

Journal of Issues in ***Intercollegiate Athletics***

An Investigation of Male College Athletes' Attitudes toward Sexual-Orientation

Richard M. Southall

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Mark S. Nagel

University of South Carolina

Eric D. Anderson

The University of Bath

Fritz G. Polite

University of Tennessee

Crystal Southall

The University of Northern Colorado

Multiple studies have found homophobic cultures within intercollegiate athletic departments. Accordingly, intolerance of gay/lesbian athletes (while most often forbidden by university policy), may still exist. Many "straight" athletes feel gay/lesbian/bi-sexual (GLB) athletes do not "belong" in college sport. In addition, female sport participants are frequently assumed to be lesbians. Within this social milieu, this study surveyed 698 male and female college athletes from four Division I & III universities in a traditionally conservative region, the Southeastern United States, to determine their attitudes toward sexual orientation. The primary research questions were: (a) "What are college-athletes' attitudes toward sexual orientation?" and (b) "Is there a significant relationship between athletes' gender and expressed attitudes toward sexual orientation?" Specifically, this study focused on an examination and discussion of male college athletes' attitudes toward sexual orientation. Results confirm a relationship between athletes' gender and their sexual-orientation attitudes, specifically the existence of a higher degree of sexual prejudice among male college athletes. This research reveals that while homophobia is quickly eroding - even in the American South - there still exists a need for both expanded research of college athletes' sexual-orientation attitudes as well as an expansion of educational programs for male college athletes, college athletic administrators and faculty, since 28% of male athlete respondents still reported being homophobic.

As with many issues surrounding college athletics, there is disagreement regarding college athletes' attitudes regarding sexual orientation and the extent to which they may be prejudiced or homophobic. Previous research suggests male and female college athletes have differing views on sexual orientation (Bryant, 2003; Clarke, 1998; Curry, 1991; Griffin, 1998; Hekma, 1998; Messner, 1992; Price & Parker, 2003; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morphew, 2001). In addition, some college administrators, both in athletic departments, and in the general college environment, continue to question the extent of prejudice against gay and lesbian athletes, and whether such attitudes constitute a "problem." In addition, as Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, and Robinson-Keilig (2004) noted, while researchers have examined *campus climate* for a number of years and several investigations into campus climate related to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender college students have been conducted (Eliason, 1996; Evans, 2001; Rankin, 2003), few studies have assessed the campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (GLBT) college athletes (e.g. Wolf-Wendel et al., 2001), college students' attitudes toward gays and lesbians (Gill, Morrow, Lucey, & Schultz, 2006), or college athletes' attitudes related to sexual orientation (Southall, Nagel, Folske, & Eagan, 2004; Southall, Nagel, Polite, Medler, & Southall, 2006).

This paper sought to address this situation by specifically examining the relationship between gender and college-athletes' attitudes toward various sexual orientations and reevaluating previous reports of differing levels of *homophobia* in male and female college-sport cultures (Gill et al., 2006; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2001). The current results may provide a foundation from which to improve research methodologies, initiate policy development, and develop educational programs within college athletic departments.

Review of Literature

North-American sport, particularly the male athletic culture, has been widely theorized as a bastion of cultural and institutional homophobia. Researchers examining the relationship between men and sport largely agree organized sport remains a hostile environment for gay men (Bryant, 2003; Clarke, 1998; Curry, 1991; Griffin, 1998; Hekma, 1998; Messner, 1992; Price & Parker, 2003; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2001). Almost twenty years ago, Pronger identified hostility toward gay men in sport settings, "Many of the [gay] men I interviewed said they were uncomfortable with teamsports... [O]rthodox masculinity is usually an important subtext if not *the* leitmotif in teamsports" (p. 26). In 1998, Messner summarized this point-of-view noting, "The extent of homophobia in the sports world is staggering. Boys [in sports] learn early that to be gay, to be suspected of being gay, or even to be unable to prove one's heterosexual status is not acceptable" (p. 34). Hekma (1998) noted, "Gay men who are seen as queer and effeminate are granted no space whatsoever in what is generally considered to be a masculine preserve and a macho enterprise" (p. 2).

Teamsports are often described as places where hegemonic masculinity is reproduced and defined, since an athlete represents the ideal in contemporary masculinity—a definition which traditionally contrasts with what it means to be gay (Anderson, 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Connell, 1995; Curry, 1991; Messner, 1992). Wolf-Wendel et al. (2001) detailed that most of the university-teamsports athletes they surveyed maintain *hypermasculine* and homophobic attitudes, and, as a result, behaviors associated with this setting nullify for most participants the possibility

of gays *even existing* among their teammates. To such athletes, the term homosexuality is synonymous with physical weakness and emotional frailty, and the notion of a *gay athlete* or teammate remains an oxymoron (Pronger, 1990).

Within this context, as Griffin (1998) suggests, if gay male athletes, who are stigmatized as being feminine, can be as strong and competitive as heterosexual male athletes, they threaten the perceived distinctions between gay men and straight men, and thus the perceived differences between men and women as a whole. Bourdieu (2001) maintained gay men are uniquely situated to undermine masculine orthodoxy because of their unique ability to invisibly gain access to masculine privilege before coming out. Thus, gay male athletes—who are seen as a paradox because they comply with the gendered script of being a man through the physicality involved in sports, but violate another masculine script through the existence of same-sex desires—may threaten sport as a prime site of hegemonic masculinity and masculine privilege.

Anderson (2005b) theorized that homophobia presents itself in the form of resistance against the intrusion of a gay sub-culture within sports. Homophobia helps maintain the rigidity of both orthodox masculinity and patriarchy in sport. Sports culture not only rejects homosexuality, but it also venerates hyper-heterosexuality (Curry, 1991; Griffin, 1998; Hekma, 1998; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2001). As Clarke (1998) noted, gay males, since they defy culturally-defined structures of hegemonic masculinity, are perceived “largely as deviant and dangerous participants on the sporting turf” (p. 145).

But the presence of homophobia in the sport setting does not necessarily mean gay males *are* driven away from competitive sports. In *The Arena of Masculinity*, Pronger (1990) interviewed a number of closeted gay athletes and concluded, “Not all homosexual men and boys avoid athletics because of its masculine significance” (p.4). In fact, Pronger suggested gay men might actually be drawn to sport because of the heterosexual veneer it provides. Expanding the concept of sport providing such a veneer, Anderson (2005a, 2005b, 2009) has suggested men who participate in competitive teamsports (e.g. football, basketball, and baseball) are *masculinized* by their participation; while men in “subordinated” sports, like tennis, cheerleading, and gymnastics, are *homosexualized* by their participation. Based on this masculinization, Messner (2002) described football, basketball, baseball and hockey as sports at ‘the center’ of masculine production. However, Anderson (2005a) theorized these male sports to be an effective place to hide one’s homosexual orientation, since gay athletes are shrouded in a cloud of scripted heterosexuality. He argued highly-closeted gay male athletes are more likely to seek these sports while gay athletes less afraid of their sexuality are more likely to seek sports thought less homophobic. Anderson also suggested highly-closeted gay male athletes are more likely to stick with highly-homophobic sports in a continual attempt to rectify the stigmatized effeminacy attributed to homosexuality.

It has been proposed the presence of gay athletes in teamsports might also be a product of *homosociality* (Anderson, 2005a; 2009), since sport teams are over-represented by young, toned, sexualized, and highly-masculinized bodies: all of which may serve as a *homoerotic* enticement for boys and men. In this view, homophobia appears to be both a way to nullify the sport setting’s homoeroticism and a means to prevent men from acting upon their stigmatized desires (Anderson, 2005b; Pronger, 1990, 1997). However, a number of shifting cultural trends may influence how many openly-gay and closeted-gay men might seek to participate in sport, come out during such participation, or retain their sporting participation but not declare their sexual orientation. Such trends are also likely to influence the attitudes that heterosexual men maintain toward gay teammates and homosexuality in general.

Shifting Attitudes on Sexuality and Gender

There are a number of trends that may influence how university-aged, heterosexual men construct their sexual and gendered identities and influence their constructed perspectives on homosexuality both in and out of sport. First, since the early 1990s, both qualitative and quantitative studies show a significant decrease in cultural and institutional homophobia in both intercollegiate athletic and university settings (Barrett & Pollack, 2005; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Loftus 2001; Ohlander, Batalova, & Treas, 2005; Widmer, Treas, & Newcomb, 2002). Second, there is increasing evidence of a form of normative masculinity growing more inclusive of feminine gender expression, particularly among university-aged, white, middle class men (Anderson, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Hyman, 2004; Price & Parker, 2003). Third, recent decades have brought a lessening of traditional views and institutional control of sexual behaviors and relationships (Joyner & Laumann, 2001). This is made evident by the lessening of the traditional double standard of heterosexual intercourse (Tanenbaum, 1999; Wolf, 1997) and the growing percentage of those engaging in pre-marital intercourse (Laumann et. al.; Johnson, Mercer, Erens, Copas, McManus, Wellings, Fenton, Korovessis, Macdowall, & Nanchahal, 2001).

Other relevant trends include the growing willingness of men to be *dominated* (taken) in heterosexual sex, an act that effectively makes men into objects of sexual desire, and more fluid gender codes resulting from a merger of gender and sexuality signifiers in consumer culture (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Miller, 2001; Warner, 1993). Finally, while Parks and Robertson's (2004) assessment of sexist language and discourse among sport-management students may contradict this contention, Bryant (2003) offers evidence institutional sexism may also be decreasing among university-aged men. It is also important to note the present research assessed attitudes, not discourse or behaviors. Not only is discourse complicated, it is important to remember that while misogynistic, homophobic, and sexist language may have the ultimate affect of stigmatizing women and GLBT individuals, such may not be the user's intent (Pascoe 2005).

It is reasonable to suspect the symphony of these changing cultural trends has implications for a sex-gender system that conflates homosexuality with femininity (Anderson 2008) and subordinates gay men. For example, Ibson (2002) found increasing cultural homophobia influences heterosexual men to further police their gendered behaviors, while decreasing cultural homophobia has the opposite affect. Accordingly, Anderson (in press) has contended that as "cultural homophobia" declines heterosexual men are more likely to make gay friends (Anderson; 2005a; 2005b) and even to engage in same-sex sexual acts that do not threaten their publicly-perceived heterosexual identities (Anderson, in press).

Homophobia in Sport

In conducting the first research on openly gay high-school and university teamsports athletes, Anderson (2002) found the degree of homophobia maintained by ostensibly heterosexual male athletes was considerably less than previous researchers predicted (Pronger, 1990). Whereas he expected these openly gay athletes' stories to resemble the experiences of those who had come out in the previous decade, Anderson (2002) found a decreased level of 'overt' athletic homophobia. None of the 26 openly-gay athletes studied were physically assaulted, and many reported their teammates had stopped or decreased their use of homophobic

discourse (Anderson, 2002). These results were supported by an additional 22 interviews (2005b) during which he found many informants' teammates celebrated their gay teammates' sexuality through repeated bonding efforts, often in the face of institutional discrimination. Based on these findings Anderson (2005b) theorized possession of masculine and/or athletic capital helped mitigate much of homosexuality's stigma in the sport setting.

Other recent quantitative research among university-aged men (Brown et al., 2004; Gill et al., 2006; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2001) has suggested attitudes toward gay men in sport may not be as inclusive as Anderson (2005a, 2005b) concluded. Wolf-Wendel et al. concluded that in contrast to the prevalence of progressive views regarding race and gender in sport, *heterosexual* and homophobic views are still more likely to exist in the athletic culture. These conflicting viewpoints suggest that while former National Basketball Association (NBA) star, Tim Hardaway's homophobic comments:

You know, I hate gay people, so I let it be known...I don't like gay people and I don't like to be around gay people. I am homophobic. I don't like it. It shouldn't be in the world or in the United States (ESPN.com news service, 2007, para. 2)

drew media criticism and condemnation from the NBA, his attitude may still not be an anomaly, they may be an example of still existent latent homophobia in the male sports culture. Such a view would be consistent with Gill et al.'s (2006) findings that undergraduate male college students possessed especially negative attitudes toward gay men and "social acceptance of sexual prejudice" (p. 562).

However, there is evidence that contrary to the veneer of heterosexuality that surrounds male sports, a significant degree of same-gender sexual activity may occur within the male athletic culture. As far back as 1977, Garner & Smith found that 36% of sampled National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletes had engaged in same-gender sexual activity (to the point of orgasm). However, they also noted their informants were highly concerned with maintaining their anonymity regarding these same-sex sexual transactions (Garner & Smith). More recently, Anderson (2008) found (mostly limited) forms of same-sex activities among high-school football players.

As a result of seemingly conflicting evidence regarding the level of homophobia or sexual prejudice in athletics, the current study is designed to evaluate the extent to which Anderson's (2005b) broadened heterosexual masculinity has occurred among male-college athletes. Specifically, while the overall research study sought to investigate male and female college athletes' attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual teammates, this manuscript focuses specifically on a discussion of male-college athletes' attitudes related to sexual orientation to determine (a) if Anderson's (2005b) "new" masculinity has allowed some gay male athletes to emerge from their athletic closets, and (b) to what degree values of inclusion and acceptance are present in today's male intercollegiate athletic culture in what may be the most conservative part of the United States.

Methods

This study was conducted at four NCAA-affiliated universities (three Division I-A, one Division I-AAA, and one Division III) located in the Southeastern United States. Data was obtained from 698 respondents, consisting of 363 male and 335 female athletes from 16 sports. Table 1 details the overall and participating teams' response rates for each university, while Table 2 summarizes the number of respondents from each sport. For a variety of reasons (e. g.

coach unwilling to allow athletes to participate in this particular study, time conflicts and/or constraints, team policy not to participate in any surveys), several teams did not participate in the study. In addition, it should be noted that not all universities sponsor all sports represented in the sample (e. g. only two of the four universities included in this study sponsor football). See table 1 and 2.

Table 1- *Survey Response Totals and Rates by University*

University	<i>n</i>	Males	Females	Overall Response Rate	Participating Teams Response Rate
University A	193	141	52	53.7%	73.3%
University B	244	110	134	58.3%	62.2%
University C	104	40	64	44.8%	73.0%
University D	157	72	85	42.2%	64.9%
Total	698	363	335	50.5%	67.2%

Note. Universities A & B are (NCAA) D-I, University C is (NCAA) D-IAAA, and University D is (NCAA) D-III. Note: While the NCAA has recently changed its classification categories, but the historic designations have been utilized in this research.

The overall study's purpose was to measure respondents' self-expressed sexual orientations, attitudes toward athletes (both teammates and non-teammates) of various sexual orientations, and investigate respondents' responses to specific college-sport related situations. While this manuscript focuses on gender as a predictor independent variable, the developed survey contained questions designed to gather demographic information (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, year-in-school, sport participation, and sexual orientation) to allow for further investigation and statistical analyses. In addition, several questions were intended to assess attitudes related to a hypothetical, but "real-world" scenario. The survey's scales and items were derived from previous campus-climate studies, as well as conversations with scholars engaged in gender or sexuality research, and piloted in a 2003-2004 study of athletes at a Division II university (Southall, et al., 2004).

Table 2- *Number and Percent of Respondents by Sport*

Sport	Frequency	Percent of Sample
Football	104	14.9%
Softball	50	7.2%
Baseball	85	12.2%
Women's Basketball	41	5.9%
Men's Basketball	38	5.4%
Cross Country	7	1.0%
Volleyball	29	4.2%
Women's Crew	31	4.4%
Women's Golf	13	1.9%
Women's Soccer	61	8.7%
Women's Tennis	41	5.9%
Women's Track & Field	71	10.2%
Men's Golf	23	3.3%
Men's Soccer	49	7.0%
Men's Tennis	20	2.9%
Men's Track & Field	35	5.0%
Total	698	100.0%

In order to estimate the survey's internal consistency and reliability, parallel scales and questions were tested utilizing *Cronbach's alpha*. High internal consistency ($\alpha = .79$) was found on questions designed to measure single unitary variables. In addition to nominal descriptive data analysis involving development of frequencies based upon the independent variable (Gender) - and in order to answer the research question: "Is there a significant relationship between athletes' gender and expressed attitudes toward sexual orientation?" -Pearson Chi-square and likelihood ratio chi-square tests were conducted. Chi square (χ^2) tests are used to test the difference in proportion in two or more independent groups of which the levels of measurement for independent variable is the nominal level (Li, Pitts, & Quarterman, 2008). The results of these analyses are summarized in the following section.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Initially, the study sought to gather information about the sampled athletes' sexual orientations, attitudes and behaviors, the athletes' expressed attitudes toward individuals of various sexual orientations, and the athletes' responses to hypothetical situations. While this study focused on male college athletes' attitudes toward sexual orientation, a comparison of male and female athletes' attitudes provides a context from which male college athletes' attitudes can be evaluated more fully. Since survey questions were both straightforward and probing, the survey methodology allowed respondents to refrain from answering any question. For example, when respondents were asked to describe their sexual orientation, 99.1% ($n = 692$) of sampled

athletes answered the question and self-identified their sexual orientation, with 673 (97%) all sampled athletes self-identifying as heterosexual, .86% ($n = 6$) listing themselves as gay males, 1.0% ($n = 7$) identifying themselves as lesbians, and another .86% ($n = 6$) describing themselves as bisexual females. The six gay men represented 1.6% of the sample's male athletes, with lesbians comprising 2.0% and bisexual females 1.8% of the sampled female-athletes.

While only 20 athletes described their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian or bisexual, a total of 51 respondents (15 males and 36 females - 7.3% of sample) reported having engaged in same-sex sexual behavior. Fourteen of the 15 males who reported having engaged in same-sex sexual encounters classified themselves as heterosexual males. In addition, when asked if they hid their sexual orientation from their teammates, a total of five male (including three heterosexual males) and three female athletes (1.1%) responded "yes," while another .7% (three female and two male athletes) chose not to answer the question.

For the question asking if they act "differently" around their teammates to hide their sexual orientation, approximately 98% of both male and female respondents answered "No." However, almost all the gay male athletes (five out of six, 83%) reported they acted differently, in order to hide their sexual orientation. A much lower percent of lesbian and bisexual female athletes (three out of 14) lesbian athletes and bisexual female athletes reported hiding their sexual orientation. However, all of the female athletes who "hid" their sexual orientation self-identified as lesbians.

Another series of questions dealt with behaviors athletes used to model or demonstrate their sexual orientation, and whether they "suspected" or "knew" if any athletes, including teammates, were gay, lesbian or bisexual. In order to determine if - in order to demonstrate their sexual orientation to their teammates - sampled athletes had ever modeled what they considered to be stereotypical masculine or feminine behaviors, they were asked: "Have you used any of the following actions in order to demonstrate your sexual orientation to your teammates?" In addition, respondents were asked how they might have come to suspect another athlete of being gay, lesbian, or bisexual: "What would cause you to 'suspect' a specific athlete of being a lesbian, gay man, or bisexual woman or man?" Finally, sampled athletes were asked if they thought or knew any teammates who were lesbian, gay or bisexual. Table 3 summarizes the responses to these questions.

Table 3- *Orientation Demonstration, and Suspicion or Knowledge of Sexual Orientation*

Question	Response	Male (n)	Female (n)	Total (n)
Demonstrate Orientation				
	Did not answer	108	147	255
	Act Ultra-masculine	96	2	98
	Act somewhat masculine	148	25	173
	Act ultra-feminine	5	33	38
	Act somewhat feminine	6	128	134
Suspect athlete				
	Did not answer	16	14	30
	Mannerisms	265	266	531
	Being a female athlete	13	11	24
	Sport in which they participate	42	21	63
	Mannerisms and sport	11	15	26
	Other	16	8	24
Suspect Teammate				
	Yes	98	145	243
	No	264	187	451
	Did not answer	1	3	4
Know Teammate				
	Yes	37	151	188
	No	313	182	495
	Did not answer	13	2	15

Following up on these questions, athletes were asked how they “found out” a teammates’ sexual orientation. While 33.8% of the sampled athletes (149 males and 87 females) chose not to disclose how they found out that a teammate was lesbian, gay or bisexual, over three times as many female athletes ($n = 137$) than male ($n = 44$) reported the teammate had told them about their sexual orientation. Seventy-one male and 55 female athletes reported another teammate had told them about the teammate’s sexual orientation. In addition, five male and three female athletes reported finding out as a result of a sexual encounter with a teammate.

Finally, athletes were asked how they ‘would’ or ‘do’ treat a teammate they suspect or know is lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Overwhelmingly, 96.4% ($n = 323$) sampled female athletes reported they ‘accept’ lesbian or bisexual teammates. On the other hand, 61.5% ($n = 230$) of male athletes reported ‘accepting’ a gay or bisexual teammate. Twenty-eight percent ($n = 103$) of male athletes reported they would/do reject a suspected/known gay/bisexual teammate. In addition, 21 male athletes (5.8%) - as opposed to only three female athletes - reported they would or do harass a gay or bisexual teammate.

In order to gain additional insight into the athletes’ sexuality and/or attitudes toward various sexual orientations, the next set of questions presented a ‘real-world’ hypothetical situation. During previous interviews with coaches and athletes as part of the initial (2003-2004) pilot study, it was discovered (because of budgetary considerations) many college-sport teams have athletes share beds on road trips (e. g. traveling to away athletic contests). Therefore, several questions investigated how male and female athletes might feel about the possibility of sharing a bed with a teammate (both heterosexual and GLB). Table 4 summarizes the responses to these questions. The results show male athletes consistently reported feeling more uncomfortable than females about the possibility of being in close physical proximity to a teammate.

A final series of questions dealt with behaviors and/or attitudes related to the use of derogatory sexual-orientation jokes or terms, whether the respondent felt GLBs should be allowed to coach, whether they would “mind” having a GLB coach, and whether the athletes considered themselves to be “homophobic.” When asked if derogatory jokes about GLBs offended them, 41 male athletes (11.3%) and 95 female athletes (28.4%) reported that all such jokes offended them. However, 70.8% ($n = 257$) of male athletes and 37.0% ($n = 124$) of female athletes reported using derogatory sexual-orientation terms to belittle a teammate. In addition, thirty-one percent ($n = 113$) male athletes felt GLBs should not be allowed to coach, while only 6.9% ($n = 23$) of female athletes reported feeling that way. When asked if they would object to having a GLB coach 14.0% ($n = 47$) of female athletes and 46.6% ($n = 169$) of male athletes reported such an attitude. Finally, when asked if they were homophobic, 19 female (5.7%) and 94 male athletes (25.9%) self-identified as being homophobic.

Table 4- Responses to Bed-Sharing Questions

Question	Response ^a	Male		Female	
		<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent
When you travel with your team, do you share a bed with a teammate?	Yes	90	24.8	186	55.5
	No	251	69.1	141	42.1
Does sharing a bed with teammate make you feel uncomfortable...?	Yes	87	24.0	9	2.7
	No	264	72.7	320	95.5
Would your comfort level change if the teammate was GLB?	Yes	257	70.8	128	38.2
	No	94	25.9	200	59.7
Does possible bed sharing with a GLB teammate make you uncomfortable?	Yes	284	78.2	138	41.2
	No	72	19.8	192	57.3

^aNote. Non-responses are not included. Percentages listed represent percent of total, including non-responses.

Pearson Chi-square and Likelihood Ratio Chi-square Tests

In order to test the null hypotheses that there was no relationship between respondents' gender and their attitudes toward sexual orientation, Pearson Chi-square and likelihood ratio Chi-square tests (with a level of significance of less than .05) were performed. After performing appropriate Chi-square tests, with Gender as the independent variable, the null hypothesis was rejected for 21 items and the alternative hypothesis, that there is a significant relationship between gender and reported sexual-orientation attitudes, was accepted for these items (see Table 5). For only two questions, for which the Chi-square tests were appropriate, was there found to be no relationship between respondents' gender and their attitudes. For the question that asked what would cause them to "suspect" an athlete of being GLB, both male (72.8%) and female (79.9%) athletes overwhelmingly identified "mannerisms" as the reason they thought an athlete was gay, lesbian, or bisexual. In addition, there was no relationship between gender and surveyed athletes' belief in the appropriateness of a "don't ask, don't tell" policy, with both male and female athletes being almost equally divided on this issue.

Table 5- *Chi-Square Tests*

Item	Value	df	Sig.
In what sport(s) do athletes you “ suspect ” of being GLB participate?	63.91	13	.000
Do you “ know ” any GLB athletes here at this school?	77.90	2	.000
Do you “ suspect ” any of your teammates of being GLB?	22.15	2	.000
Do you “ know ” if any of your teammates are GLB?	110.91	2	.000
How did you “ find out ” that such teammates we GLB?	86.20	6	.000
How do you treat an athlete who you “ know ” or “ suspect ” is GLB?	110.57	3	.000
How would you treat a teammate, if you “knew” he/she was GLB?	125.62	3	.000
Have you engaged in same-sex sexual behavior?	11.26	3	.000
How do you think your team members feel about GLBs?	145.74	2	.000
How do you think your team members feel about having a GLB teammate?	129.32	2	.000
When you travel with your team, do you share a bed with a teammate?	69.78	2	.000
Does sharing a bed with a teammate make you feel uncomfortable about your sexuality?	69.73	2	.000
Would your opinion about such bed-sharing change if you knew this teammate was GLB?	81.77	2	.000
Does the possibility of sharing a bed with a GLB teammate make you feel uncomfortable about your sexuality?	104.44	2	.000
Do derogatory jokes, words, or phrases regarding GLBs offend you?	53.25	5	.000
Do you use derogatory words (e.g. fag, pussy, homo, dyke) when referring to GLBs?	85.06	2	.000
In general , do you feel a GLB athlete’s athletic skill contributes to their being accepted or rejected by teammates?	16.70	2	.000
Should a GLB person be allowed to coach a college-sport team?	102.42	4	.000
Would you like to know if your coach was GLB?	12.56	2	.002
Would you mind having a GLB coach?	116.79	2	.000
Do you consider yourself to be homophobic?	77.41	2	.000

Discussion

This study's results support previous research that the male athletic culture is significantly more homophobic than the female athletic culture. However, while our results substantiate previous studies (Curry, 1991; Hekma, 1998; Pronger, 1990 Southall et al., 2004) that found sexual prejudice and homophobia in sport to be predominately a male-athletic issue, there is evidence the male intercollegiate culture may no longer be a uniform bastion of cultural and institutional homophobia and representative of traditional notions of hegemonic contemporary masculinity. While a significant percentage (28%) of heterosexual college-male athletes are likely to be unfriendly or even hostile toward gay male athletes, such reported attitudes do not necessarily mean they will be actualized. In addition, while surveyed male athletes were significantly less likely to consider allowing GLBs to coach and were opposed to having a GLB coach, it should be noted this study was conducted in the Southeastern United States, a geographic region noted for its religious evangelism and conservative politics (Philips, 2006). As a result, this study's sexual prejudice and homophobia attitude levels may be higher than what might be found in other parts of the United States. Future research projects hope to address this limitation.

It should also be noted this research indicated the level and extent of homophobia in sports identified by Messner (1992) is not indicative of the majority's view. This suggests the possibility that such sexual prejudice may be diminishing. While the "homophobic male-athletic citadel" still exists, it may be that - as Anderson (2005a, 2005b) has reported - the "outer walls" of masculine homophobia are at least under siege. Though Wolf-Wendel's et al. *hypermasculine* males were present in our sample and a high percentage of male athletes reported using derogatory language, the reported 28% rejection/harassment and 25% self-described homophobic levels are less than previously reported (Bourdieu, 2001; Messner 1992), and consistent with General Social Survey (GSS) trends, which show increasing acceptance of various sexual orientation (National Opinion Research Center, 2009). Future research is needed to determine if the number of homophobic male athletes is, in fact, decreasing and if progress toward acceptance of diverse sexual orientations among male-college athletes is taking place.

While the high level of acceptance of GLBs (both male and female athletes) among the sampled female athletes is encouraging, the levels of homophobia and sexual prejudice levels among sample male athletes supports previous calls (Anderson, 2002; Cunningham, 2004; Fink & Pastore, 1999; Gill et al., 2006; Southall, et al., 2006) for proactive diversity educational and training initiatives within intercollegiate athletic departments. This study offers evidence that - as Jacobson (2002) reported - it is likely the loneliness and fear of discovery felt by many deeply-closeted male athletes is still present. While progress has been made, if this study's results are any indication, male intercollegiate-athletic fields, arenas, stadiums, and locker rooms are still more homophobic and less accepting of GLB sexual orientations than female athletic environments. If acceptance of diversity is a proclaimed goal of both NCAA-member institutions and their athletic departments, this study cast doubt on Rutgers University's Robert Mulcahy's notion that homophobia and sexual prejudice is "...not a significant problem" (Koblin, 2004, p. 3) in college sport and supports the need to proactively address these attitudes on college campuses nationwide in order to reduce or eliminate harassment, hazing or assault of GLB college athletes.

Future research should explore more fully some additional study findings related to female college athletes' sexual-orientation attitudes, including female athletes being far more

likely to (a) be lesbian or bi-sexual, (b) know teammates who are LBT and (c) hold non-prejudicial attitudes about sexuality. In addition, given the study's large sample size, the wide distribution across sports - including sports dominated by African Americans and those in which blacks are not present - the authors are currently completing intersectional data analysis, in which gender & race form the basis for investigating attitudes regarding sexual orientation.

References

- Anderson, E. (2002). Openly gay athletes: Contesting hegemonic masculinity in a homophobic environment. *Gender & Society, 16*(6), 860-877.
- Anderson, E. (2005a). *In the Game: Gay athletes and the cult of masculinity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Anderson, E. (2005b). Orthodox and inclusive masculinity: Competing masculinities among heterosexual men in a feminized terrain. *Sociological Perspectives, 48*(3), 337-356.
- Anderson, E. (2008). Being masculine is not about who you sleep with...:" Heterosexual athletes contesting masculinity and the one-time rule of homosexuality. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 58*(1-2): 104-115.
- Anderson, E. (2009). *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities*. Routledge.
- Barrett, D., & Pollack, L. (2005). Whose gay community? Social class, sexual self-expression and gay community involvement. *The Sociological Quarterly, 46*, 437-456.
- Brannon, R. (1976). The male sex role: Our culture's blueprint of manhood, and what it's done for us lately. In D. S. David and R. Brannon (Eds.), *The forty-nine percent majority: The male sex role*. (pp. 1-45). Reading, MA: Random House.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine Domination*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Brown, R. D., Clarke, B., Gortmaker, V., & Robinson-Keilig, R. (2004). Assessing the campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) students using a multiple perspectives approach. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(1), 8-26.
- Bryant, A. (2003). Changes in attitudes toward women's roles: Predicting gender-role traditionalism among college students. *Sex Roles, 48*(3/4), 131-142.
- Cashmore, E., & Parker, A. (2003). One David Beckham? Celebrity, masculinity and the soccerati. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 20*, 214-231.
- Clarke, G. (1998). Queering the pitch and coming out to play: Lesbians and physical education in sport. *Sport, Education, and Society, 3*(2), 145-160.
- Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Cunningham, G. B. (2004). Strategies for transforming the possible negative effects of group diversity. *Quest, 56*, 421-438.
- Curry, T. (1991). Fraternal bonding in the locker room: A profeminist analysis of talk about competition and women. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 8*, 5-21.
- Dworkin, S. L., Shari, L., Wachs, F. L., & Faye .L. (in press). *Size matters: Body panic, health, and consumer culture*. New York: NYU Press.
- Eliason, M. J. (1996). Homophobia in a university community: Attitudes and experiences of heterosexual freshmen. *Journal of College Student Development, 31*, 484-491.
- ESPN.com news service. (2007 February 11). *Retired NBA star Hardaway says he hates gay people*. Retrieved March 17, 2007, from <http://sports.espn.go.com/nba/news/story?id=2766213>

- Evans, N. J. (2001). The experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths in university communities. In A. R. D'Augelli & C. Patterson (Eds.), *Lesbian, gay and bisexual identities and youth: Psychological perspectives* (pp.181-198). New York: Oxford Press.
- Fink, J. S., & Pastore, D. L. (1999). Diversity in sport? Utilizing the business literature to devise a comprehensive framework of diversity initiatives. *Quest*, 51, 310-327.
- Garner, B., & Smith, R. (1977). Are there really any gay male athletes? An empirical study. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 13(1), 22-34.
- Gill, D. L., Collins, K. E., Lucey, A. B., & Schultz, A. M. (2006). Attitudes and sexual prejudice in sport and physical activity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 20(4), 554-564.
- Griffin, P. (1998). *Strong women, deep closets: Lesbians and homophobia in sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Hekma, G. (1998). "As long as they don't make an issue of it..." Gay men and lesbians in organized sports in the Netherlands. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 35(1), 1-23.
- Heywood, L., & Dworkin, S. (2003). *Built to win: The female athlete as cultural icon*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hyman, P. (2004). *The reluctant metrosexual: Dispatches from an almost hip life*. New York: Villard.
- Ibson, J. (2002). *A century of male relationships in everyday American photography*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books.
- Koblin, J. (2004, November 30). U. sets climate for gay athletes. *The Daily Targum*. Retrieved March 17, 2007, from <http://www.dailytargum.com>
- Jacobson, J. (2002, November 1). The loneliest athletes: Facing derision in a macho culture, many gay athletes in team sports hide their sexuality. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved March 17, 2007, from <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v49/i10/10a03601.htm>
- Johnson, A., Mercer, C., Erens, B., Copas, A., McManus, S., Wellings, K., Fenton, K., Korovessis, C., Macdowall, W., & Nanchahal, K. (2001). Sexual behavior in Britain: Partnerships, practices, and HIV risk behaviours. *The Lancet*, 358(9296), 1835-1842.
- Joyner, K., & Laumann, E. O. (2001). Teenage sex and the sexual revolution. In E.O. Laumann & R.T. Michael (Eds.), *Sex, love, and health in America: Private choices and public consequences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Laumann, E. O., Gagnon, J., Michael, R., & Michaels, S. (1994). *The social organization of sexuality: Sexual practices in the United States*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Li, M., Pitts, B. G., & Quarterman, J. (2008). *Research methods in sport management*. Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.
- Loftus, J. (2001). America's liberalization in attitudes toward homosexuality, 1973 to 1998. *American Sociological Review*, 66(5), 762-782.
- Messner, M. (1992). *Power at play: Sports and the problem of masculinity*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Messner, M. (2002). *Taking the field: Women, men, and sports*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Miller, T. (2001). *Sport sex*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- National Opinion Research Center. (2009). *Variable: Homosexual Sex Relations*. [Data file]. Available from General Social Survey Web site; <http://www.norc.org/GSS+Website/Browse+GSS+Variables/Subject+Index/>

- Ohlander, J., Batalova, J., & J. Treas, J. (2005). Explaining educational influences on attitudes toward homosexuality. *Social Science Research*, 38, 781-799.
- Pascoe, C. J. (2005). 'Dude, You're a Fag:' Adolescent Masculinity and the Fag Discourse. *Sexualities*, 8, 329-346.
- Parks, J. B., Robertson, M. A. (2004). Attitudes toward women mediate the gender effect on attitudes toward sexist language. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28(3), 233-239.
- Philips, K. (2006). *American theocracy: The peril and politics of radical religion, oil, and borrowed money in the 21st century*. New York: Viking.
- Price, M., & Parker, A. (2003). Sport, sexuality, and the gender order: Amateur rugby union, gay men, and social exclusion. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 20, 108-126.
- Pronger, B. (1990). *The arena of masculinity: Sports, homosexuality, and the meaning of sex*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Rankin, S. (2003). Campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people: A national perspective. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Washington, DC.
- Southall, R. M., Folske, B., Eagan, K., & Nagel, M. S. (2004, November). *Homophobia: Just a "thing" on United States college campuses?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, Tucson, AZ.
- Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., Polite, F., Medler, J., & Southall, C. (2006, November). *A Study of Attitudes Regarding Sexual Orientation among NCAA University Athletes*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, Vancouver, BC.
- Tanenbaum, L. (1999). *Slut: Growing up female with a bad reputation*. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Warner, M. (1993). *Fear of a queer planet: Queer politics and social theory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Widmer, E. D., Treas, J., & Newcomb, R. (2002). Attitudes toward nonmarital sex in 24 countries. *Journal of Sex Research*, 35, 349-358.
- Wolf, N. (1997). *Promiscuities*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Wolf-Wendel, L., Toma, D., & Morpew, C. (2001). How much difference is too much difference? Perceptions of gay men and lesbians in intercollegiate athletics. *Journal of College Student Development*, 42(5), 465-479.