved with a person of the same sex.

_____ 15. I would not think less of my co-worker if I found out that he or she was a lesbian, gay, or bisexual individual.

_____ 16. My relationship with my friend would change if I found out that he or she was not heterosexual.

_____ 17. I make sure to invite the partner of my lesbian or gay friend to social functions.

(Appendix D)

Section Two

Please read each of the following statements and rate them according to how accurately they describe your attitudes and beliefs. Please respond honestly and answer every question according to the rating scale below.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

- _____ 1. Lesbians just can't fit into our society.
- _____ 2. State laws against private sexual behavior between consenting adult women should be abolished.
- _____ 3. Female homosexuality is a sin.
- _____ 4. Female homosexuality in itself is no problem unless society makes it a problem.
- _____ 5. Lesbians are sick.
- _____ 6. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.
- _____ 7. Male homosexuality is a perversion.
- _____ 8. Male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in men.
- _____ 9. Sex between men is just plain wrong.
- _____ 10. Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned.

(Appendix E)

Demographic Questionnaire

Below are some demographic questions about your personal background. Please select a response to these questions to the best of your ability. Reminder that all these questions are voluntary, if you choose to not respond leave the question blank.

1. What is your gender?

Male Female Other

2. What is your team affiliation?

Women's Soccer Women's Basketball Baseball Men's Swimming and diving

3. How many years have you been a Student-Athlete at Allegheny College? (For coaches enter how many years you were a student athlete)

1 2 3 4

4. Please indicate your self-identified sexual orientation.

Heterosexual Gay Lesbian Other

5. Your team is strongly bias towards gay individuals?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

6. Your sport is considered to have more gay individuals?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree