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The Impact of Religion and Ally Identity on Individual Sexual and Gender Prejudice at an NCAA Division II institution

Austin R. Anderson

University of Southern Indiana

Chase M. L. Smith

University of Southern Indiana

Sarah E. Stokowski

University of Arkansas

Few academic studies have explored the intersection of sexuality, religion and sport specifically within the collegiate setting; however, with more than 8,000 NCAA student-athletes that identify as something other than heterosexual (Turk, 2018) there is a need to investigate this marginalized population (Melton, 2013). Grounded within the social categorization framework (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the purpose of this study was to examine the impact of religion and ally identity on the LGBT climate surrounding student-athletes at an NCAA Division-II institution. Two hundred and sixty-six student-athletes, coaches and administrators (77.8% response rate) completed a modified version of the LGBT campus climate assessment (Yost & Gilmore, 2011). Results suggested that those involved in organized religions that viewed homosexuality as immoral reported significantly more negative sexual and gender prejudice scores than those that identified as non-religious or LGBT allies. Athletic departments that promote inclusivity find that individuals in the LGBT community are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation, decreasing the likelihood of discrimination (Walker & Melton, 2015). Results of this study can assist administrators to improve the LGBT athletic climate and to foster the development of an organizational culture that encourages the saliency of ally identity vis-à-vis religious identity.

Keywords: Division II, LGBT, religion

Nearly 5% of the United States (US) population does not identify as heterosexual, and as such this population is often classified as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community (Gates, 2017). Based on those numbers, it can be inferred that over 8,000 student-athletes that compete within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) membership are possible members of the LGBT community (Gates, 2017; Turk, 2018). As such, it is not only important to understand this particular population, but to recognize the environment and culture in which LGBT student-athletes find themselves. Furthermore, studies employ various verbiage (lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender [LGBT], lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer [LGBTQ] and sexual minority) when referring to this population.

Although research demonstrates that the climate for student-athletes that identify as LGBT appears to be improving (Magrath, 2017; McCormack, 2012; Toomey, McGeorge & Carlson, 2018), the environment for LGBT individuals still remains negative (i.e., heavily lacking inclusion, derogatory behavior, lack of representation) as this population continues to be marginalized both inside and outside of sporting environments (O'Brien, Shovelton & Latner, 2013; Pfeiffer & Mitsunori, 2018; Rankin & Merson, 2012; Toomey et al., 2018; Turk, 2018). This may be particularly true in collegiate sporting environments that are heavily influenced by organized religion, either in university affiliation or participant identity (Anderson, 2017). Religion is often an important aspect of life (King, 2003), providing many NCAA institutions and participants with purpose and a sense of self-worth (Kiesling & Sorrell, 2009; Levesque, 2002). Moreover, religious beliefs taught by explicitly religious institutions create an internal conflict for those who do not abide by the normative heterosexual narrative (Elizur & Ziv, 2001; Shilo, Yossef & Savaya, 2016). At many NCAA religiously-affiliated institutions, or where religious identity is highly salient among athletic participants, homosexuality and same-sex acts are often viewed as immoral in direct violation of university policy under student conduct codes (Brady & Gleeson, 2016). Often such beliefs are internalized and lead to internalized homophobia among LGBT persons (Ream & Savin-Williams, 2005).

Unfortunately, negative climates impact academic and athletic performance (Cunningham, 2015; Wolf-Wendel, Bajaj, & Spriggs, 2008). In fact, when compared to their heterosexual peers, student-athletes that identify as LGBT are more likely to feel isolated, excluded from team related activities and subjected to homophobic remarks (Rankin & Merson, 2012). Individuals that identify as LGBT are also more likely to abuse drugs, attempt suicide and acts of self-harm, and are more susceptible to mental health disorders (Cunningham, 2015; Kroshus & Davoren, 2016; Rankin & Weber, 2013). According to Melton (2013), student-athletes that identify as LGBT are influenced by a multitude of factors (e.g., organizational, societal, individual). Within organizational constructs, student-athletes that identify as LGBT are often influenced by the overall campus culture, including the athletic department (coaches and teammates) as well as parental involvement (Melton, 2013). Influential societal factors consist of thoughts and feelings related to normative gender ideology as well as overall geographical mindsets regarding sexual orientation. Individual factors that influence LGBT student-athletes often consist of sexuality acceptance, religious attitudes and peer relationships (Melton, 2013). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that those who have a friend or family member in the LGBT community and those that know a student-athlete that identifies as LGBT tend to have a more favorable view of this population (Ensign, Yiamouyanis, White & Ridpath, 2011; Toomey et al., 2018).

Visible LGBT advocacy and ally-creating events are often recognized as important steps in combating negative LGBT climates on college campuses (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld & Frazer 2010; Yost & Gilmore, 2011). The importance and role of allies in the improving environment for LGBT persons, particularly in educational settings and on college campuses, is a concept that should not be ignored.

Previous research has underlined this importance by showing that LGBT students perceive teachers that have participated in ally training to be more accepting than their non-ally identified counterparts (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013). The presence of educators who are supportive of LGBT causes in educational settings has also been related to an increase in school attachment among LGBT students (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz & Barkiewicz, 2010) and an overall improvement in mental health measures of LGBT students (Birkett, Ezpelage & Koenig, 2009). Additionally, safe space programs are commonly identified as recommended efforts to create inclusive LGBT campus environments (Woodford, Kolb, Durocher-Radeka & Javier, 2014).

Although certain factors that contribute to the overall experience of LGBT athletic participants have been explored, there is still an immense need to investigate this marginalized population (Melton, 2013; Toomey et al., 2018). Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature regarding how student-athletes feel about the campus climate regarding the LGBT student-athlete population, specifically at institutions outside of NCAA Division-I membership. There is also a significant lack of research related to student-athlete religious identity and allyism as it relates to LGBT athletic climate. It is important to note that most studies that examine student-athletes experiences tend to be qualitative in nature. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of religion and LGBT ally identity on the athletic environment and culture surrounding LGBT student-athletes at a public NCAA Division-II institution. Specifically, this study investigates the following research questions:

- RQ1. Does self-identification as a member of a religious organization that views homosexuality as immoral, as an LGBT ally, and/or being aware of efforts for LGBT activism influence the levels of individual sexual prejudice (ISP) a student-athlete may possess?
- RQ2. Does self-identification as a member of a religious organization that views homosexuality as immoral, an LGBT ally, and/or being aware of efforts for LGBT activism influence the levels of individual gender prejudice (IGP) a student-athlete may possess?

Review of the Literature

Gender Ideology in Sport

It is difficult to discuss sexuality without addressing traditional gender ideology, as sport often reinforces gender-normative values and beliefs (Coakley, 2015; Krane, 2001; Melton, 2013). Within the context of sport (as well as society), scholars believe women are expected to emphasize their femininity and men are expected to accentuate their masculinity (Coakley, 2015; Waldron, 2016). Normative gender ideology has greatly impacted sport participation, motivation, ideas, and overall beliefs (Coakley, 2015; Waldron, 2016). Coakley (2015) believes normative gender ideology (or the traditional way of thinking about gender) influences: identity, relationships, expectations, and rewards. Normative gender ideology consists of ideas and/or beliefs used to define masculinity and femininity (Coakley, 2015; Waldron, 2016). Ultimately, such ideologies determine gendernormative expectations and values; defining what is considered to be masculine/feminine (Coakley, 2015; Waldron, 2016). Dominant gender ideology also reinforces the belief that same-sex feelings are deviant (Coakley, 2015; Waldron, 2016).

Females are expected to partake in athletic related activities (e.g., figure skating, gymnastics, cheer, dance, tennis, golf) that emphasize exquisiteness and are not viewed as aggressive nor physically exhausting (Coakley, 2015; Waldron, 2016). Although research suggests that adolescent female athletes go to greater lengths to express their athleticism (and in turn masculinity) when compared to their male counterparts

(Griffin, 1998; Harry, 1995; Messner, 1988, Waldron, 2016; Zipp, 2011;); there is also contradictory evidence which suggests that female athletes are presumed to be lesbian (Kauer & Krane, 2006; Turk 2018; Waldron, 2016). Female athletes often feel the need to “overemphasize femininity by wearing makeup, bows, accentuating traditional femininity, and distancing themselves from lesbians or sexual minority athletes to avoid being labeled a lesbian” (Turk, 2018, p. 17). Kauer and Krane (2006) suggest the importance of appearance, specifically that of hair, which can often lead to female athletes being labeled as lesbians.

Male athletes are expected to participate in sports (e.g., wrestling, football) that are physical in nature, a place where they can exude aggression and demonstrate a heightened sense of masculinity (Coakley, 2015). Furthermore, male athletes are expected to avoid sports that lack physicality (Coakley, 2015). Essentially, male and female athletes are expected to participate in traditional sports in line with normative gender ideology (Connell, 1987, 1995; Griffin, 1998; Kolnes, 1995; Krane & Barber, 2003; Shaw & Hoerber, 2003). Male athletes often conform to this ideology by exerting their masculinity in order to avoid being labeled as gay (Krane, 2001). Krane (2016) believed that prejudice towards those who do not align with the normative heterosexual narrative is often rooted in these traditional gender normative expectations.

According to Ashmore and Del Boca (1979) a stereotype is a “set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people” (p. 16). Such views contribute to negative perceptions of those belonging to specific (and often underrepresented) groups, often leading to self-perpetuating stereotypes (Allport, 1954; Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005; Devine, 1989; Dovidio et al., 1996; Rush, 1998). Men who identify as non-heterosexual are often viewed as flamboyant, feminine, perverted, and promiscuous (Bernstein, 2004). Women are often viewed as masculine and antagonistic (Eliason, Donelan, & Randall, 1992; Satore & Cunningham, 2009).

Attitudes of LGBT in Sport

Within the context of sport, several studies have noted the negative attitudes toward those who identify as LGBT (Anderson, 2005; Gill, Morrow, Collins, Lucey & Schultz, 2010; Griffin, 1998; Krane & Barber, 2003, 2005; Pfeiffer & Misawa, 2018; Plummer, 2006; Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). Such attitudes lead to the inability for many student-athletes that identify as LGBT to feel safe enough to disclose their sexuality or “come out” and has potentially harmful psychological effects. Student-athletes that are forced to remain closeted often experience a decrease in athletic as well as academic success (Turk, 2018; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2008).

Negative cultural climates have detrimental effects on athletic identity which are quite impactful for student-athletes that identify as LGBT. According to Rankin and Weber (2013), negative climates impact academic success, and student-athletes who identify as LGBT often demonstrate lower levels of academic success and overall performance when compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Student-athletes outside the heterosexual norm often have negative experiences, specifically regarding interactions with coaches and teammates (Wolf-Wendel, et al., 2008). According to Rankin and Merson (2012) those who identify as LGBT experience harassment at an alarming rate; 20% have been cyber-bullied, and 50% reported feelings of isolation. There are also significant associations between a student-athlete’s sexual orientation and substance abuse (Kroshus & Davoren, 2016). Student-athletes who identify as a LGBT are at a higher risk of drug abuse, including illicit and prescription drugs, when compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Kroshus & Davoren, 2016). Additionally, student-athletes that identify as LGBT are not only at risk of substance abuse but also at risk of experiencing specific mental health conditions (Cunningham, 2015; Kroshus & Davoren, 2016; Rankin & Merson, 2012). This population experiences high levels of anxiety,

depression and feelings of isolation (Cunningham, 2015; Kroshus & Davoren, 2016; Rankin & Merson, 2012). More pointedly, the sexual orientation of student-athletes, specifically those that identify outside of the heterosexual norm, is associated with harmful mental health outcomes including acts of self-harm and suicide (Cunningham, 2015; Kroshus & Davoren, 2016).

Within the sport context, discrimination in regards to sexual orientation is actually viewed as somewhat acceptable (Herek, 2007; 2009). Satore and Cunningham (2009) looked at decisions in regards to sport participation as related to sexual and gender prejudice, finding that athletes were less likely to participate, and parents were less likely to encourage participation, if a coach identified as LGBT. In line with past studies (Herek & Capitanio, 1999; Shang, Liao, & Gill, 2012; Toomey et al., 2018), men viewed those who identified as LGBT negatively (Satore & Cunningham, 2009). However, results also indicated that males viewed lesbian coaches more favorably compared to their gay male counterparts (Satore & Cunningham, 2009). In a similar study, Cunningham, Satore and McCullough (2010) found that student-athletes and coaches that identified as LGBT were viewed negatively. Furthermore, sexual orientation has been found to be a barrier in the hiring process of coaches and athletic administrators (Cunningham et al., 2010).

Non-heterosexual student-athletes often have negative experiences, specifically regarding interactions with coaches and teammates as well (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2008). However, Pfeiffer and Misawa (2018), in a qualitative study of lesbian student-athletes, demonstrated that “positive support from teammates” (p. 168) played a crucial role in this population feeling accepted. Toomey et al. (2018) examined heterosexual student-athletes’ perceptions of gender and sexual minorities. The results of the study not only demonstrated that heterosexual student-athletes reported high levels of bias toward those gender and sexual minorities, but they also were not likely to mediate in instances of prejudice towards their non-heterosexual peers (Toomey et al., 2018).

Ensign et al. (2011) investigated athletic trainers’ attitudes toward student-athletes that identify as LGBT at NCAA member institutions. Results indicated that, overall, athletic trainers had positive attitudes toward student-athletes that identified as LGBT (Ensign et al., 2011). However, female athletic trainers that had a friend or family member that identified as LGBT tended to view this population more favorably (Ensign et al., 2011). Furthermore, athletic trainers who knew a student-athlete that identified as LGBT had a more auspicious view of this population (Ensign et al., 2011).

Discrimination in regard to sexual orientation can greatly influence the lived experience, health, and overall well being of individuals that identify as LGBT (Brooks, 1981; Crocker & Major, 1989; Shilo et al., 2016; Smith & Ingram, 2004). As such, those who identify as LGBT are often unable to escape the stigma associated with their sexual orientation (Shilo et al., 2016; Smith & Ingram, 2004). In essence, an individual’s sexual orientation becomes their identity and those who identify as LGBT must find ways to manage such stigmatization (Beatty & Kirby, 2006; Pinel, 1999; Pfeiffer & Misawa, 2018; Pinel & Paulin, 2005; Satore-Baldwin, 2013). Pinel (1999) defines this status as stigma consciousness, which often manifests within negative environments (Herek, 2009), labeling, and discrimination (Link & Phelan, 2001). Due to stigma consciousness, lesbian athletic coaches fear that such labeling and discrimination will not only lead to restricted employment opportunities or even job termination, but will also impact their ability to recruit (Griffin, 1998; Krane, 1997; Satore & Cunningham, 2009). Despite improved climates for those who identify as LGBT within athletic spaces (Magrath, 2017; McCormack, 2012; Toomey et al., 2018; Waldron, 2015), labeling and other discriminatory practices for individuals who identify as LGBT is often validated though the lack of inclusionary practices (Atteberry-Ash, Woodford & Center, 2018; O’Brien, Shovelton & Latner, 2013; Pfeiffer & Mitsunori, 2018; Rankin & Merson, 2012; Turk, 2018).

As research has demonstrated, the climate within the athletic space can impact the experiences of all student-athletes. Athletic departments that vigorously promote inclusivity and promote fair-minded

environments find that individuals in the LGBT community are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation, reducing discrimination and negative impacts for LGBT participants (Pfeiffer & Misawa, 2018; Turk, 2018; Walker & Melton, 2015). Organizational diversity (including sexual orientation) and inclusive values can lead to improved performance (Walker & Melton, 2015). Though research around inclusivity regarding sexual orientation in sport has begun to diversify in regard to athletic staff members (e.g., administrators and coaches), student-athlete perceptions of those who identify as LGBT are not often thoroughly explored. Furthermore, previous literature fails to examine institutions outside of the NCAA Division-I level.

Religious Affiliation in Sporting Contexts

Few academic studies have examined the intersection of sexuality, religion and sport specifically within collegiate settings. An article published in the USA Today (Brady & Gleeson, 2016) discussed that at many NCAA member institutions, specifically those with religious affiliations, homosexuality is viewed as immoral and these institutions have strict policies that forbid such behavior. Such opinions often conflict with the mission of the NCAA, fail to create an inclusive environment and in many cases are illegal (Brady & Gleeson, 2016). It remains clear that such values, and even freedom of religion, remain a source of conflict among the stakeholders and those competing at NCAA member institutions.

Magrath (2017) conducted a qualitative study of 17 Christian football players in the United Kingdom and found that nearly half of the sample demonstrated homophobic attitudes. The athletes that had positive attitudes towards the LGBT population referred to a family member (e.g., uncle) or a friend that identified as LGBT (Magrath, 2017). However, there were several athletes that had favorable attitudes towards those that acted outside of the heterosexual norm. Such negative attitudes towards those who identified as LGBT were not only associated with heightened masculinity and religion (as all the participants were Christian) but also with the cultural environment in which the participants were raised. For example, a few of the participants were from countries (e.g., Nigeria, Uganda) in which homosexuality is not only viewed as immoral, but is in fact illegal (Magrath, 2017).

In Turk's (2018) qualitative study that examined the perceptions of sexual minority student-athletes toward inclusion at a Division-I institution, religion was a major finding. In the study, nearly every participant mentioned religion and "its influence on beliefs and attitudes toward the sexual minority community or towards themselves" (Turk, 2018, p. 101). The participants spoke of their "struggle of coming to terms with others' or their own sexuality and their personal religious views" (Turk, 2018, p. 102). A male student-athlete that identified as a sexual minority found it difficult to accept his sexuality as, according to his religion, homosexuality is a sin. Others spoke of difficulty in speaking to religious leaders, as church leadership disagreed with their same-sex relationships (Turk, 2018). Furthermore, different religious groups that met on campus (e.g., Fellowship of Christian Athletes [FCA], Athletes in Action [AIA]) actually discouraged non-heterosexual relationships and when such an organization became aware of an athlete that identified as a sexual minority, the student was encouraged to meet with individuals who had been "reformed" (Turk, 2018, p. 106). Turk (2018) also noted the need for sport scholars to look deeper into the matter of religion and the impact of religion on student-athletes that identify as LGBT.

Anderson (2017) examined the impact of the religious identities for participants within a campus recreational sporting context on attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Anderson's (2017) study found that Evangelical Christian-identified participants held significantly worse attitudes toward lesbians and gay men when compared to non-religious participants. Given the impact that religious identity can have on acceptance of those who do not identify as heterosexual, there is little additional research on how this aspect of identity may influence overall athletic and sporting climates, as the present study addresses.

Regarding student-athletes, there is an ongoing conversation concerning meeting the spiritual needs of this population (Waller, 2016; Waller, Huffman, & Hardin, 2016). According to Waller et al. (2016), “more student-athletes are aware of the importance of spirituality” (p. 226). Spirituality plays an integral role in the lives of student-athletes both on and off the field of play (Waller et al., 2016). One way organizations have assisted in meeting the needs of athletes is through the guidance of sport chaplains (Waller, 2016; Waller et al., 2016). Sport chaplains were originally associated with the Christian faith; however, presently the role of a chaplain is to inspire “persons to access their own spiritual and religious coping strategies” (Waller, 2016, p. 244). Although most NCAA membership institutions do not officially employ sport chaplains, Waller et al. (2016) suggest “sport chaplains provide the unique expertise needed to accommodate the spiritual needs of the collegiate athletic population” (p. 237). Furthermore, such “spiritual care provides another crucial tool to effectively address issues which collegiate athletes encounter” (p. 237). As this practice becomes more common at NCAA institutions, the connection between religious identity and attitudes toward non-heterosexual populations becomes more prominent and important to explore.

Theoretical Framework

Identity, specifically identity formation, is a fundamental part of life (Erikson, 1968). Although complex, identity is constantly changing and evolving throughout the course of a lifetime (Erikson, 1968). Religious identity is an integral part in overall identity development (Erikson 1950, 1968). Erikson’s (1950, 1968) work emphasized that the late adolescent phase of life is essential not only for identity development, but for religious identity development. It is during this time that youth begin to conceptualize their worldviews (Erikson, 1968; King, 2003) and analyzing the purpose of life (King, 2003). Often, spiritual assessment, examination, and consideration transpires during this time (Good & Willoughby, 2008). According to Donelson (1999) religious discussions happen during late adolescence; as such, parents often play a large role in the development of religious identity (Good & Willoughby, 2008). Furthermore, it is during early adolescence that religious commitments are made (Donelson, 1999). The development of a religious ideology can assist individuals ultimately in developing “a perceived relationship with the divine found in religion” (Long, 2012, p. 1). For some, religion is the predominant component of identity (Kiesling & Sorrell, 2009).

The present investigation and subsequent analysis were grounded within the social categorization framework to aid in understanding the role of individual identities within group and social settings. The social categorization framework is inclusive of both social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987). Tajfel (1972) defined social identity as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (p. 292). Self-categorization theory “describes how categorization of self and others underpins social identification and associated group and intergroup phenomena” (Hogg, 2006, p.113). Taken together, the social categorization framework suggests that social groups are constructed through individual categorization of identities, and that within these social groups individuals will prioritize group norms and identities that accentuate their in-group status, while de-emphasizing norms and identities that are counter to the construction of the social group. This is particularly important within sporting settings where sexual minorities typically occupy “out-group” identities. When it comes to student-athlete religious identity, this framework suggests that members of a group may accentuate the traditional aspects of their in-group religious status, to the detriment of sexual minority identities that may be present within the group. That is, if there is a dominant religious identity which represents “in-group” members, aspects of that identity will be stressed as significant while identities counter to that identity (“out-group”) will be de-valued. It is against this background that the current study investigated the LGBT athletic climate at a public

Division-II institution, particularly in reference to religious affiliation and allyism. This study addresses a significant gap in the literature within this particular sporting environment and population.

Method

Participants

The invited participants for the study consisted of all student-athletes, all coaches, and the athletic administrators at a Midwestern university that is a state, public institution containing membership in the NCAA's Division-II. The convenient, purposive sample of participants was determined by a University Athletics Council (UAC) charge within the institution. While purposive sampling is typically used in qualitative methods, the approach is recommended when an objective for investigation is established (Andrew, Pedersen, & McEvoy, 2011). Participation within the study consisted of completing an online Qualtrics survey. In total, 266 usable surveys were completed from the institution's student-athletes, coaches, and athletic administrators, of 342 possible participants, resulting in a total response rate of 77.8%. The information concerning frequencies and demographics of the sample are provided in Table 1.

Instrumentation

A slightly-modified version of an LGBT campus climate assessment (Yost & Gilmore, 2011) tool was utilized in this study. In the initial study, the assessment tool was utilized to assess the levels of sexual- and gender-based prejudice among the [target] college's various constituents, specific perceptions of the campus' institutional climate, student and faculty experiences in the classroom (as the classroom is often a microcosm of the larger campus climate), and finally, whether students' involvement in co-curricular activities was related to their campus perceptions. In the present study, the assessment tool was modified to fit the particular campus of study, and to specifically focus upon the university athletic environment's LGBT community. The assessment tool had shown previously acceptable levels of reliability and validity (Yost & Gilmore, 2011) within a campus environment and was thus thought to be an appropriate fit for this study.

Dependent variables. Data were collected from participants for two measures determining the levels of sexual prejudice and levels of gender prejudice within individuals on a 5-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). To assess the levels of sexual prejudice the investigators utilized a 10-item measure (ISP) that consisted of items "related to homophobic attitudes, beliefs about immorality of homosexuality, and personal support" (Yost & Gilmore, 2011, p. 1334). To assess the levels of gender prejudice the investigators utilized a 4-item measure (IGP) that consisted of items related to transphobic attitudes and support for the LGBT community. Within both measures, the higher overall scores indicate more negative attitudes toward LGBT individuals. The items within each scale that show support for the LGBT individuals were reversed coded. The descriptions, means, and standard deviations for each item within the ISP and the IGP are located in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

Independent variables. The three independent variables utilized in the study were asked at different points in the survey. The first independent variable *Nonmember* assessed the religious stance on homosexual behavior, "If you consider yourself a member of an organized religion, does your religion consider homosexual behavior immoral or sinful?" (0 = Yes, 1 = No). The second and third independent variables (i.e., *Ally*, *Aware*) respectively read as, "I am actively involved in organizations, campaigns, and/or

activities that promote equality for LGBT people (also known as an ally)” and “I am aware of organizations, campaigns and/or activities that promote equality for LGBT people.” Both variables were measured with a 5-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Control variables. The participants statuses as involved with athletics are controlled for the analyses. Dummy variables after the data within the sample was cleaned include gender (Male = 0, Female = 1), race (White = 0, Minority = 1), and sexuality (Heterosexual = 0, Minority = 1). Other control variables within the analyses are the team affiliation (if applicable), student-year / athletic status, and residence (rural, suburban, urban).

Data Collection

The institution’s UAC charge for this study required collaboration with the institution’s athletic department and the principle investigator. The investigators devised scientifically appropriate measures to collect information at the request of the UAC regarding the institution’s LGBT athletic climate, specifically inquiring for operative and enlightening questions to be asked concerning what influences exist for the athletic department individual’s levels of sexual and gender prejudice. Once IRB approval was obtained by the principle investigator’s institution, contact was made to the athletic department to facilitate times to collect data. The procedure allowed the student-athletes for each athletic team to receive an assigned time to meet at an on-campus computer lab to participate in the study. Each session was proctored by a member of the research team. The proctor of an assigned time stressed the voluntary nature of participation which was explicitly outlined prior to survey administration via a Qualtrics-generated email to the student-athletes. No identifiable information was collected, therefore, no additional attempts were made to contact the student-athletes that did not attend or participate. Coaches and athletic administrators received email invitations to participate via Qualtrics containing a direct link to the online survey instrument. Follow-up emails were automatically generated and sent via Qualtrics (i.e., not directly from the research team) to the coaches and administrators that had not yet accessed the survey. The emails to these individuals were sent at regular intervals, for a maximum of three email invitations.

Data Analysis

After collection, data were analyzed for overall demographic frequencies and ISP and IGP item scores. The investigators found relatively high internal consistency (i.e., reliability) for the two factors with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for ISP and IGP at .887 and .825 respectively. Individual question item ISP and IGP mean scores were also calculated and examined. Following interpretation of these overall scores, regression analysis was undertaken to determine the significant predictor variables for each type of individualized prejudice factor score. Specifically, the following research questions were examined:

- RQ1. Does self-identification as a member of a religious organization that views homosexuality as immoral, as an LGBT ally, and/or being aware of efforts for LGBT activism influence the levels of individual sexual prejudice (ISP) a student-athlete may possess?
- RQ2. Does self-identification as a member of a religious organization that views homosexuality as immoral, an LGBT ally, and/or being aware of efforts for LGBT activism influence the levels of individual gender prejudice (IGP) a student-athlete may possess?

The investigators utilized STATA 14.0 version to input the standard multiple linear regression models for analysis. It was determined by the investigators that theory did not sufficiently support a different method and the standard method of simultaneous variable entry is appropriate (Statistics Solutions, 2013). The F-test was used to assess whether the set of (independent) variables for each model collectively predict the ISP and IGP scores and proved significant for each model. Residual plots were analyzed by the investigators and determined to be appropriate for the fitted values of both ISP and IGP. The investigators utilized an adjusted R-squared value for interpretation of the data as it provides an unbiased value for measuring the percent variance explained within a model. A Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) test was used to address severity of multicollinearity for the regression of each model. All VIF scores (i.e., ratio of variance) for the models were acceptable (i.e., less than 10). This allowed the investigators to have confidence the adjusted R-squared statistic reported in Tables 4 and 5 for each of the models determined how much variance ISP and IGP can be accounted for by each independent variable (*Nonmember*, *Ally*, and *Aware*) isolated in models 1, 2, and 3 respectively. The investigators identified an increase in the adjusted R-squared statistic for model 4 compared to the other three models for Tables 4 and 5 supporting reason for the investigators to interpret each independent variable as practical within each model 4.

Results

The sample of respondents in this investigation contained individuals within the institution's athletic department (student-athletes, coaches, staff). The demographic characteristics for the sample are displayed in Table 1. The responses totaled 266 for which Individual Sexual Prejudice climate (ISP) and Individual Gender Prejudice climate (IGP) scores were calculated. The mean ISP score for the sample is 20.21 (ranged from 10 to 39) and the mean IGP score is 10.05 (ranged from 4 to 20). The individual instrument items and mean scores are also displayed below (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 1
Total Sample Characteristics

Demographic category	<i>n</i>	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Class			
Freshman	66	25.10	25.10
Sophomore	56	21.29	46.39
Junior	61	23.19	69.58
Senior	52	19.77	89.35
Graduate Student	4	1.52	90.87
Coach/Staff	24	9.13	100.00
Gender			
Male	119	45.08	45.08
Female	145	54.92	100.00
Race			
African Am. / Black	18	6.79	6.79
Native American	1	0.38	7.17
Asian American	3	1.13	8.30
White	226	85.28	93.58
Hispanic / Latino	5	1.89	95.47
Multiple Race	10	3.77	99.25
Other	2	0.75	100.00

Residence				
	Rural	109	40.98	40.98
	Suburban	118	44.36	85.34
	Urban	39	14.66	100.00
Sexuality				
	Heterosexual	242	90.98	90.98
	Gay	7	2.63	93.61
	Lesbian	8	3.01	96.62
	Bi-sexual	5	1.88	98.50
	Questioning	4	1.50	100.00

Table 2
Individual Question Item Mean Scores - ISP

Question Item	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
As far as I'm concerned, homosexuality is immoral.	2.23	1.20	.000	.011
I would feel at ease talking to an LGBT person at a party or social gathering.	2.01	1.05	.000	.101
Gay or lesbian couples in a committed relationship should have the same rights and privileges as heterosexual couples.	2.13	1.08	.000	.968
I would be afraid of what others would think if they saw me having lunch with a person who is openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered.	1.74	.80	.000	.142
I usually refer to LGBT people in a derogatory manner.	1.72	.80	.000	.037
I think LGBT individuals should be prohibited from working with children (teachers, sport coaches, etc.).	1.59	.80	.000	.010
If I knew someone was gay, lesbian or bisexual, I would feel comfortable forming a friendship with that individual.	1.98	1.03	.000	.013
I'm sick and tired of hearing about LGBT individuals.	2.72	1.11	.359	.023
Bisexual individuals are actually confused about their sexual orientation.	2.38	.99	.086	.164
I would decline membership in an organization if I knew it had gay, lesbian, or bisexual members.	1.71	.75	.000	.765

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neither, 5 = Strongly Agree. Reverse-scored items = 2, 3, & 7.
Abbreviations: ISG = Individualized Sexual Prejudice

Table 3
Individual Question Item Mean Scores - IGP

Question Item	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
If I knew someone that was transgender, I would feel comfortable forming a friendship with that individual.	2.52	1.03	.027	.121
The LGBT movement (for equal rights) is important as a civil rights movement.	2.55	1.12	.026	.011
Transgendered individuals are actually confused about their sexual orientation.	2.54	1.04	.198	.093
I consider myself supportive of LGBT individuals.	2.43	1.06	.009	.554

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neither, 5 = Strongly Agree. Reverse-scored items = 1, 2, & 4. Abbreviations: ISG = Individualized Gender Prejudice

The first of the two research questions the investigators examined is that being a member of a religious organization that considered homosexuality to be immoral (i.e., *Nonmember*), being involved as an ally to the LGBT (i.e., *Ally*), and being aware of efforts for activism (i.e., *Aware*) will influence the levels of individual sexual prejudice (ISP) an individual may possess. To address this question the investigators regressed each independent predictor and then all three predictors while holding all demographic variables (e.g., team, class status, gender, race, hometown, sexuality) constant. Table 4 displays the results.

In models 1, 2, and 3 of Table 4, all three predictors in isolation with the control variables showed strong, significant influence on ISP for the respondents. In model 1, the respondents that identify as a member of an organized religion that considers homosexual behavior immoral or sinful contain sexual prejudice significantly higher than respondents who are a *Nonmember*. On average and holding all else constant, these nonmembers contain ISP levels that are almost five points less than members of the religious organization contain ($\beta^{\wedge} = -4.75, p < 0.001$). When calculating the influence of the respondent's involvement to be an ally for the LGBT community on their levels of ISP, on average, the respondent's ISP is significantly associated with the involvement by the respondent ($\beta^{\wedge} = -1.78, p < 0.001$). The respondents that identify more as an *Ally* show lower levels of ISP than otherwise. In model 3, the more *Aware* by one point a respondent is about organizations, campaigns and/or activities that promote equality for LGBT people the lower their ISP score will be by decreasing between 1.57 to 3.21 points when holding all else constant (95% *CI*: [-1.57, -3.21], $t = 5.73, p < 0.001$). In other words, the respondents that are more aware show lower levels of ISP than otherwise.

In model 4 of Table 4, the investigators utilized all three predictor variables to regress the influence on ISP with roughly 40% explained variation. The direction of significance remained for each predictor variable found respectively within models 1, 2, and 3. However, each predictor variable appears to lessen in influence when the other two independent variables are controlled. The coefficient for being a *Nonmember* of an organized religion that considers homosexual behavior immoral or sinful lessened by over 20%. The coefficient for the involvement to be an *Ally* for the LGBT community almost decreased by half in value while becoming less significant after showing strong significance in model 2. Lastly, when considering the more *Aware* a respondent is by one point on behalf of organizations, campaigns and/or activities that promote equality for LGBT people, their ISP score will be reduced between 0.73 to 2.59 points when

holding all else constant (95% *CI*: [-0.73, -2.59], $t = 3.52$, $p < 0.001$). This is noticeably less than the coefficient listed for the *Aware* independent variable in model 3.

Table 4

The Effects of Religious Membership, Allyism, and Awareness on Individual Sexual Prejudice (N=266)

	Individual Sexual Prejudice			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Nonmember	-4.75*** (0.94)	— —	— —	-3.70*** (0.93)
Ally	— —	-1.78*** (0.44)	— —	-1.03* (0.49)
Aware	— —	— —	-2.39*** (0.42)	-1.66*** (0.47)
CONTROL VARIABLES				
Team	-0.08 (0.18)	-0.22 (0.15)	-0.25 (0.15)	-0.09 (0.17)
Class	-0.24 (0.32)	-0.45 (0.27)	-0.50 (0.26)	-0.13 (0.30)
Gender ^a (0,1)	-6.46*** (0.95)	-4.79*** (0.84)	-4.23*** (0.82)	-5.46*** (0.92)
Race ^b (0,1)	-0.91 (1.23)	0.03 (1.06)	-0.20 (1.03)	-0.83 (1.16)
Resident Area	-1.02 (0.62)	-1.12* (0.56)	-1.19* (0.54)	-1.22* (0.59)
Sexuality ^c (0,1)	-3.46* (1.57)	-2.56 (1.36)	-3.44** (1.30)	-3.27* (1.51)
Constant	40.03*** (2.34)	25.42*** (2.63)	26.06*** (2.15)	29.27*** (3.29)
<i>N</i>	185	252	251	184
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.33	0.25	0.29	0.40
<i>AIC</i>	1177.94	1620.41	1597.37	1151.96
<i>BIC</i>	1203.71	1648.65	1625.57	1184.11

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. ^aGender = Female coefficient. ^bRace = Minority coefficient included African Am. / Black, Native American, Asian American, Hispanic / Latino, Multiple Race, Other.

^cSexuality = Minority coefficient included Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Questioning. Ns do not total 266 due to missing values within some variables.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The second research question the investigators examined mimicked the first question, but analyzing the influence the three independent variables *Nonmember*, *Ally*, and *Aware* have on IGP. The inquiry provided an examination of the impacts an individual's religion, allyism and awareness of LGBT equality and activism may have regarding their levels of individual gender prejudice (IGP). The investigators addressed the question by regressing each independent predictor and then all three predictors while holding all else constant. Table 5 shows the results.

In models 1, 2, and 3 of Table 5, all three predicting independent variables in isolation with the control variables showed strong, significant influence on IGP for the respondents. In model 1, the respondents that identify as a *Nonmember* of an organized religion that considers homosexual behavior immoral or sinful contain gender prejudice significantly lower than respondents who are members. On average and holding all else constant, these nonmembers contain roughly 2.4 points less of an IGP score than members do ($\beta^{\wedge} = -2.40, p < 0.001$). When considering the influence of the respondent's involvement to be an *Ally* for the LGBT community on their levels of IGP, on average, a respondent's IGP is significantly associated with this involvement by the respondent; more specifically the more involved the respondent is (i.e., an ally) will decrease their levels of IGP ($\beta^{\wedge} = -1.27, p < 0.001$). In model 3, the more *Aware* by one point a respondent is about organizations, campaigns and/or activities that promote equality for LGBT people, the lower their levels of IGP will be by a range of .98 to 1.78 points when holding all else constant (95% *CI*: [-0.98, -1.78], $t = 6.78, p < 0.001$).

In model 4 of Table 5, the investigators utilized all three predictor variables to regress the influence on IGP with roughly 40% explained variation. The direction of significance remains for each predictor variable found respectively within models 1, 2, and 3. When taking a closer look, each predictor variable appears to lessen in impact when the other two independent predictors are controlled. The coefficient for being a *Nonmember* of an organized religion that considers homosexual behavior immoral or sinful decreased by more than 30%. The coefficient for the involvement to be an *Ally* for the LGBT community lessens by half of a point in value while becoming slightly less significant after showing strong significance in model 2. Finally, when taking consideration for the more *Aware* a respondent is by one point with organizations, campaigns and/or activities that promote equality for LGBT people, their IGP score will lower between .56 to 1.49 points when holding all else constant (95% *CI*: [-0.56, -1.49], $t = 4.34, p < 0.001$). The value is distinctly less than the coefficient's value listed for the *Aware* independent variable in model 3.

Table 5
The Effects of Religious Membership, Allyism, and Awareness on Individual Gender Prejudice (N=266)

	Individual Gender Prejudice			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Nonmember	-2.40*** (0.49)	— —	— —	-1.66*** (0.46)
Ally	— —	-1.27*** (0.21)	— —	-0.77** (0.24)
Aware	— —	— —	-1.38*** (0.20)	-1.02*** (0.24)
CONTROL VARIABLES				
Team	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.17* (0.08)	-0.20** (0.07)	-0.07 (0.08)
Class	-0.22 (0.17)	-0.27* (0.13)	-0.32* (0.13)	-0.15 (0.15)
Gender ^a (0,1)	-2.70*** (0.50)	-1.87*** (0.41)	-1.54*** (0.40)	-2.04*** (0.46)
Race ^b (0,1)	-0.47 (0.65)	0.09 (0.52)	0.02 (0.51)	-0.38 (0.59)
Resident Area	-0.37 (0.32)	-0.38 (0.27)	-0.42 (0.26)	-0.50 (0.29)
Sexuality ^c (0,1)	-1.83* (0.82)	-1.48* (0.66)	-2.10** (0.63)	-1.66* (0.75)
Constant	19.30*** (1.22)	10.44*** (1.27)	11.86*** (1.05)	11.95*** (1.63)
<i>N</i>	184	251	250	183
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.27	0.29	0.32	0.40
<i>AIC</i>	930.78	1248.77	1232.35	889.20
<i>BIC</i>	956.50	1276.97	1260.52	921.29

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. ^aGender = Female coefficient. ^bRace = Minority coefficient included African Am. / Black, Native American, Asian American, Hispanic / Latino, Multiple Race, Other.

^cSexuality = Minority coefficient included Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Questioning. *N*s do not total 266 due to missing values within some variables.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Discussion and Implications

Impact of Religious Affiliation on ISP/IGP

The investigators found application within each analysis for each of the research questions for athletic departments within collegiate higher education institutions. When each of the independent variables focused for analysis were controlled, *Nonmember* (i.e., not being a member of a religious organization that views homosexual behavior as immoral), *Aware* (i.e., being aware of LGBT promotions for equality), and *Ally* (i.e., being active as an LGBT ally), the coefficient for *Ally* showed a reduction of influence on the levels of ISP and IGP. Moreover, the reduction of influence was coupled with a reduction in significance on ISP. This suggests that there is support for a link between the status of being an LGBT ally and the individual's levels of ISP/IGP channeling via an individual's member status of a religious organization viewing homosexual behavior as immoral and the individual's awareness for promotional activities to create equality for LGBT individuals. Additionally, these findings suggest that an individual who belongs to a religious organization that views homosexuality as immoral has levels of prejudice (i.e., ISP and IGP) that are bettered by the higher levels of awareness and activism in promoting LGBT equality. Vice versa, an individual who does not belong to a religious organization that views homosexuality as immoral has levels of ISP and IGP that are worsened by lower levels of awareness and activism in promoting LGBT equality.

As noted above, student-athletes and athletic department members who identified as members of organized religions that consider LGBT "lifestyles" to be sinful, reported significantly higher sexual and gender prejudice scores than those that did not. Brady and Gleeson (2016) found that at many NCAA member institutions, specifically those with religious affiliations, homosexuality is viewed as immoral. Magrath's (2017) qualitative study of 17 Christian football players in the United Kingdom found that nearly half of the sample demonstrated homophobic attitudes. In Turk's (2018) qualitative study nearly every participant mentioned religion, specifically, their "struggle of coming to terms with others' or their own sexuality and their personal religious views" (Turk, 2018, p. 102). Anderson's (2017) study found that Evangelical Christian-identified participants held significantly worse attitudes toward lesbians and gay men when compared to non-religious participants. As such, the results of this study are congruent with previous research within sporting contexts. Coaches, managers and administrators should be aware of the impact that religious affiliation/identity can have on the diversity-related climate of their athletic programs, particularly when the number of participants that ascribe to religious identities is large (i.e., at religiously affiliated institutions).

In relation to the impact of religious affiliation on sexual and gender prejudice scores, this study presents some opportunity to mitigate the impact of such affiliation grounded in the results. Specifically, the positive impact on sexual and gender prejudice scores that being an ally to the LGBT community and being aware of organizations and campaigns that support LGBT equality should not be overlooked. These results indicate, at least partially, that administrators within athletic environments may be able to mitigate the impact of self-identities that could be detrimental to the diversity climate within their departments and/or teams by providing education around LGBT allyism and equality, and providing opportunities for student-athletes to gain the skills necessary to be an LGBT ally and making them aware of organizations and campaigns that support LGBT equality. Even for participants with strong self-identification with religious organizations that consider LGBT individuals to be immoral, such increased education and awareness may help coaches and administrators to foster an open climate within their departments.

Religious Identity and Social Categorization

At any point in time, individuals have multiple social identities that work to influence their behavior and attitudes. The social categorization framework (Turner et al., 1987) asserts that certain social identities will be more salient than others, and thus more influential on behaviors and attitudes, depending on the environmental context that individuals find themselves. This type of identity saliency and attitude formation is particularly interesting within a university athletic environment where participants may find themselves identifying with many social identities at any one time. Religious affiliation has been acknowledged as a strong source of identity formation, particularly among youth and adolescents (King, 2003). Similarly, religious identity and affiliation has been recognized as a possible indicator of higher levels of homophobia (Rodríguez, 2010).

Student-athletes in collegiate athletic settings, by definition, are consistently juggling multiple social identities during their participation in sport. These identities can include those related to: student-status, athlete, gender, race, teammate, leadership role within a team (captain, senior, etc.), religious affiliation and family roles (son/daughter, parent, partner/spouse), among others. These multiple social identities are consistently working together to exert different levels of influence on behavior, depending on the particular environment.

Within university sport settings, often the identities surrounding athletic and teammate roles can be found to be most salient on the field of play. Within other areas of athletic settings related to social team interaction and the overall athletic climate, other social identities can become more salient; including those related to religious affiliation and sexual identity. When such social identity roles exert influence on behavior, individuals are likely to engage in activities that support in-group identities and discard out-group identities. Within many normative religious affiliations, this can lead to behavior that is counter to non-normative sexual and gender identity acceptance. Institutions with a large percentage of student-athletes affiliated with these religious identities, such as the one in this study, should pay particular attention to the role that this has on behavior and athletic climate when it comes to the acceptance of LGBT persons.

Religion is the principal component of identity (Kiesling & Sorrell, 2009) and religious identity is formed during the late stage of adolescents (Erikson 1950; 1968). Given that many enter the university setting with a religious ideology (Donelson, 1999; Good & Willoughby, 2008; King 2003), perhaps athletic departments should strive for inclusion efforts when student-athletes begin their collegiate careers. Past studies have found that athletic departments that instill inclusive environments experience numerous cultural benefits (Pfeiffer & Misawa, 2018; Turk, 2018; Walker & Melton, 2015). Research also demonstrates that those who know members of the LGBT community are less likely to be bias towards this population (Ensign et al., 2011; Magrath, 2017).

Gender Differences within ISP/IGP

The effects that gender had on the levels of ISP and IGP for the individuals showed strong significance throughout the analysis. Across the models for each research question, females recorded levels of prejudice significantly lower than males. For the results pertaining to both research questions, both model 4 results displayed females recording levels of ISP and IGP lower than males. Thus, on average and holding all else constant, females recorded 5.46 points less of an ISP score than males did ($\beta^{\wedge} = -5.46, p < 0.001$), and females reported roughly 2.04 points less of an IGP score than males did ($\beta^{\wedge} = -2.04, p < 0.001$). These results are of particular importance in intercollegiate athletic environments that are often dominated by male (and masculine) sports, student-athletes, and staff. This finding is in line with past studies (Ensign et al.,

2011; Herek & Capitano, 1999; Satoro & Cunningham, 2009; Shang et al., 2012) that also found that men viewed those who identified as LGBT more negatively when compared to their female counterparts.

Administrators within these environments can address heterosexism and homophobia in athletics with this in mind, and create programs aimed at mitigating the dominant influence that male participants may have on the climate within intercollegiate athletic departments. As Ensign et al. (2011) demonstrated, those who have a personal relationship with an athlete who identifies as LGBT tend to have a more favorable view of this population. Furthermore, Magrath's (2017) study noted that although the participants in the study identified as Christian, if the athletes had a relationship with someone (e.g., teammate) that identified as LGBT, the athlete then had a more favorable view of this population. Lastly, these findings are also support Pfeiffer and Misawa's (2018) qualitative study of lesbian student-athletes in which the participants felt a lack of support from athletic administration.

Limitations

The present study is limited in a number of important ways. First, the sample was drawn from a single institution's athletic department and thus is largely not generalizable beyond the scope of the participant population. The study is also limited in ways that most survey-based research is limited, including response-bias and how forthcoming subjects may be in expressing their individual identities and attitudes that may be counter to socially-expected norms. The present study also assessed for organized religion and did not ask the respondents, specifically the student-athletes, if they participated in a specific religion nor any religious groups that met on campus (e.g., FCA, AIA) or met with a sport chaplain. This study did have a very high response rate from the population group being studied, and as such mitigates some of these limitations in important ways.

Future Research

To our knowledge, this is the first quantitative study that examined religion and LGBT prejudice in regard to student-athletes outside of the NCAA Division-I level. As this line of inquiry (religion) appears to be significant, research further examining the intersection of religion and views on student-athletes that identify as non-heterosexual is warranted. Scholars should consider looking into the impact of religion on perceptions of student-athletes who identify as LGBT across NCAA membership institutions, including institutions that are religiously affiliated. Furthermore, perhaps religiously-affiliated sport groups that meet on campus (e.g., FCA, AIA) warrant further investigation. Lastly, coaches' perceptions of student-athletes that identify as LGBT should be further investigated, as coaches are the leaders of these teams and can have a significant impact on the lived experiences of this population.

Practical Implications: Importance of Allies and Awareness

Although the present study took place at a public Division II institution and the findings should not be generalized, there are practical implications that can perhaps be applied to various sporting organizations. The impact of the presence of LGBT allies and the level of awareness of student-athletes about LGBT equality on gender and sexual prejudice in this study are of particular interest for coaches and administrators in intercollegiate athletic settings. This is partially because, unlike other areas of social identity referenced above, these factors are impactful of gender and sexual prejudice while also being somewhat controllable. That is, coaches and administrators in these settings can actively and directly impact the number and prevalence of LGBT allies within the athletic environment and can implement programs to raise the level of

awareness of student-athletes around LGBT equality. This study suggests that such direct administrative action can have significant influence on the levels of sexual and gender prejudice that are present within athletic environments.

Given the significance of both individual student-athlete religious identity and identification as an LGBT ally in the study, the intersection of these social identities is also noteworthy. On the surface, it seems that identification with both a religious affiliation that views homosexuality as immoral and as an LGBT ally would be incongruent. However, it is clear that student-athletes in the sample are internally balancing those differing social identities in some way. It seems worthwhile for administrators wishing to improve the LGBT athletic climate to more fully understand the balancing of social identities that takes place in reference to religious and ally affiliation, and to foster the development of an organizational culture that encourages the saliency of ally identity vis-à-vis religious identity. This can be particularly challenging in religiously-affiliated institutions where religious identity is at the forefront of the organizational mission, but this study provides evidence that even in such instances, the claiming of religious identity *and* LGBT ally identity is possible within sporting settings.

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