

# SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN SPORT

*Essays from Activists, Coaches, and Scholars*



GEORGE B. CUNNINGHAM  
EDITOR

CENTER FOR SPORT MANAGEMENT RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

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*Edited by*  
George B. Cunningham

Center for Sport Management Research and Education  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, Texas

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# Contributors

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Janet S. Fink (PhD, The Ohio State University) is a faculty member at the University of Massachusetts. Her research interests include diversity issues in sport, sport media and the female athlete, and sport fan behavior. In 2007, Fink was awarded The Ohio State University's Award for Distinguished Teaching. She is Associate Editor for the *Journal of Sport Management* and Past-President of North American Society for Sport Management.

Pat Griffin is Professor Emeritus in the Social Justice Education Program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and project director for Changing the Game: The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) Sports Project ([sports.glsen.org](http://sports.glsen.org)), whose mission is to assist K-12 schools in making athletics and physical education respectful, safe, and inclusive for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities. She has written a number of books and is author of Pat Griffin's LGBT Sports Blog ([www.ittakesateam.blogspot.com](http://www.ittakesateam.blogspot.com)).

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Dan Woog is a freelance writer, educator, and coach. His *Jocks* books offered a groundbreaking look at America's gay male athletes. His "OutField" newspaper column on GLBT sports is syndicated nationally. An openly gay soccer coach, his Staples High School team (Westport, Conn.) has won 1 state and 4 league championships, and been ranked as high as #6 in the US.

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# Preface

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Kurt Lewin famously noted, “there is nothing more practical than good theory” (1952, p. 169)—an oft-cited quote that points to the promise of a connection between research and practice. In seeking to better understand organizational life, scholars develop theory aimed at explaining *how*, *when*, and *why* different phenomena take place, systematically and empirically examine the support or lack thereof for their frameworks, and disseminate the findings. Administrators, activists, and other practitioners then take these theories and distill them to their environments, using them to better manage their complex workplaces, advocate for social justice, and the like. The relationship is ideally a reciprocal one, with both parties informing the activities of the other.

While this idealized pattern has occurred in some cases (for examples, see Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoeber, 2005), more times than not, scholars and practitioners are far apart in their analyses, consideration of what constitutes pressing issues, and, perhaps most pertinent to the current discussion, the application of theory and research. This is by no means a new lament or observation, as a number of authors have noted the research-practice disconnect within the sport context (see Cunningham, *in press*; Doherty, *in press*; Irwin & Ryan, *in press*).

It was with this research-practice chasm in mind that, in the early Fall of 2011, I contacted Dr. Pat Griffin, Professor Emeritus in the Social Justice Education Program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and project director for Changing the Game: The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) Sports Project. During our conversation, I suggested (a) there had been an increased interest in research issues related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in sport and physical activity, and much of this research was yielding very compelling findings; (b) there were many activists in the field engaging in meaningful work that had the potential to radically change the inclusiveness of sport; and (c) the two groups were largely unaware of what the other was doing. As Dr. Griffin is much more knowledgeable of LGBT issues and the work taking place in that area than I ever will be, it was imperative for me to run these ideas by her and gauge her reactions to them.

She agreed with the assessment, and as such, we started brainstorming of ways to bring the two sides together, with the goal of increasing collaboration, communication, and translational research activities. The result of these efforts was the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport Conference, held on the Texas A&M University campus in April of 2012. This conference brought together leading researchers, administrators, activists, and advocates in the field. Over several days, we discussed the state of LGBT affairs in sport and physical



activity, identified ways to increase collaborations, and presented our research and perspectives to a standing-room only crowd at the conference.

Many exciting activities have resulted because of these efforts. First, under the leadership of Dr. Ellen Staurowsky and her colleagues at Drexel University, and in collaboration with Dr. Sue Rankin at Penn State University, we have started a blog entitled “LGBT Sports Blog: Theory to Practice.” In the spirit of Lewin’s assessment of theory’s potential to influence everyday organizational activities, the purpose of this blog is to (a) serve as *the place* for news and research focusing on LGBT issues in sport; (b) make this research accessible to all persons, including practitioners and activists; (c) generate increased awareness of LGBT issues in sport and physical activity; and (d) facilitate connections among researchers, practitioners, and activists, with the ultimate aim of making sport a more diverse and inclusive environment.

A second outcome of the conference is this book. Representing a collection of essays from researchers, activists, counselors, and coaches, the book touches on the myriad of issues facing sexual minority athletes, coaches, and administrators today. It represents the first book to have contributions from both researchers and practitioners, all with the aim of advancing LGBT inclusiveness in sport and physical activity.

In the opening chapter, Pat Griffin provides an overview of LGBT affairs today, highlighting the progress made and the challenges we face. The next two chapters focus on trans athletes: Vikki Krane, Katie Sullivan Barak, and Mallory E. Mann (all with Bowling Green State University) highlight the winding paths trans athletes must traverse as they seek to participate on athletic teams, while Erin Buzuvis, a law professor at Western New England University, focuses her chapter on the varying degrees of trans inclusive policies found across the sport spectrum.

The next two chapters examine the experiences of LGBT athletes today. Both Eric Anderson, a researcher at the University of Winchester, and Dan Woog, a freelance writer and high school soccer coach in Connecticut, suggest sexual minority athletes experience far more inclusive and hospitable environments today than they have in the past. In the next contribution, Janet S. Fink (University of Massachusetts) argues that homophobia is at the root of the hypersexualized and hyperfeminized manner in which women and women’s sports are marketed and promoted; further, despite the widespread use of these gendered tactics, she provides empirical evidence showing that such strategies are largely ineffective.

The final two chapters address strategies aimed at improving the experiences of LGBT players, coaches, and administrators. Mary Ann Covey, a psychologist

with decades of experience working with both athletes and LGBT clients, discusses her transformation as an advocate for equality. She argues for visible signs of support and affirmation throughout sport. In the final chapter, I provide a summary of the essays and also address strategies for improving LGBT inclusiveness in sport.

I am thankful to the authors who contributed to this book, the conference participants, the various sponsors who helped support the initiative, and the hundreds of people who came from across the state to attend the conference. Most of all, I am thankful for *all persons* – whether they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, questioning, or heterosexual – who advocate and fight for greater inclusiveness in sport and physical activity. While there is still considerable work to be done, their efforts have made sport a more diverse and inclusive environment, and it is a better place for it.

George B. Cunningham

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# LGBT Equality in Sports: Celebrating our Successes and Facing our Challenges

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*Pat Griffin*

Griffin, P. (2012). LGBT equality in sports: Celebrating our successes and facing our challenges. In G. B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Sexual orientation and gender identity in sport: Essays from activists, coaches, and scholars* (pp. 1-12). College Station, TX: Center for Sport Management Research and Education.

## Introduction

Efforts to make sports a safe, inclusive, and respectful experience for athletes and coaches of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions span 35 years of individual acts of courage, as well as organizational projects focused on diversity and inclusion. The silence and terror typical of the sport experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) athletes and coaches in the 1970s and earlier stands in sharp contrast to the burgeoning LGBT sports equality movement of today. The dedication of LGBT sports advocates and allies to changing the climate in one of the last bastions of homophobia and transphobia lays the foundation for a more inclusive future in sport.

I believe it is important to understand and appreciate the history of any social justice movement of which we are a part. What has come before us informs what we do in the present and how we shape the future. What I like to call the LGBT sports equality movement has a history. It serves as a benchmark to note the progress we have made and guides us in avoiding mistakes of the past as we work to shape a more inclusive sports future for participants of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions. The purposes of this chapter are to note some of the highlights of our history, the progress we have made over time and to identify several challenges I see facing the LGBT sports equality movement as we move into the future.

## Historical Highlights of LGBT Sports Equality Movement

I count 1975 as the beginning of the modern LGBT Sports Equality Movement. That was the year that Dave Kopay, an ex-NFL player, came out in a *Washington Post* article. That was 37 years ago and 6 years after the Stonewall Rebellion in New York City in 1969, which marks the beginning of the modern LGBT rights movement in the United States. Until 1975 no gay, transgender, bisexual, or lesbian athlete dared to come out publicly. There were rumors about tennis great, Bill Tilden, in the 1930s and about the greatest athlete of the 20th Century, Babe Didrikson Zaharias, but these were whispered conversations behind closed doors. The cultural social consensus was that being LGBT was sinful, sick, and immoral, and publicly identifying oneself as LGBT invited ridicule and discrimination.

As a young college athlete at the University of Maryland in the mid-1960s, it truly was possible to believe that I was the only lesbian in the world. At that time in my life, I had completely internalized all of the negative social messages I received about being gay. Filled with self-hate, shame, and fear of discovery, I kept my secret deep within. Coming out to anyone, much less a beloved coach or my parents was out of the question. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the only other lesbian in the world just happened to be one of my teammates on the basketball team.

We struggled for months to suppress our attraction to each other even as we grew closer, spending time together on the basketball court and studying in the dorm. Finally, one night in my dorm room during January intersession when we were back at school early for basketball practice we kissed each other for the first time. I think most people remember their first kiss with someone they are growing to love as a wonderful moment of discovery and joy. In my case, because of the burden of self-loathing I brought to that kiss, it filled me with fear and confusion. It took me many years to shake these feelings as I struggled with reconciling my gay identity with my “public” identity as a star athlete, good student, and future teacher and coach. Unfortunately, my experience was typical of many young athletes of that era.

In 1977 Dave Kopay’s autobiography was published. It was also the year that transgender athlete, Renee Richards, successfully sued the United States Tennis Association for the right to play in the women’s division of the US Open Tournament.

It was into this climate of secrecy and fear that Penn State women’s basketball coach Rene Portland began her 25 year anti-lesbian reign of terror in 1979 during which she dismissed from the team any player she suspected was a lesbian. Glenn Burke, a gay man who played major league baseball from 1976 to 1979 was driven out of the game by hostility of team executives, managers, and some teammates long before his time.

In 1981 tennis great Billie Jean King’s ex-lover sued her for alimony. In the ensuing public scandal, King initially denied that she was lesbian, but lost all of her commercial sponsorships nonetheless. Also in 1981 the *New York Post* outed tennis champion Martina Navratilova in an article that she feared would jeopardize her application for US citizenship.

Few, if any, heterosexual allies rallied around Dave, Glenn, Billie Jean or Martina (at least in public). Being publicly out as an LGBT athlete cost these pioneers coaching opportunities and commercial endorsements, or cut short their athletic careers. The general public and sports fans were not yet ready to embrace openly LGBT athletes.

The first state law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation was not passed until 1982 (in Wisconsin). It was the only such law until 1989, when Massachusetts became the second state to outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Few colleges or universities at the time included sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies. “Transgender” was not even in the vocabulary of the gay and lesbian movement. No LGBT or feminist advocacy organizations focused on athletics as an arena in which discrimination based on sexual orientation needed to be addressed. Few colleges had LGBT student support

groups, let alone groups for LGBT athletes. Scholars interested in writing about or researching heterosexism and homophobia in sport did so at great risk to their academic careers. Graduate students had difficulty finding a faculty member who would support research on LGBT issues in sport.

In the 1980's, LGBT youth were an invisible minority in K-12 schools. No advocacy groups championed the rights of young people or challenged discrimination and harassment in schools based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. LGBT athletes and coaches in high schools and college sports suffered discrimination and harassment in silence and fear with no legal recourse.

### **Progress Toward Creating An Inclusive Sports Climate For LGBT People**

We have much to celebrate when we compare the state of the LGBT sports movement in 2012 to what it was like to be an LGBT athlete or coach in previous decades. It is important to remind ourselves where we have come from to mark the progress we are making in the present and to more clearly envision where we are going.

Much of the progress in eliminating homophobia and transphobia in sports is a reflection of broader social change. The visibility of LGBT issues and people has increased greatly since the 1980's. Not only are LGBT people publicly out in all professions and in the mainstream media, but we can also see progress on such policy and legal issues as hate crime laws, legal recognition of same-sex relationships and families, the elimination of the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, anti-bullying laws and programs, and the increasing addition of "sexual orientation" and "gender identity/expression" to non-discrimination laws and organizational policies. Support structures and resources for LGBT youth are integrated into schools across the United States. These cultural and institutional changes are the backdrop for the progress we see in addressing LGBT issues in sports.

Against this backdrop of broader social change we can identify several important developments over the last ten years with an incredible acceleration of progress over the last two years.

1. Increasing numbers of LGBT athletes are coming out at younger ages. In response, more of their heterosexual teammates and coaches are comfortable with and supportive of their LGBT teammates. In addition, parents of LGBT athletes are increasingly likely to accept their children's LGBT identity and act as advocates for them.
2. An increasing awareness among coaches of men's and women's teams that they have LGBT, if not T, athletes on their teams and that they need to be better prepared to address LGBT issues. In many cases, however, a generational gap is apparent, as coaches lag behind the athletes on their team in their comfort with and awareness of LGBT athletes.

3. Organizations that focus on addressing LGBT issues in sport, such as the National Center of Lesbian Rights Sports Project and the Women's Sports Foundation's It Takes A Team initiative pioneered education and legal initiatives for athletes, coaches, sports administrators, and parents working to make sports more inclusive.
4. Internet sites, such as [Outsports.com](http://Outsports.com), provide information, news, advocacy related to LGBT inclusion in sports and opportunities for gay athletes and sports fans to communicate.
5. Mainstream sport governing organizations, such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), offer educational programs and resources to member school athletic departments on diversity topics including sexual orientation and gender identity. They also provide leadership in the development of policies that promote the inclusion of LGBT athletes in collegiate sports.
6. One of the most recent changes is the increasing number of heterosexual professional male athletes who are speaking out publicly against anti-LGBT discrimination, name-calling, and bullying, advocating for same-sex marriage, and supporting the inclusion of LGBT athletes and coaches on sports teams. Contrary to the stereotype that male athletes are particularly hostile to having gay teammates, such athletes as Scott Fujita and Brendan Ayanbadejo of the NFL, Grant Hill and Steve Nash of the NBA, and Sean Avery of the NHL have led the way in speaking out publicly about their support for LGBT people in and out of sport. In an effort to prevent LGBT youth suicides, several professional sports teams such as the Boston Red Sox, San Francisco Giants and Chicago Cubs have participated in the internet-based "It Gets Better" video campaign.
7. Where faculty researchers and their graduate students were once reluctant to investigate topics they perceived to be controversial and professionally risky, research on LGBT issues in sports is now accepted as a valid area of inquiry in many institutions. A new generation of sport researchers in sociology, psychology, history, legal studies, and sport management are making important contributions to the body of knowledge we have available about transphobia and homophobia in sports. As a reflection of this change, Ithaca College hosted the first ever conference on sports and sexuality in 2008 during which established researchers and graduate students shared their work.

### **2011-12: Break Out Years for LGBT Sports Equality**

The years 2011 and 2012 brought unprecedented visibility and attention to LGBT issues in sport during which it seems as though new advocacy efforts are initiated every month and more individual athletes are speaking out every day. The following actions reflect an increasing awareness of and intention to eliminate anti-LGBT discrimination and prejudice in sports:

- The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the “go to” national organization for making K-12 schools safe and respectful for LGBT youth, unveiled Changing The Game, a sports project focused on making K-12 athletics and physical education safe and respectful for athletes of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.
- The NCAA released policy and best practice recommendations for including transgender students on college sports teams.
- The National Football League, National Basketball Association, and Major League Baseball have joined the Women’s National Basketball League in adding “sexual orientation” to their non-discrimination policies.
- New non-profit organizations focused on eliminating anti-LGBT bullying in sport and enlisting heterosexual athletes in efforts to make sports respectful and safe for LGBT athletes are receiving widespread attention and support. Athlete Ally, founded by Hudson Taylor, the Ben Cohen Stand Up Foundation, and Patrick Burke’s You Can Play Project, are all organizations led by straight male athlete allies.

In addition to celebrating our progress, we must also channel the energy of our burgeoning LGBT sports equality “moment” to make real and lasting change. Every civil rights movement has a history that often must be uncovered because it is hidden or distorted in the mainstream or dominant narrative. Knowing our history lays the foundation for understanding our present and claiming our future. From the pervasive silence, scandal, and fear of the 1970’s and 1980’s, we have emerged into 2012 where the goal of eliminating homophobia and transphobia in sport is on the table to stay. Noting this progress is important because it provides a benchmark to assess and celebrate change and the astounding explosion of action and advocacy in the last few years. It also provides an opportunity to pause and think about some important challenges that need to be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of the LGBT Sports Movement as we move forward.

### **Addressing Challenges**

Some important internal challenges need to be addressed as the LGBT sports equality movement moves forward. We must be thoughtful about how inclusive we are and how we address inequities within the LGBT sports equality movement. In short, when we say LGBT, do we really mean it?

Every significant social justice movement must come to grips with power imbalances and social issues within. As activists, educators, researchers – how do the multiple identities we bring to our work affect the direction of the LGBT sports equality movement? Homophobia, classism, and racism were alive and well in the White straight middle class dominated feminist movement of the 1970’s as they struggled with how to include the needs of poor Black women and lesbians



in their agenda. Sexism and homophobia were alive and well in the male dominated Black civil rights movement as they struggled to include the needs of Black women (LGBT issues were not even on the table). Sexism and racism were alive and well in the early Gay Rights movement when the voices of lesbians and people of color were ignored by White gay male leadership.

Our focus on LGBT issues in sport needs to be informed by what we learned from these earlier social justice movements. To learn from these experiences, we need to think about six challenges as we move forward.

### **Sexism with Homophobia**

Sexism and how it affects women and men in sports differently must be factored into any comprehensive understanding of homophobia and transphobia in sport. In sport, as in all other social institutions, sexism and its attendant, male privilege, are ever-present players in the game.

Perceptions of women and men athletes have always been embedded in cultural expectations of masculinity and femininity. Whereas athletic prowess, physical strength, and competitive toughness in a man are expected and celebrated, the same qualities in a woman are regarded with suspicion unless she can counter-balance these qualities with overt exhibitions of femininity and heterosexuality. As a result, women's sports and women athletes are often trivialized and marginalized as second rate imitations of male athletes and men's sports. Let us make sure this dynamic is not replicated in the LGBT Sports Equality movement by attending to the following dynamics:

Sexism and male privilege are in play in conversations among LGBT sports activists and advocates when they assume that talking about "gay" athletes applies to both men and women. Assuming that gay male athletes' experiences are the same as lesbian athletes' experiences discounts the effects of sexism on the experiences of lesbians and gay men.

Sexism and male privilege are in play when we do not consider women a part of the conversation at all without any apparent regard for or interest in addressing homophobia and transphobia in women's sports. Sometimes this omission is rationalized by the mistaken belief that homophobia and transphobia are no longer problems in women's sports, and it is now time to focus our efforts on men's sports.

It is essential to be aware that homophobia is alive and well in women's sports. Only one NCAA Division 1 women's basketball coach is publicly out – Sherri Murrell at Portland State University in Oregon. A handful of other female college coaches are publicly out as lesbian or gay, but the number is still small compared with the number of coaches locked firmly in the back of their professional closets.

Homophobia is still used as a recruiting tool in college women's sports, both blatantly and subtly. Women coaches lose their jobs (or are eliminated from the applicant pool) because of the perception or actuality that they are lesbian. Athletes perceived to be or who are lesbians are dismissed from teams or find their playing time diminished. Women athletes and coaches still feel pressure to perform femininity and heterosexuality as a defense against homophobia and the discrimination that often accompanies it. These are the realities of current day homophobia in women's sports that make it imperative that we make sure we intentionally include women's sports in our advocacy efforts.

### **Increasing the Visibility of Female Heterosexual Allies**

As heterosexual male athletes and advocates have stepped up as allies, the silence of publicly visible heterosexual women athlete allies is striking. This imbalance can be attributed to several possible explanations. Perhaps heterosexual women allies in sports are simply overlooked by the media. As is case for coverage of women's sports in general, maybe we just do not hear about it when female athlete allies speak up. Whether the gay press or mainstream sports media, both dominated by men, do not know about women allies or do not value them enough to cover these stories, the result is that we know of many more male athlete allies speaking out than we do female athlete allies.

Another factor that cannot be overlooked is the failure to see on-going power of the lesbian label as a means of social control that effectively silences and intimidates many heterosexual women sports advocates and athletes. Fear of being called a lesbian leads many women in sport to respond to insinuations and accusations about their sexuality with defensiveness and apology rather than confidence and power. Because the lesbian label can be deployed to intimidate heterosexual women as well as lesbians in sport, all women regardless of their sexual orientation or their personal commitments to equality in sports are held hostage to the fear of being called a lesbian. Innuendo about lesbians on teams or speculations about coaches' sexual orientations affect all women and sports teams who are targeted by them. As long as the lesbian label carries a negative stigma in the eyes of athletes, parents, fans, and the general public, it is an effective silencer of heterosexual women allies in sports.

While heterosexual male athlete allies may also face challenges to their heterosexuality, they do not experience the institutionally sanctioned consequences for their advocacy that silence women. Male athletes conform to and embody the characteristics attributed to ideals of heterosexual masculinity in Western culture. This conformity, plus the male privilege they enjoy, make the advocacy of heterosexual male athlete allies both more visible and less threatening.

At the same time that we recognize these potential constraints on the visibility of heterosexual women athlete allies, is imperative that LGBT sports advocates ask

for more heterosexual women allies to speak up publicly despite their fears. This is an important challenge that we must address if we are to continue to make progress in eliminating homophobia and heterosexism in women's sport.

### **Defining the Role of (Straight White Male) Allies**

First, It is important to acknowledge the value of straight White men speaking up against anti-LGBT bullying and discrimination in sport. They are an important part of the LGBT sports movement. In particular, heterosexual men like Hudson Taylor, Ben Cohen, and Patrick Burke who are dedicating themselves to addressing LGBT issues in sports are amazing leaders and role models for other heterosexual men in sport.

At the same time, straight White male allies need to remember some factors that affect their ability to be allies. First, their privilege as White straight men in sport enables them to receive media attention in ways that LGBT advocates do not. Their ability to garner attention for the LGBT sports equality movement is a great thing, but they need to use that privilege in ways that assure they are both inclusive and sensitive to the needs of LGBT people in sport as WE ourselves define them. I do not want my straight allies defining those needs for me. I do not want them speaking for me. I also want them to talk about how eliminating homophobia and transphobia benefits them as straight allies. To only talk about the need to make sports safe for LGBT people leaves privilege out of the conversation and risks putting LGBT people in sport in a "victim" role with our heterosexual allies cast as our "saviors." I want to work with straight allies, and I want them to honor and recognize the work that LGBT people in sport have done and continue to do to make sports a respectful and inclusive place for all people. I want straight allies to place their advocacy efforts in the context of on-going progress achieved over the last 37 years. Let us make sure LGBT people and our straight allies work together as partners in the important task of making sports an inclusive activity for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.

### **Integrating Race and Racism into LGBT Sports Advocacy Efforts**

Just as we need to avoid assuming a "male default" in addressing homophobia and transphobia in sports, we must also take care to avoid a "White default" in our efforts. LGBT coaches and athletes of color experience homophobia and transphobia in the context of racism. When we, in our roles as researchers and advocates, fail to understand and account for the effects of racism on the experiences of LGBT athletes and coaches of color, we commit the same omissions of privilege and entitlement based on race as we do based on sex.

LGBT athletes and coaches of color do not have the same experiences as White LGBT athletes and coaches. Men of color experience the double whammy of racism and homophobia and women of color experience the triple whammies of homophobia, racism, and sexism. This is a significant difference that we need to

take into account. Moreover, there are culturally based perspectives on being LGBT that come from different communities of color that White advocates need to appreciate. The fear of being isolated, cast out of family and community combined with the intentional and unintentional racism of the predominantly White LGBT community leave many LGBT athletes of color in a lonely place forced to choose between pretending to be straight for acceptance in their home communities or ignoring the tacit racism in the white LGBT community in order to be part of it. This omission, whether intentional or unintentional, weakens our claims of commitment to equality in sport and makes our efforts less effective.

White LGBT and ally advocates, educators, and researchers in sport need to do our homework to understand how our voices and our points of view are privileged by racism. Then we must use this understanding to inform our work. White LGBT sports advocates must also make it a priority to ensure that LGBT and ally people of color are a part of all of our conversations at all levels. White LGBT sports advocates cannot view building a multicultural LGBT sports equality movement as an optional focus if convenient. We must view it as an essential foundational value that guides all of our work.

### **Addressing Biphobia and Bisexuality**

LGBT sports advocates always include the 'B' when we speak of LGBT issues in sports, but there is rarely any substantive effort to back up this nominal inclusion with tangible efforts to address biphobia or the experiences of bisexual people in sport. Though "LGBT" rolls off of our tongues easily, efforts to differentiate biphobia from homophobia and the experiences of lesbian and gay athletes or coaches from those of bisexual athletes and coaches are rare. The recent lawsuit in gay softball, in which bisexual men were forced to define their sexuality in binary ways in order to demonstrate their eligibility to play in a gay sports league demonstrates the work we need to do in understanding the complexities of sexuality, and the experiences of bisexual coaches and athletes and how they are different from those of lesbian and gay participants. Sexual orientation is not merely an either/or binary, yet many athletes who identify as bisexual feel forced to identify themselves as either lesbian, gay, or straight. Many bisexual athletes feel caught between the homophobia of the straight world and the biphobia of the lesbian and gay world. LGBT sports advocates need to do our homework to ensure that we are not contributing to the invisibility of our bisexual teammates or tokenizing their experience by including the "B" in LGBT without any real effort to address the lived experiences of bisexual athletes and coaches.

### **Addressing the Needs of Transgender and Intersex Athletes and Coaches**

LGBT sports advocates need to do a lot of homework on transgender and intersex issues in sports. Many of us do not understand the meaning of transgender and intersex identities. Some of us do not understand that sexual orientation and

gender identity are different parts of each of us. Others do not understand that transgender and intersex people are not necessarily lesbian, gay, or bisexual. They might be heterosexual. We cannot claim to effectively advocate for the rights of people if we have not taken the time to understand their experience. Similarly, effective advocacy demands that transgender and intersex athletes and advocates are at the table with lesbian, gay, and bisexual advocates to help shape the agenda of the LGBT sports equality movement. Though sexual orientation and gender identity are different aspects of identity, many overlapping connections among LGBT and intersex identities and our experiences of social injustice make our working together as an alliance an effective way to achieve equality in sport for all of us.

### Implications

So what are the messages for the LGBT sports equality movement? First, If we use the shorthand LGBT, make it real. Do not say “LGBT” to describe your efforts unless you really intend to address the L, G, B and T.

Second, LGBT sports advocacy is not just about embracing our diversity. It is also about recognizing and owning differences in power and visibility we have within our movement. We all need to reflect on the ways we are privileged by race, sex, sexual orientation, and gender expression within the LGBT sports movement. We also must identify what we need to do to make sure we are working as conscientiously to eliminate sexism, racism, biphobia, and transphobia within our movement as we are to address homophobia in the mainstream sports world.

Third, we need to make sure that women, bisexual people, people of color, and transgender people are included in all aspects of our work: on panels, in our educational materials, in our media interviews, in our research studies, and, most importantly, part of our advocacy organizations. When we cannot identify someone from these groups to be a part of our sports equality organizations, it is not because they do not exist; rather, it is because we do not know who they are, and that’s a problem that needs to be addressed.

### Conclusions

I often think of the fight for LGBT sports equality as a long relay race. We each run our leg as best we can. We have much to be thankful for from the advocates and educators who ran their leg of the race before us and passed the baton to us. Let us make sure that, as we each run our legs of the race, we learn from the experiences of those who have come before us. Let us make our leg of the race for LGBT sports equality as inclusive as our use of the shorthand LGBT implies.

It would be fun to have a panel of pioneers like Dave Kopay, Billie Jean King, Martina Navratilova, Glenn Burke, and Renee Richards to talk about the last 35

years of the LGBT sports equality movement. Without a doubt they would see a sports world today that is much improved over the one in which they fought for their rights to compete openly as LGBT athletes. However, we still have much work to do. Let us get to that work mindful of the complexities and challenges of making sure that all voices are heard and all experiences are included.

Martina Navratilova once said, "If it's the last two minutes of the championship game and the score is tied, you don't care if your teammate is black or white, gay or straight, Jew or Christian. You just want her (or him) to make the shot." Now that's a sports ideal to strive for: A day when you are judged by your contribution to the team and valued for the diversity of experience and identity you bring to enrich the sporting experience for all.

# Broken Binaries and Transgender Athletes: Challenging Sex and Gender in Sports

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Krane, V., Barak, K. S., & Mann, M. E. (2012). Broken binaries and transgender athletes: Challenging sex and gender in sports. In G. B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Sexual orientation and gender identity in sport: Essays from activists, coaches, and scholars* (pp. 13-22). College Station, TX: Center for Sport Management Research and Education.

## Introduction

*Joanne started playing sports when she was very young. She was strong, fast, and dedicated, and although she excelled at a number of sports, soccer was her passion. She loved soccer and spent any time outside of school practicing. She practically lived in her practice clothes and hated anything that could be construed as girly-girl. She was quickly dubbed a tomboy, but if the nickname meant she could play soccer without being questioned, then she was content. As Joanne got older and people began pressuring her to “act more like a girl,” she began reflecting on what that meant to her. She often felt disconnected or awkward at being considered female, but did not know what to do with those feelings. When she looked at the girls and women around her, she felt different from them. Her mom wore scrubs to work, which did not seem so bad, but she always put on makeup, which, to Joanne, seemed like a monumental waste of time. She saw how her teammates dressed and acted off the field, and it all looked like something alien to her. Wearing bows and dresses, and playing with dolls was tortuous!*

*Despite being born a girl, Joanne had always felt she had more in common with boys. These feelings did not go away with time; in fact, as Joanne neared high school, she felt more and more as if she had been put in the wrong body. All parts of her being identified as a boy, but her breasts, long hair, and thin bone structure, as well as the way people treated her, did not reflect how she felt about herself. Joanne increasingly thought of herself as male. But other players, coaches, and officials saw feminine features and related to Joanne as a female, which complicated his<sup>1</sup> inner thoughts and feelings. On top of that, there were pressures to look like a lady and behave properly. While he lived in sweats, athletic shorts, and t-shirts at home, in practice, and at school, there were functions where he was forced to don a dress and wear the perfunctory mascara. In those moments, Joanne felt further away from himself than ever before. He felt like he was in a costume that did not fit. When his teammates would talk about dating, Joanne felt even more betrayed by his body because he was not experiencing the same feelings. He was not attracted to boys but found himself talking and acting as if he were in order to appear the same as his friends. All of these thoughts and emotions left Joanne confused and ashamed because it seemed as if he was the only person experiencing this uncertainty.*

Joanne is struggling with the incongruence between sex and gender. Consistent with his gender identity, his gender feels male whereas his biological sex is female. In other words, Joanne is transgender; his inner feelings of self-gender (gender identity) do not match his sex and the gender assigned at birth (Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). Enke (2012) further explains a transgender identity as “a gender identity that differs from the sex assigned at birth; a gender expression that differs from that conventionally expected of people according to their bodily sex; and/or a desire for alteration of the body’s sex/gender characteristics” (p. 19). Typically, biological females accept a feminine gender and their sex and gender match. Similarly, most biological boys act in masculine ways, showing congruence between sex and gender. However, multiple combinations of biology



and identity exist, although the male/masculine and female/feminine categories are the most commonly recognized. This sex/gender binary recognizes only two categories which are considered as opposites of one another; to be male is not to be female and vice versa (Krane & Symons, in press). The binary or dichotomous categorization of sex and gender is particularly evident in sport where teams and activities are segregated based on biological sex.

Although the terms sex and gender often are used interchangeably, it is important to distinguish between them, especially as more and more trans people become visible in sport. Gender is a socially constructed system that categorizes people as either masculine or feminine, while sex is biological and includes anatomical, hormonal, genetic, and physiological components of one's body. Having secondary sex characteristics such as facial hair, a deep voice, and high levels of testosterone coincide with being male; having secondary sex characteristics such as breasts and high estrogen levels correspond with being female. These are biological traits. How one acts, as masculine or feminine, reflects gender. Gender is considered socially constructed because people learn to act in a manner consistent with social expectations. That is, girls are socialized to be emotional, gentle, and graceful (i.e., feminine) and boys are reinforced for being assertive, strong, and independent (i.e., masculine). How an individual outwardly reveals, enacts, and performs gender, such as through hair style, speech, clothing, and body movements, is gender expression (Enke, 2012). Gender identity refers to an internal sense of one's own gender (Enke, 2012). While gender identity informs gender expression, identity cannot be understood by examining the way a person dresses, moves, or looks. Instead, sex, gender, gender identity, and gender expression coalesce and culminate in how someone feels about her- or himself and presents that outwardly. In some cases, sex and gender will align in socially expected manners. For example, many of Joanne's teammates, who were also born female, feel like girls or women and present themselves in traditionally feminine manners; here, sex and gender are in alignment. But, other people's gender identity does not match the gender ascribed to them at birth, as in Joanne's case; although he was born with female genitalia, he did not feel comfortable expressing traditional femininity and identifying as a female.

### **Sex, Gender, and Sport**

The essence of sport is predicated on the assumption that individuals neatly fit into the categories of female and male. To compete as an athlete, individuals must align themselves as female or male and join the corresponding team. For most people, this is not difficult; transgender individuals, however, face unique challenges posed by this binary or dualistic view of sex. The sex/gender binary consistently is reinforced through gendered expectations of masculine and feminine behaviors in sport. The celebration of aggression, physicality, and a lack of empathy (Messner, 2002) in sport plays a major role in teaching boys to be mas-

culine. Boys often are instructed on how to overpower opponents and win-at-all-costs (Coakley, 2008). If they are weak or inept, they are called “girls” or “fags,” making it clear that to be masculine is not to be feminine. Boys are cheered for hard hits and chastised for helping an opponent get up. In these moments, male athletes are learning how to enact their masculine gender. On the other hand, sport provides different lessons for young girls. Even while being competitive, girls also are expected to be not too strong, powerful, or aggressive, which is considered unfeminine. It is okay to play hard, as long as clear signs of femininity are evident (e.g., having long hair, dressing in a feminine manner off the field).

*Joanne felt sport was the only arena that allowed him to express his gender identity in a comfortable manner. Throughout high school, soccer remained an area in which he excelled; he started in every game during high school and was a captain his senior year. As one of the best athletes on the team, Joanne received many social and athletic rewards. Additionally, being physically active allowed him to separate from his gender identity and exist simply as an athlete. Sex and gender fell away on the field and speed, strength, and athletic ability became markers of success. Soccer was both a diversion and a respite for Joanne. While on the field he comfortably fit his athletic identity, Joanne struggled fitting in socially off the field.*

*Eventually Joanne was offered a scholarship to play women’s soccer in college, which he excitedly accepted. He looked forward to living away from home, meeting new people, and having unprecedented experiences. The social demands of college were not much different from high school as Joanne still felt pressure to appear feminine off the field. Inside, Joanne desperately wanted to fit into his peer groups and was still unsure about why he felt uncomfortable acting like his teammates or other college girls. But the outside pressures also were tough to navigate. Joanne recognized that all girls in sport had to work hard to express femininity off of the field because competing in sport challenged the very notion of girliness. He also realized that some people read him as lesbian, which was not an identity he embraced. Then, shortly after his first year soccer season ended, Joanne read an article in Sports Illustrated about transgender athletes and it all fell into place. He recognized himself within all the stories and examples in the article and began considering the possibility that he too was transgender.*

For some female athletes, sport is a refuge that allows them to act in ways that do not conform with the social expectations aligned with femininity (e.g., Chase, 2006; Krane, 2001). This gender non-conformity is not always an indication of one’s gender identity. Rather, accomplished athletes must engage attitudes and behaviors often characterized as masculine. As such, these athletes reap the rewards that come with being a successful athlete, which may negate negative retribution often associated with gender non-conformity (e.g., teasing or harassment by peers). For athletes who are most comfortable when displaying gender non-conformity, sport may provide space to do so and, if they are highly skilled, this unconventionality can be more tolerable to others (Lucas-Carr & Krane,

2012).

### **Being Transgender in Sport**

*At the end of his first season on the soccer team, Joanne received the conference award for outstanding first year player and was readily recognized by the campus community as a star athlete. Yet he continued to struggle with his gender identity. Now he had a word for himself, and the more he read, the more secure he felt in his personal feelings. He scoured the Internet reading as many websites and blogs as he could find. He quickly found he was not alone or crazy and that there were a number of options before him as a transgender man. He also gained an on-line community with whom he interacted regularly. As Joanne became more comfortable considering himself as trans, he looked at his life outside of sport and felt stagnant; to grow as a person, he needed to express his trans identity. This was not an easy decision and probably would be a hard path. He was particularly concerned about how coming out as trans would affect his position on the team as well as the team as a whole. Would his coach and teammates accept a transgendered player? Would he even be allowed to remain on the team? Yet thinking of himself as trans and naming his identity was comforting and a wave of relief washed over him. Initially, Joanne began making minor changes in his gender expression: he began to wear his hair shorter and dressed in a somewhat more masculine style. Expressing gender in this manner felt more natural, and as his appearance aligned with how he felt inside, he began to feel happier off as well as on the field. During the summer, Joanne felt compelled to be true to himself and come out to others as a trans male. First he talked with his family and then, during pre-season soccer camp, he told his coach and finally his teammates. Instead of Joanne, he asked his family, coaches, and teammates to refer to him as Joe and to use masculine pronouns. Although tricky for some at first, most people transitioned alongside Joe and respected his requests.*

*That is not to say Joe did not run into any hurdles along the way. He intended to keep his scholarship and wanted nothing more than to continue playing soccer. Since Joe still possessed the anatomy of a woman, he continued playing on the women's soccer team. This adhered to the NCAA guidelines, but it did create a lot of questions from fans, alumni, and opposing teams. Sex and gender identities are not usually called into question on the soccer field, but Joe's decision to transition while actively participating in sport made it a difficult and necessary conversation. Transitioning complicated issues such as with whom to room on the road and which locker room to use – women's or men's. Some people did not know how to react to Joe and called him names or were disrespectful. On top of that, Joe's position in the media's eye created a platform from which people expected him to speak as a trans male athlete. That kind of exposure made Joe a target for some people, but, more importantly, it also made him a recognizable role model. From this position, Joe realized he was not alone in his experiences and he wanted to help young people who were going through something similar.*

Transitioning is the period of time during which a transgender person makes

changes to align gender identity and gender expression. These changes can take numerous forms, including altering appearance (e.g., hair style, clothing), changing name and pronoun use, and making changes to the body via hormone therapy and/or surgery. There is not a monolithic path for transitioning; individuals consider what changes are comfortable, correspond with their gender identity, and fit into their life situations. Athletes also have to consider eligibility requirements that will factor into decisions regarding transitioning. For example, if an athlete changes gender expression but does not take hormones, then the body remains consistent with the sex assigned at birth and that athlete can continue competing on a team corresponding with that sex, regardless of gender identity and expression. Joanne now is called Joe, refers to himself with male pronouns, appears more stereotypically masculine, but he has not used hormones to change body physiology. Thus, his female body qualifies him to compete on women's teams. This consistent with current National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) policy (Griffin & Carroll, 2011).

*During the course of the next three years, Joe's coach was incredibly supportive. Each fall, when new players joined the team, Coach and Joe would talk with them and explain his situation. All of the team members were understanding and quickly adopted the team expectation of inclusion, based on all social characteristics. Joe also became active on campus raising awareness of trans issues. He now had a vast on-line community of trans people, including some athletes, with whom he communicated regularly. As Joe learned about other peoples' life circumstances and how they chose to live as trans people, he seriously began considering whether or not he wanted to use hormones to change his body. Not wanting to jeopardize his position on the team and his scholarship, he knew he would not move in this direction until after his senior year season. Also, the soccer team was like family; Joe not only loved playing, but he had a very supportive group of close friends on the team. But thinking beyond college, Joe hoped to remain competitive in some way, maybe playing soccer in recreational leagues or perhaps doing triathlons (Joe exceeded his expectations in a sprint triathlon last summer). Now he had to consider the ramifications of taking testosterone: Will rec teams allow him to play? In the men's or women's division? Will he remain competitive in triathlons as a male? Will people think he is cheating because he will be taking testosterone? Joe had a lot to think about while weighing his desire to fit his body to his gender identity and his desire to remain in sport.*

While transitioning as a transgender person poses challenges, athletes who choose to make changes to their bodies so that their physicality becomes consistent with their gender identity face additional obstacles. As Joe's story reveals, athletes need to consider how taking hormones or having sex reassignment surgery will affect their performance and eligibility. Individuals who change their physicality by taking hormones and/or having sex reassignment surgery (SRS) to align their physical body with their gender identity are referred to and may identify as transsexual. Taking hormones is a first step (and sometimes the only

step) towards changing one's physicality. Exogenous hormones (those taken orally or injected) will lead to changes consistent with the secondary sex characteristics of the desired sex. Testosterone therapy will lead to male-patterned hair growth, deepened voice, increased muscle mass, and decreased body fat whereas estrogen therapy will lead to loss of musculature and strength, and an increase in body fat and breast tissue (Gooren, 2005). Some of these changes will directly influence athletic performance and are addressed in some sport eligibility policies. For example, the NCAA requires one year of hormone therapy before an athlete can compete as the sex other than that assigned at birth (Griffin & Carroll, 2011). Olympic eligibility requires two years of hormone therapy (IOC, 2003).

It is important to recognize that SRS has no direct impact on sport performance; rather it is the hormone therapy (which accompanies surgery) that leads to bodily changes that impact performance. Also essential, post-operative transsexual athletes can compete in their reassigned sex category with no unfair advantages (Ljungqvist & Genel, 2005). That is, trans females athletes no longer have the strength and muscularity of their previous male body. Trans male athletes are not doping by continuing their testosterone therapy (hormone levels of transsexuals are carefully monitored to stay within the average range for the corresponding sex).

Athletes like Joe may choose to delay desired hormone therapy to maintain their athletic eligibility. The medical literature supports that it takes one year of continuous hormone therapy for the body to adapt to the new hormonal composition and balance concomitant physical changes (Gooren & Bunck, 2012). That is, after one year of introducing exogenous testosterone to a female sexed body, he will have increased muscle mass and bone density and decreased body fat consistent with non-trans males (Gooren, 2011; Gooren & Bunck, 2004). Similarly, after a year of estrogen therapy, a male sexed body will have testosterone levels consistent with female bodies, decreased muscle mass and bone density and increased body fat that will be positioned in female fat patterns (e.g., in breasts and on the hips; Gooren, 2011; Gooren & Bunck, 2004; Lapauw et al., 2008). Thus, athletes who identify as trans males and who take testosterone will gain muscularity, strength, and speed. Trans female athletes taking estrogen will experience a decline in their muscularity, strength, and speed. This is why sport policies address the use of hormone therapy. For trans elite athletes with a relatively small window of opportunity (e.g., 5 years of college eligibility, Olympic Games every 4 years), beginning hormone therapy can have drastic effects on their performance: they will have to sit out of competition for at least one year, get used to a new physicality (e.g., change in center of gravity), and try out for a new team corresponding with their bodily changes. This explains why some trans athletes will delay making any changes to their bodies until they complete their eligibility.

Trans individuals, such as Joe, may raise suspicion in sport. Although their bodies are consistent with the team-designated sex, their gender expression is not. Uninformed coaches, parents, administrators, or teammates may think trans athletes should be on a different team or that they have an unfair advantage. Neither of these beliefs is true (cf. Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). In this situation, prejudice is based solely on the athlete's appearance. The athlete has no innate physical advantage beyond that of any highly skilled competitor (e.g., they may be taller, stronger, or faster than average); there are no cross-sex physical advantages. This bias is transprejudice, injustice or hostility based on gender identity and aimed at trans people (Krane & Symons, in press). Unfortunately, gender non-conformity often is the basis of intolerance in sport. Transprejudice can have many consequences. Athletes with nonconforming gender expression are at risk for experiencing bias; being cut from, or denied access to, teams; discrimination; and bullying. As a result, some trans athletes may experience high levels of stress and may monitor themselves to conceal their identity to prevent this discrimination.

## Conclusion

Joe's story is a fictional amalgamation of many trans athletes' experiences<sup>2</sup> (cf. Torre & Epstein, 2012; Outsports.com) and it is important to note that it only represents one example where gender identity does not align with sex. There are countless combinations of gender, sex, gender identity, and gender expression that can exist. What Joe's story does point out is that trans athletes are participating in sport and their presence is challenging the foundation of sport structures. When they compete, trans athletes confound the traditional division of men's sport and women's sport or male athletes and female athletes. They also push the boundaries of inclusion and acceptance in sport. Although fictional, Joe's team provided a supportive and inclusive climate. This is not unique. Although more often it is assumed that sport is intolerant, especially when considering gender non-conformity, sport is changing and many sport administrators, coaches, and athletes are all becoming more knowledgeable about the diversity of gender identities.

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## Notes

1. Consistent with Joanne's inner feelings and gender identity, the masculine pronoun will be used from this point forward.
2. Additional internet sources and resources include:  
<http://www.glaad.org/transgender>,  
<http://www.genderspectrum.org/athletics/>,  
<http://transathlete.blogspot.com/>, <http://kristenworley.ca/>, and  
<http://www.miannegolf.com>.



# Including Transgender Athletes in Sex-Segregated Sport

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*Erin Buzuvis*

Buzuvis, E. (2012). Including transgender athletes in sex-segregated sport. In G. B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Sexual orientation and gender identity in sport: Essays from activists, coaches, and scholars* (pp. 23-34). College Station, TX: Center for Sport Management Research and Education.

## Jaime's Story

Jaime is a rising tenth grader at a large public high school in the northeast United States. Though born and raised as male and named James by her parents, Jaime has identified internally as female from an early age. When she started high school, she began to express her female identity to others as well. With her parents' support, she grew her hair out and started wearing girls' clothes to school. Though her birth certificate and school records all identify Jaime as male, she asked her teachers and classmates and teachers to use female pronouns and to call her Jaime instead of James, which they usually remembered to do.

This social transition has been largely good for Jaime. Integrating her appearance and her identity has improved her self-image and eliminated the anxiety she used to experience when people regarded her as the boy she did not feel she was. But her transition has produced some challenges as well. Despite her female hair and clothing, Jaime's male body makes her different-looking from other students. She is a little taller than most girls, has a deeper voice, and her rail-thin body lacks the curves emerging on the bodies of her female classmates. Because of these differences, Jaime is sometimes teased by other students. She worries that she might encounter a hostile presence in the girls' bathroom, so she chooses to use the neutral single-stall in the nurse's office. She would like to begin taking hormones to feminize her body and fit in better, but her parents are nervous about the potential health risks of this, not to mention the expense. As a family, they have decided to forego a hormonal transition for now.

Jaime has several female friends who plan to try out for the high school girls' soccer team this fall. They have encouraged her to try out too, but Jaime is not so sure. She loves sports, and would love to play with her friends. But she is worried that trying out for a girls' team would "push her luck" too far, and jeopardize the fragile-seeming acceptance that she's experienced so far in high school. Would the other players on the team accept her as one of them? Would she face hostility from other teams? Would she be strong enough to endure a challenge or controversy? Or, she might be rejected at the outset. Given her male physiology and the word "male" on her birth certificate and school records, the coaches might insist that Jaime belongs on the boys' team if she wants to play soccer. But that is not an option for Jaime. As worried as she is about acceptance by the girls, she is certain that she would never be accepted by the boys, given her female expression. Moreover, it just feels wrong to Jaime to consider joining the boys' team, when in her heart she does not feel like a boy. In the end, Jaime decides to not to pursue soccer. She attends the junior varsity games to watch her friends play, but on the sidelines, she feels like an outsider. She wishes she could be a member of the team.

Jaime's story is fiction, but it is rooted in the reality of transgender students'

lives. More and more, young people are coming out as transgender, that is, having an internal sense of self that does not match their sex assigned at birth. Many of them may wish to pursue athletic opportunities for the same reasons other students do. It is fun to be a part of a team, to have the connection to teammates that comes from working together to pursue a common goal. Sports participation promotes physical and mental health, and builds confidence, cultivates leadership, and correlates to success in the classroom as well (Bailey, 2006; Ewing, Gano-Overway, Branta, & Seefeldt, 2002; Rosewater, 2009). The fact that schools across America include sports as part of their (extra)curricula demonstrates that educators regard the potential for sport to enrich the educational experience in valuable ways.

Moreover, participation in sports may be particularly beneficial to transgender youth. Like Jaime, many transgender youth are at risk for teasing, bullying, and harassment at school that can negatively affect a student's attendance, grades, well-being, and mental health (Greytak, Kosciw, and Diaz, 2009). They may also experience shame and isolation (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006). Researchers examining other populations where these risks are present have shown that participation in sports provides a protective factor for these challenges (Bailey, 2005; Taliaferro, Rienzo, Miller, Pigg & Dodd, 2008), thereby suggesting that it would likely benefit transgender youth as well. In particular for Jamie, affiliation with girls' soccer would also validate Jamie's gender identity and demonstrate to her peers and to the community that she deserves treatment similar to any other girl. But even without considering the potential for sport to help mitigate some of the serious risks particular to transgender individuals, athletic opportunities should be equally available to them for one simple reason: they are no less deserving of the opportunity to play, simply because they are transgender.

Presently, private and public policy addressing participation by transgender athletes can be described on a spectrum of least to most inclusive. This chapter will describe and evaluate different ways in which athletic associations and sport organizers are trying to accommodate transgender athletes into single-sex athletic teams. It will end with recommendations for advocacy to promote the inclusion of transgender athletes across all sports.

### **Least-Inclusive Policies**

The sport organizations with the least inclusive policies are likely those without any policy addressing inclusion of transgender athletes. In the absence of express words to the contrary, gatekeepers, such as coaches and administrators, may choose to narrowly interpret "sex" in the context of a sex-specific team to only include those who were assigned that sex at birth, without regard for the fact that such an interpretation would preclude some transgender individuals, such as Jaime, from participating in the category most meaningful to them. As further

illustrated by Jaime's story, when sport organizations do not expressly convey the message of inclusion through their policies, they put the burden on the athletes to risk rejection, criticism, publicity, and controversy. Seeking to participate under these circumstances would require transgender athletes to sacrifice privacy and to actively self-advocate for the right to play with their identified gender, a right which is automatically extended to non-transgender athletes. It is easy to see how these risks can operate as a deterrent to participation, and as a result, exclusion.

In 2003, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the governing body charged with overseeing Olympic competition and those events leading up to the Games, became the first athletic body to adopt a policy of inclusion regarding transgender athletes. At the time, many saw this as a progressive step because it broadened the prevailing birth-sex paradigm and allowed for some transgender athletes to compete with their transitioned gender. The IOC's policy, however, is one of conditional inclusion. Only those who have (a) undergone sex reassignment surgery, (b) had hormone treatments for at least two years, and (c) received legal recognition of their transitioned sex can participate consistent with their gender identities (IOC, 2003). Many have critiqued these restrictions for excluding more athletes than necessary to achieve the IOC's stated objective of preserving a supposedly level playing field – in particular, a level playing field within women's sport (Griffin & Carroll, 2010; Dreger, 2010). For example, there is no medical basis to require an athlete transitioning from male to female to surgically remove her testes, the body's source of testosterone, in addition to undergoing hormone treatment that includes anti-androgens to neutralize the effect of testosterone in the body (Griffin & Carroll, 2010). Along with the requirement of a legally recognized sex change, the requirement for surgery seems only to underscore the permanence and irrevocability of the athlete's transition in order to ensure that the athlete is really transgender, and not temporarily transitioning for the purpose of a competitive advantage. Yet this concern is hardly supported by history, as evidence by the fact that IOC's decades-long history with gender verification testing has never revealed a case of fraud (Ritchie, Reynard, & Lewis, 2008). Moreover, it is a concern that could be addressed through other less restrictive requirements, such as testimony of a health care provider.

Unfortunately, the combination of the IOC's stature, coupled with it having been at the forefront of the issue of transgender inclusion, has influenced several sport organizations to adopt the IOC's policy as their own.<sup>1</sup> Many of these organizations govern professional and other elite sports, which exist for capitalist and nationalist purposes rather than the promotion of health, recreation, community, and other objectives that value inclusion. More concerning, however, is the fact that the IOC's policy has been adopted by two state high school athletic associations, and is currently still the policy of one. The Connecticut Interscholastic Ath-

letic Conference (CIAC), which governs interscholastic athletics for 184 high schools and 148 middle schools (public and private) in the state of Connecticut, requires students to participate in their “birth sex” unless they have undergone “sex reassignment,” which it defines in similar fashion as the IOC (CIAC, 2011). That is, transgender students in Connecticut must undergo sex reassignment surgery, hormone treatment, a two-year waiting period after surgery, and legal recognition of new sex. Similarly, the Colorado High School Activities Association (CHSAA) adopted a policy that allows transgender students to participate in sports consistent with their transitioned sex only if they have undergone surgical and hormonal transition. However, a more recently-adopted policy appears to give member schools the discretion to relax these requirements when determining an athlete’s eligibility.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the application of the IOC’s policy to high school athletics can hardly be considered an inclusive policy. Jaime, the student described in the introduction to this chapter, does not satisfy the surgical, hormonal, or the legal sex change components of the policy. And even if she had made a different decision to start a hormone treatment, it is highly unlikely that she’d be a candidate for sex reassignment surgery at such a young age, since surgical intervention is not recommended as part of the standard of care for transgender individuals under 18 years of age, except in rare cases (W-PATH, 2001). Furthermore, considering the additional two-year waiting period imposed in Connecticut makes clear that adopting the IOC’s policy for high schools is an effective ban on transgender participation, given that one’s eligibility for high school athletics is typically only four years. If Jaime lived in Connecticut, she would have had to undergo sex reassignment surgery sometime before seventh grade (probably age twelve) in order to play girls’ sports for four years in high school.<sup>3</sup>

### **More-Inclusive Policies**

Compared to the IOC’s policy, the National Collegiate Athletic Association’s transgender participation policy, adopted in 2011, is far more inclusive. The NCAA allows transgender athletes who identify as female to participate on teams competing for a women’s championship if they are undergoing cross-sex hormone treatments designed to neutralize the effect of testosterone on the body. Unlike the IOC, the NCAA does not require sex reassignment surgery or legal recognition of one’s transitioned sex (which in some states is conditioned on surgery) because the NCAA regards hormone treatment as sufficient to neutralize any source of gender-related physical advantage that may be relevant to sport. Moreover, the NCAA requires only one year of hormone treatment as a condition for being eligible for women’s sport in contrast to the IOC’s two-year minimum. It bases this departure on medical evidence suggesting that one year of testosterone suppression decreases an individual’s muscle mass and puts that individual in the “spectrum of physical traits of their transitioned gender.”

(NCAA, 2011, p.7; Goorin & Bunck, 2004). The one-year waiting period is also a better fit for collegiate sport than the IOC's two-year requirement, given that an athlete's eligibility is limited to the time period she or he is enrolled in school, which is typically four years. A one-year waiting period squares with the NCAA's "medical redshirt" practice of allowing an athlete to extend eligibility for one year due to time taken off for medical reasons.

The NCAA's policy also expressly acknowledges participation by athletes who may identify as male notwithstanding a female sex assigned at birth, a category of athletes that the IOC's policy overlooks. The NCAA's policy clarifies that such an athlete remains eligible to compete in women's sports unless or until that athlete begins a physical transition using hormones. This aspect of the policy provides important protection for those athletes who may have devoted a lifetime to women's sports based on having been assigned a female sex at birth. It ensures that these athletes will not be excluded from their sport "of origin" just because they transition socially by expressing a male gender identity. At the same time, the NCAA's policy ensures that those athletes transitioning from female to male who are undergoing cross-sex hormone treatment will not be excluded from men's sports for testing positive for exogenous testosterone, an otherwise banned substance (NCAA, 2011).

While the NCAA's policy is more inclusive than the IOC's policy, some transgender athletes are still excluded—namely, athletes who identify as female despite having been assigned a male sex at birth who have not transitioned with hormones for more than one year. If Jaime, the student from the introduction to this chapter, grew older and enrolled in college, she would not be eligible for women's sports despite perhaps having played on a women's team in high school (under one of the "most inclusive" policies described in the following section). Unlike non-transgender women, Jaime would have to undergo an expensive medical treatment that could compromise her fertility and expose her to other health risks (Becerra & de Luiz, 1999) as a condition to compete with her identified gender. Nor is it necessary to assume that competitive equity hinges on excluding transgender women like Jaime, who are not on hormones. As the NCAA itself acknowledges in its explanation of the policy, "A male-to-female transgender woman may be small and slight, even if she is not on hormone blockers or taking estrogen. ... The assumption that all male-bodied people are taller, stronger, and more highly skilled in a sport than all female-bodied people is not accurate." (NCAA, 2011, p. 7). Moreover, other forms of "natural" potential competitive advantage—such as height, weight, muscularity, or training environment—are rarely questioned or proffered as the basis for exclusion from women's sports. Women come in many shapes and sizes. If we wouldn't exclude a woman from sport because she was born with a tall body, or a strong body, or other attributes that might provide an asset on the field, then it is not necessary

either to exclude a woman because she was born with a male body.

### **Most-Inclusive Policies**

The most inclusive policies governing participation by transgender athletes are those that turn not on whether the athlete has transitioned to some degree, but on what gender category that athlete declares as most appropriate for her- or himself. In 2007, the Washington Interscholastic Athletic Association, which governs high school sports in the state of Washington, enacted a policy allowing students to participate in sports “in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on a student’s records.” (WIAA, 2007). Should any questions arise about the appropriateness of a student’s asserted gender, an eligibility committee can determine whether the athlete’s gender identity is “bona fide” (i.e., that the athlete is really transgender and not pretending to be the other sex for an improper purpose). Importantly, no medical evidence is required to confirm that a student’s asserted gender identity is bona fide. The WIAA’s policy instructs the eligibility committee to accept confirmation of the student’s “consistent gender identification” in the form of affirmed written statements from the student, the student’s parent or guardian, or her or his health care provider (WIAA, 2007).

The most recent example of a most-inclusive policy comes not from athletic association bylaws, but through an application of state law. On July 1, 2012, a statute went into effect in the state of Massachusetts that protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of gender identity in the context of employment, housing, and education (An Act Relative to Gender Identity, 2011). The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has promulgated regulations to specify the law’s application to public and charter schools within the state. Specifically, to the regulatory provision allowing schools to sponsor separate teams for female and male students, the Department added the following sentence: “A student shall have the opportunity to participate on the team that is consistent with the student’s gender identity” (DESE, 2012). This simple regulatory provision is augmented by the statutory definition of gender identity, which includes a mechanism for ensuring that an individual’s asserted gender identity is legitimate and sincerely held: “[g]ender-related identity may be shown by providing evidence including, but not limited to, medical history, care or treatment of the gender-related identity, consistent and uniform assertion of the gender-related identity or any other evidence that the gender-related identity is sincerely held, as part of a person’s core identity; provided however, gender-related identity shall not be asserted for any improper purpose” (An Act Relative to Gender Identity, 2011).

This broad language of both WIAA’s and Massachusetts’s verification provision ensures that no particular form of medical treatment—such as surgical or hor-

monal transition—or legal documentation is required to verify one’s gender identity for the purpose of athletic participation or any other context of the law. In Washington and Massachusetts, a student like Jaime can assert the right to play on the girls’ soccer team even though she has not taken hormones or legally changed her sex, simply by asserting that her gender identity is genuine. Since gender identity is the internal sense of being male, female, or something else, it makes sense to recognize that the best evidence of Jaime’s gender identity is what she says it is.

WIAA and Massachusetts’s policies are also considered “most” inclusive because they would not exclude transgender athletes from participating according to their sex assigned at birth if that was the more appropriate category for them.<sup>4</sup> For some transgender individuals assigned a female sex at birth, but who identify as male, being restricted from women’s sports could be exclusive and isolating, especially if they have grown up playing women’s sports and have cultivated a community in that context. Many who come to identify as transgender men in adulthood have identified as female in the past, and some, in particular, as lesbians. Given that women’s sports leagues often foster community not only among women, but among lesbians in particular, a requirement that “you must identify as female to play” has the possibility to exclude someone who has been playing with women all along, but who eventually comes out as transgender. Especially in leagues that value community, it is not necessary to exclude someone who is assigned a female sex at birth whose gender identity happens to be male. In my own women’s softball league, I have advocated for a definition of women that includes anyone who now or has ever identified as woman, leaving it up to the individual to determine when and whether the community of women’s sports is no longer salient to them.

### **Creating Change: Advocating for More- and Most-Inclusive Policies**

There are a number of components to a strategy for advocating that sport organizations adopt “more” and “most” inclusive policies for transgender athletes as described in this chapter.

First, it’s important to meet organizations “where they are.” Self-declaration policies, like Massachusetts’s and WIAA’s, are a good fit for high schools and other scholastic contexts, given the value that schools place on high rates of participation in athletics and the recognized importance of sport to students’ well-being. Insisting that the NCAA or the IOC adopt a similar policy, however, may not be a fruitful approach given those organizations’ strong, persistent beliefs about gender-related athletic advantages and the desire to protect “competitive equity.” While it is important to speak honestly about the limitations of the “more inclusive” policies described herein, it is also important to recognize the value of such incremental steps of inclusion.



Another prong of an overall strategy of inclusion is to leverage state law and other nondiscrimination policies wherever possible. Two state agencies, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, have interpreted laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity to require permitting athletes to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity, without any requirements for legal or medical transition. In addition to Massachusetts and Connecticut, eleven more states—Colorado, Oregon, Iowa, Vermont, Washington, New Jersey, Illinois, Maine, California, Rhode Island, Minnesota—plus the District of Columbia have discrimination laws that prohibit educational institutions from discriminating on the basis of gender identity and expression (NCLR, 2010). Advocates should therefore not only challenge the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Commission’s policy for its inconsistency with state law, but also challenge the absence of inclusive policies in other states with similar laws. Relatedly, fifteen states (Connecticut, Nevada, Colorado, Oregon, Iowa, Vermont, Washington, New Jersey, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, California, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Minnesota), the District of Columbia, and over a hundred cities and towns across the country ban discrimination on the basis of gender identity in places that are open to the public (NCLR, 2010). Many local sports leagues are covered by such laws, and therefore represent more opportunities to leverage existing nondiscrimination laws to promote gender-identity-based participation outside the context of schools.

Third, directing advocacy efforts at the level of a sport’s national governing body (NGB) can, if successful, promote widespread change, since NGBs have jurisdiction over many affiliated organizations and leagues within that sport. At the same time, it is important not to forget adult recreational athletes, whose opportunities are not governed by any of the Olympic, collegiate, or high school policies discussed in this chapter. Moreover, adult leagues independent of any NGB will not be affected by policy change at that level, so it may be necessary to address them individually.

Fourth, it is useful to remember that even policies on the same end of the spectrum of inclusion are not necessarily one-size-fits all. The needs of the organization should dictate the terms and language of the policy. For example, it may not make sense to recommend the language of WIAA’s or Massachusetts inclusion policy in the context of youth sports context where everyone is required to show proof of sex (and in many cases, age) in order to register for the appropriate division. An inclusion policy tailored to those kinds of organizations might be written in a way to make clear that birth certificates, while dispositive of age, may not be dispositive of sex, and should yield to other verifications of the participant’s gender identity that may be submitted at registration.

Finally, we must ensure that sex-specific sports are not the only opportunities

youth and adults have to participate in athletics. Having some sports that are open to anyone regardless of sex augments opportunities for transgender individuals who may be excluded even by the “more” and “most” inclusive policies described above. Some individuals identify their genders as something other than male or female, and therefore might be excluded or deterred from participation not because of the absence of a transgender inclusion policy, but by the more basic fact of having only two sex categories from which to pick. Co-ed sports are a good start, but they lose appeal to athletes seeking a gender-free alternative if they highly regulate participation by sex, such as by requiring a set number of participants of each sex to be on the field, or in a particular set of positions, at any given time. Where possible, sport organizers should provide truly gender free sports, or at least more flexible requirements for sex of coed participants.

## Conclusion

This chapter started with the story of Jaime, a fictional transgender student deterred from trying out for the high school girls’ soccer team due to the absence of an applicable policy of inclusion. In another version of this story, Jaime could have gone out for the team and enjoyed the physical, educational, and socio-emotional benefits that sports participation has to offer, not to mention the opportunity to assert and be validated in the expression of her gender identity. By advocating for “more” and “most” inclusive policies throughout the sporting work, we can change the ending of Jaime’s story and make a difference for other athletes like her.

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## Notes

1. These organizations include USA Track and Field, USA Rugby, USA Hockey, the United States Golf Association, Ladies Professional Golf Association, Ladies Golf Union (Great Britain), the Ladies European Golf Tour, Women's Golf Australia, and USA Track and Field (Buzuvis, 2011).
2. The new policy states, "The school may use the following criteria to determine participation: Gender identity use [sic] for school registration records; Medical documentation (hormonal therapy, sexual reassignment surgery, counseling, medical personnel, etc.; Gender Identity related advantages for approved participation" (CHSAA 2011-12). The word "may" suggests that school officials are permitted to require medical documentation, including that of sex reassignment surgery, if they so choose. Or they may choose to consider other evidence instead. Note that the listed alternatives are rather vague and subjective, particularly "gender identity related advantages for approved participation."
3. The CIAC's policy is, however, likely unlawful. In 2011, Connecticut amended its antidiscrimination law to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity. The state agency that enforces that law, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, interprets that new law to require schools to allow athletic participation in a manner consistent with the student's gender identity (CHRO, 2012). However, until the CIAC's policy is challenged by the CHRO or someone seeking to assert their participation rights under Connecticut law, the CIAC's IOC-like policy remains in its Handbook where it operates as a likely deterrent to transgender athletes' participation.
4. For an example of a policy to the contrary, consider the Women's Flat-Track Derby Association (roller derby), which limits participation to anyone "Living as a woman and having sex hormones that are within the medically acceptable range for a female." The policy further clarifies that "Male athletes may not participate, nor can those born female or Intersex who identify as male" (WFTDA, 2011).

# The Changing Relationship between Men's Homosexuality and Sport

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## Introduction

In the summer of 2011, I spent four weeks training with a high school cross country running team in Orange County, California. At the age of 43, I found the running pace much more difficult to maintain than I did coaching this team's cross-town rival over decade ago, Huntington Beach High School. It was there that I coached from the time I was 18 until I was 29. I quit coaching to earn my PhD, graduating in 2004, and then moved to the United Kingdom.

The difficulty I had keeping pace with the young athletes was one of four major things that I noticed had changed since my high school coaching days. The second concerned the soft presentation of the athlete's masculinities, including the non-judgment of peers over teammates doing ballet, modeling, or quitting the team to pursue other activities. The third represented the athletes' positive attitudes toward gay men. Finally, and perhaps most striking, was the supportive manner in which the parents not only accepted me as a part-time, volunteer coach; but that they actually invited me to come back and coach the following summer when I returned for the birth of my twin sons, via surrogacy.

This final act—acceptance and invitation—might not sound strange to you, and perhaps it should not to me, either. After all, not only did I coach some of the most successful high school cross country and track teams in the state of California throughout the 1990s, but I've written three books on the coaching of distance runners. I'm an expert in sport psychology and coaching sciences. For me, however, the warmth of the booster club, the encouragement that these mostly strangers gave to me, and the lack of discussion about my homosexuality was not only welcoming, but sociologically significant.

This is because in 1994, I became America's first (or at least the first publicly recognized) openly gay high school coach (Anderson, 2000). Although I received tremendous support from the high school runners I coached at the time, I was maligned by the administration. Most of the athletes kept my sexuality from their parents, for fear that they would be removed from my team. Several parents complained about having a gay coach, and two physically assaulted me.

Worse, my athletes were also victimized. This came in the form of symbolic and actualized violence, mostly by many members of the high school's football team. Because this bullying was not stopped by my homophobic principal or football coaches, the harassment escalated. A two-year period of abuse saw damage to our cars, the extradition of my athletes from one locker room to another, and threats on our lives via messages on our voicemails.

Eventually, a football player brutally assaulted one of my heterosexual athletes. Jerryme endured a beating that resulted in four broken facial bones, including his pallet. The assailant called him a 'fucking faggot' whilst beating his head into

the asphalt. The incident was determined to be 'mutual combat' by the Huntington Beach Police Department, and the high school principal dismissed the possibility of it being a hate crime.

These experiences led me to abandon my high school teaching and coaching to instead pursue a PhD in sport sociology under the tutelage of Professor Michael Messner. Here, I was introduced to studies highlighting that not only was men's competitive sport built on the premise of homophobia, but that it was also a social institution organized around the political project of defining certain forms of heterosexual masculinity as acceptable, while denigrating other forms (Crosset, 1990; Messner, 2002). Sport, I learned, was also used in promoting men's patriarchal privilege over women (Burstyn, 1999).

Messner (1992), Pronger (1990) and others (e.g., Connell, 1990, 1995; Messner & Sabo, 1990; Plummer, 1999) have shown us that sport, particularly team sports, traditionally associates boys and men with masculine dominance by constructing their identities and sculpting their bodies to align with hegemonic perspectives of masculinist embodiment and expression. Accordingly, literature on the relationship between sport and men's masculinities throughout the 1990s highlighted that in competitive team sports boys and men were constructed to exhibit, value and reproduce orthodox notions of masculinity (Anderson, 2005a; Plummer, 1999). In other words, the academic literature on men in sport of the time reflected my experience in sport.

### **A Recent History of Sport and Homosexuality**

Although there is a dearth of research concerning the relationship between sport, masculinities and homosexuality before the 1980s (see Garner & Smith, 1977 and Sabo, 1980 for notable exceptions), this is likely because gay athletes had not yet begun to emerge from their sporting closets, nor did they exist openly within the sport related occupational industry (see Anderson & McCormack, 2010). For example, when Brian Pronger (1990) studied closeted Canadian gay athletes in the late 1980s, he was unable to find men who were out to their teammates. Whether participating in individual sports (e.g., tennis, swimming, and running) or team sports (e.g., football, basketball, and rugby), there were few openly gay athletes in the Western world to design a study around.

Athletes of the time likely remained closeted because they assumed that the high degree of homophobic discourse, alongside their teammates vocalized opposition to homosexuality, and the high levels of societal homophobia, indicated that they would have a troubled experience coming out (Woog, 1998). In fact, when I later interviewed openly gay high school athletes between 1999 and 2001, a number of the local athletes had heard about a gay athlete being beaten by a football player after coming out. This was my story, and that of the athlete on my team, Jerryyme. In other words, my coming out of the closet led to a narrative,



years later, for high school athletes to fear coming out.

Interviewing heterosexual male athletes, Messner (1992) confirmed sport's homophobic disposition: "The extent of homophobia in the sports world is staggering," he wrote. "Boys (in sport) 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). These attitudes also extended into recreational level sporting leagues, even in liberal cultures. Discussing the Netherlands, Gert Hekma (1998) wrote, "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).

This paradigmatic view was supported by the quantitative work among university athletes in the United States, too. For example, in (2001) Wolf Wendel, Toma, and Morphew found that White male athletes exhibited disproportionate degrees of homophobia compared to their attitudes toward racial minorities. Hence, sport has been widely recognized as an institution that promoted heterosexuality over homosexuality.

### **Shifting Relations between Masculinity and Homophobia**

But by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, studies began reporting a rapidly decreasing level of homophobia among youth; even in men's teamsports (Anderson, 2005b; Kian and Anderson, 2009; McCormack and Anderson 2010a; Southall et. al., 2009; Southall et al., 2011). Much of this work has been produced by me and my graduate students, and it began with my doctoral work.

Between 1999 and 2002, I interviewed 26 openly gay high school and university athletes throughout a spectrum of sports in the United States (Anderson, 2002). These athletes were not easy to find. I had to write letters to athletic directors, rely on snowball sampling, and search multiple gay youth websites. However, I was able to gather enough athletes, albeit mostly White, to say something meaningful about the experiences of openly gay athletes of the time.

The study provided the first examination of the experiences of openly gay male athletes on ostensibly all heterosexual teams. I showed that in the absence of the formal exclusion of openly gay athletes from sport, heterosexual athletes within teamsports, both contact and non-contact, somewhat resisted the intrusion of openly gay athletes through the creation of a culture of silence around gay identities. This, however, was an improvement from the outright homophobic discourse and violence with which my athletes and I were met. Although publicly out, the athletes in this first study were victimized by heterosexual hegemony and largely maintained a heteronormative framework by self-silencing their speech, and frequently engaged in heterosexual dialogue with their heterosexual teammates. This is to say that once an athlete came out of the closet, they were



met by discourse which basically said “Okay, you’re gay. Just keep it to yourself.”

In this (2002) investigation (and perhaps unsurprisingly) I also found more openly gay runners and swimmers than football or baseball players. Pronger (1990) theorized that competitive teamsports that involve collision are more likely to be over representative of macho men, and that gay men might be likely to deselect out of them as they grew older. Using data from the 1994 to 1995 Longitudinal Adolescent Health Study, Zipp (2011) empirically validates this thesis, showing that while gay youth played teamsports equally with their heterosexual counterparts in middle school, they began to self-select out of teamsports by high school.

Of course it is possible that deeply closeted gay youth play contact sports because of the veneer it offers them against cultural suspicions of homosexuality. These gay youth would not register on Zipp’s study. In other words, it is likely that those who are more likely to come out are more likely to run or swim (or join theatre), compared to gay athletes who are highly closeted. These men may be more likely to play American football (Anderson, 2005a). There is even evidence in my research to suggest that (back then) many youth intentionally joined macho sports with the ill-informed aim of believing that it would somehow make them straight.

In 2005, I expanded my work on gay male athletes to 40 openly gay (and 20 closeted) athletes (Anderson 2005a). Here, I found that openly gay athletes were not physically harassed or bullied. However, I found that their acceptance was partially attributable to the stigma of homosexuality being mediated because these were mostly top-performing athletes. Still, there was a split (a cultural war) occurring in sport, and it was evident that there were now more high school athletes (at least in my studies) supportive of homosexuality than not. I therefore argued that hegemonic masculinity (as an archetype) seemed to be slipping.

Matters have improved significantly for gay and lesbian athletes since publishing my 2005 work. Not only have things got better among youth, they have also improved among professional athletes as well. Supporting this statement, a February 27th 2006 Sports Illustrated magazine poll of 1,401 professional teamsport athletes also showed that the majority would welcome a gay teammate; this included 80% of those in the National Hockey League. Matters are even better in other Western countries (McCormack, 2012; Weeks, 2007).

Throughout my studies, not only do I show that heterosexual men maintain positive attitudes toward gay men (Anderson, 2009; Anderson, McCormack & Lee, 2011; Bush, Carr, & Anderson, 2012), and the possibility of having an openly gay player on their team, but that decreasing cultural homophobia also has a very positive impact on their homosocial relations with their straight teammates.

Here, heterosexual boys are permitted to engage in an increasing range of behaviors that once led to homosexual suspicion, all without threat to their publicly perceived heterosexual identities. For example, fraternity members (Anderson, 2008a), rugby players (Anderson & McGuire, 2010), school boys (McCormack & Anderson, 2010b), heterosexual cheerleaders (Anderson, 2008b), and even the men of a Catholic College soccer team in the Midwest (Anderson & Adams, in press) have all been shown to maintain close physical and emotional relationships with each other.

At three different schools (lower, middle and upper-middle class), McCormack (2011a, 2011b, 2012) also shows that young men are physically tactile and espouse pro-gay attitudes. In addition to this, McCormack (2012) also shows that the expression of homophobia is stigmatized by heterosexual male students. Highlighting the link between pro-gay attitudes and homosocial behaviors, Anderson, Adams and Rivers (2012) have recently documented that nine out of ten heterosexual male undergraduates in the United Kingdom kiss their male friends on the lips as a form of non-sexual, homosocial bonding. I have also found same-sex kissing as a form of homosocial bonding occurring among 20% of the university undergraduates I interviewed in my research on American college soccer players (Anderson, 2009a).

Collectively, these studies highlight that as cultural homophobia diminishes, it frees heterosexual men to act in more feminine ways without threat to their heterosexual identity. This is something I describe as Homohysteria: men's fear of being thought gay leads them to act in homophobia and hyper macho ways. My studies suggests that we have dropped out of homohysteria (Anderson, 2011b): homophobia used to be the chief policing mechanism of a hegemonic form of masculinity, but there no longer remains a strident cultural force to approximate the mandates of one type of homophobic masculinity.

In the 1980s, homophobia served as the primary policing agent of men's gendered behaviors. Homophobia is what kept all men trying to approximate one type of masculinity, the jock. But without homophobia, there is nothing to enforce a hegemonic form; thus, multiple and varied masculinities can flourish according to, what McCormack (2011b) calls a "hierarchy without hegemony." Men and their masculinities are not stratified hierarchically, but they exist with more equality, horizontally. There is increasing evidence that as cultural homophobia continues to dissipate (particularly among male youth) teamsport athletes are coming out in greater numbers, and that they are having a more affirming experience in sport. This is evidenced by the outright acceptance of gay male athletes today.

### Openly Gay Athletes Today

There is increasing evidence that as cultural homophobia continues to dissipate

(particularly among male youth) teamsport athletes are coming out in greater numbers. This is clear if one clicks on Outsports.com, where hundreds of articles related to openly gay athletes are available. More systematically, in April of 2011, I published a *Gender & Society* article about the experiences of 26 openly gay American high school and university athletes (Anderson, 2011a). Compared to my 2002 study, these athletes (who represent the same class and racial demographic) did not fear coming out in the same way or to the same degree as the 2002 athletes. Unlike the men from the 2002 study, they did not fear that their coming out would result in physical hostility, marginalization, or social exclusion (either on or off the field).

Athletes in the 2011 cohort were a more diverse group of athletes, too. Not only were teamsport athletes represented equally with individual sport athletes, but they were not as good a group of athletes. Thus, they were not using sporting capital as a shield against homophobia. Still, these men were widely accepted by their teammates. In fact, they report that their teammates are closer now than before they came out: that disclosure of something personal engenders further disclosure drawing teammates to upgrade their opinions of one another. I found that this was as true for a benchwarmer as it was a star player.

This study also found that openly gay athletes evade the culture of don't ask, don't tell that characterized the experiences of athletes in my 2002 study. Conversely, athletes in the 2011 cohort found their sexualities accepted among their teammates. These athletes talked about their sexualities frequently, and none reported that their teammates tried to publicly or privately heterosexualize them.

I concluded this research by arguing that because the social demographics of the two cohorts studied are alike, it therefore stood to reason that there are two possible reasons which account for the improvement of experience of gay athletes. First, sport has "learned" from pioneering openly gay athletes across America; or second (and much more likely), that cultural homophobia has decreased in the local cultures of the 26 men of the 2011 sample. And if this is the case, it speaks to a broader decrease in homophobia throughout the country (see Kozloski, 2010). Accordingly, I suggest that the existence of local cultures with great social inclusivity speaks at some level to inclusivity in the broader culture.

This argument is supported by quantitative research. For example, in research conducted on undergraduate male athletes in the United Kingdom, only 6% expressed some form of reservation about having a gay male teammate share their sporting spaces (Bush, Anderson & Carr, 2012). Also, Cunningham (2010) has surveyed nearly 700 university athletic department members in nearly 200 institutions to show that while sexual diversity lags behind age or gender diversity, 54% of the universities studied maintained strong sexual orientation diversity; only 17% showed no diversity.

## Conclusion

When I came out of the closet as an openly gay high school coach in 1993, there were very few experts in the field. Ex NFL player David Kopay was the most sought media voice on the topic; there was no OutSports.com; and sporting institutions did not take interest in sexual orientation equality within sport. Today, however, less than 20 years later, matters have changed considerably. Not only are more athletes coming out all the time (including a limited number of professional athletes), but there are a number of different organizational initiatives, alongside an army of individuals promoting inclusivity within sport.

It is, of course, difficult to know empirically where the locus of all this improvement has come from. But whatever the collection of causes, the playing field has turned in this time. My sexuality was not accepted among athletes when I first came out. By the time I quit coaching in 1998, athletes were changing their attitudes, and by 2005, homophobia had begun to become unacceptable. This is a reflection of the larger culture. In fact, in 2002 I argued that sport would have to change its tune considering homosexuality, or it would be considered an archaic vestige of yesteryear. The body of research I have conducted since then shows that sport has ceased to serve as a social anchor on this issue.

When I came out in 1993, only a few of my athletes had known a gay individual. My sexuality was novel and controversial. Running with kids of the same age in 2011 however, the kids were not only unsurprised in learning that I was gay, but they had no questions about homosexuality for me. I must have seemed awkward repeatedly bringing it up in order to open a window of conversation. But they did not need me to answer their questions about homosexuality, as they already had gay friends in their high school. When I talk about homosexuality they look at me as if to say, "Duh, we have gay friends, you know." Instead of being interested in my homosexuality, they were instead interested (and supportive) of the fact that my husband and I are making a family through surrogacy. Not only were they happy for me, but they were ecstatic in learning that the birth would bring me back to California over the summer of 2012, so that I could coach them another four months.

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# Experiences of LGBT Athletes Today

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*Dan Woog*

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## Introduction

I was delighted to speak at Texas A&M University as an openly gay man and a proud high school soccer coach. But it took me a long time to say that. For years I had real fears, first as an athlete, then as a coach. Those fears – unfounded, as it turned out – kept me from being a very honest person, for many years. Since I came out, my athletes, their parents, and my colleagues have responded magnificently. We have shared many good times, and plenty of laughs. They and I have come to realize that my sexuality is not good or bad, right or wrong – it simply is.

But this is not about me. It is about young athletes, the Dan Woogs and Pat Grifins out there today, 150 (it seems) years after Pat and I grew up, whose goals and dreams and visions are vastly different from ours – even different from those just a few years older than they, like Eric Anderson.

I grew up in 20th century. But for young athletes – gay and straight, bisexual and transgendered and questioning – the 21st century is a very different place. More and more, these young men and women are starting to realize that the door to the last closet – the locker room door – is opening wide, and that inside the world of sports is not a smelly place, rife with the odors of hatred and terror and homophobia, but a bright, wonderful arena filled with possibilities and promise.

It is a world epitomized by young men like Cory Johnson, the high school football player from Massachusetts, who came out to his team a few years ago, to overwhelming support. They even sang a song in his honor: “YMCA.” It is a world epitomized by young athletes by the dozens, whose coming out stories – in college and high school – are chronicled seemingly every day on websites like Cyd Zeigler’s *Outsports*.

This new world is epitomized by young men like Chris Martel, a rower at Marist College. When another rower said that a third athlete “pulled” (i.e., rowed on the rowing machine) like “a fag,” one of Chris’s teammates pointed to him and said, “THAT is how you pull like a fag.” And this new world is epitomized by young women like the one who attended a workshop I gave on homophobia at the national soccer coaches’ convention. She didn’t say a word, but she listened raptly. And when the session was over, her father walked in, and asked how it had gone. “Great!” she said immediately, with an enormous smile on her face. The support of her father, and her coaches, speaks more eloquently than I ever could of the changes that are happening today, and that will occur even more rapidly in the years ahead, in the same world of sports that for so long has been reviled as the last, acceptable bastion of homophobia.

How do I know all this? Recently I have been the guest on a number of sports talk shows. Now, radio talk shows are not exactly the Harvard Debating Society. But whenever I am on these shows, talking about gay sports issues, the level of

discourse is remarkably high. There is very little ignorance; there is, instead, plenty of understanding of the issues, of the nuances, of the subtleties of homosexuality, of the role sports plays in American society, and of the fact that the world is a complex, wonderful, rapidly changing place, sports included. And that depth of understanding comes from the callers as well as the hosts – and from me.

However, one question always arises: Who will be the first professional athlete to come out? And my answer to that is always the same: It's the wrong question. I do not think we are going to see a professional sports hero – a Tim Tebow, to pick a name out of thin air – say, while holding the Super Bowl trophy – “I'm here, I'm queer, I'm not going to Disney World, I'm going to P-town.” Instead what will happen is that some young person, who is competing as an openly gay high school college or high school athlete today, will come up through the ranks. He will be drafted into the pros, as an openly gay athlete, and he will do superbly. The day that happens, the barriers to gay men in professional sports will be breached.

Do I know this young person's name? No. But I do know he is out there – “out there” – at this very minute. He may even have been in the Texas A&M audience. And when he does make the pros – the NFL, the NBA, the NHL, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer – as an openly gay athlete, the world will not end. Professional sports will not fall apart. People will still flock to games. And if he succeeds as well as I think he will, the next gay athlete will not have to face questions like, “Will he come on to his teammates in the locker room?” or “Will all our sponsors ‘pull out’?” Instead, the questions will be, “Can he hit a slider?” “Can he hit from the 3-point range?” “Can he hit the quarterback?”

Am I painting an overly rosy picture? Perhaps. I do tend to see the Gatorade bottle as half full, rather than half empty. Do we have work to do? Of course. The world is not a perfect place, and will not be for years to come. But does that mean we stop trying? No athlete or coach would ever do that. We all do our best, in whatever ways we can, to make our planet a better place – and to win the game of “life.”

# Homophobia and the Marketing of Female Athletes and Women's Sport

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*It's no mystery as to why these campaigns conform to gender norms, showcasing female athletes as feminine and sensual. It's the same reason that men's tennis will probably never run a campaign suggesting "strong is handsome" or try to court viewers by showing new world No. 1 Novak Djokovic with his shirt off. The issue at play is homophobia (Adams, July 2, 2011, ¶ 3, in reference to the Women's Tennis Association's new advertising campaign)*

## Introduction

My research focus has mainly centered on female athletes and women's sport; thus, my research regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues as it relates to athletics is far less pronounced compared with others contributing chapters to this book. Of course, any study of women's sport is indelibly linked to hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, and homophobia—all of which serve to coerce female athletes to adhere to heterosexual, hyper-feminine “scripts” or encounter the severe negative consequences that tend to follow when confronting the status quo (Griffin, 1998; Fink, Burton, Farrell, & Parker, 2012; Sartore & Cunningham, 2009). This chapter will highlight the media depictions and marketing efforts surrounding female athletes and women's sport and the role homophobia plays in these portrayals, discuss the effects of such, and provide evidence that the time may be ripe for enacting real change.

## The Current Sad State of Affairs

Lebel and Danylchuk (2009) noted, "In today's society, if something is not reported by the media, one might be justified to question whether the event actually took place" (p. 148). If that is the case, women's sport and female athletes are in trouble! Consider this: a recent study found the major US television networks provide only 1.6% of airtime for women's sports, and such coverage has actually decreased from 6.3% in 2004. Across all television and print media, female athletes are given only 8% of overall sports coverage (Messner & Cooky, 2010). And, of course, when they are provided attention from the media, the focus tends to be on their femininity and heterosexuality rather than their athletic accomplishments. In fact, many times the most talented female athletes are not chosen to be the center of marketing campaigns for their sport, or for product endorsements (Fink, Kensicki, & Cunningham, 2004); instead, those are reserved for only the prettiest (and by all outward appearances, straightest) of female athletes.

For example, in 2011, the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) kicked off its first new ad campaign in four years, and many advertisements featured Natalie Gulbis, despite the fact that she was ranked 108 on tour at the time (Adams, 2011). In 2011, *Forbes* published its list of the 50 top paid athletes in the world, and there was not a single female athlete on the list (Badenhousen, 2011). Inter-

estingly, of the top 10 earners amongst the female athletes, 9 participated in more “traditionally feminine” sports (e.g., tennis, figure skating), and the lone top paid female athlete in a “traditionally masculine” sport, Danica Patrick of the NASCAR Nationwide Series, is perhaps the most hypersexualized female athlete of the current era. As seen in Table 1, many of these top earners were not the top ranked players in their sport, yet were able to pull in more endorsements because of their attractiveness or sex appeal. Imagine if male athletes were judged the same way. It is unlikely we would see Larry Bird in McDonald’s commercials, Randy Johnson in Geico commercials, or Marshawn Lynch with a Skittles endorsement, to name just a few athletically awesome, yet attractively challenged, male athletes who have received lucrative endorsement deals in recent years.

**Table 1: Top Earning Female Athletes and their Rank (2011)**

ATHLETE	SPORT	RANK
<b>Maria Sharapova</b>	Tennis	4
<b>Caroline Wozniacki</b>	Tennis	1
<b>Danica Patrick</b>	IndyCar Racing	10 – IndyCar Series
	NASCAR Racing	26 – NASCAR Nationwide Series
<b>Venus Williams</b>	Tennis	103
<b>Kim Clijsters</b>	Tennis	13
<b>Serena Williams</b>	Tennis	12
<b>Kim Yu-Na</b>	Figure Skating	2 <sup>nd</sup> in 2011 World Figure Skating Championships
<b>Li Na</b>	Tennis	5
<b>Ana Ivanovic</b>	Tennis	22
<b>Paula Creamer</b>	Golf	5

The evidence of the continued hypersexualization of the female athlete is staggering. The LPGA is fairly innocuous compared to other leagues' marketing and advertising efforts. For example, the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) recently launched its "Strong is Beautiful" campaign in which the sport's stars are often dressed in frilly (and skimpy) skirts, with full make-up, looking glamorous, and in settings full of provocative imagery. In one advertisement:

"Victoria Azarenka [says], 'I like to hit the ball hard. Crush it,' the 2011 Wimbledon semifinalist says in a voiceover, as the camera pans from her crotch to chest to face. 'If the ball comes back, then it's trying to tell me something. How about a little harder?'" (Adams, 2011, ¶ 2).

The International Volleyball Federation required that female athletes wear bikini uniforms (i.e., the uniforms could be not exceed 6 centimeters in width at the hip) until just this year, and only changed the rule in response to pressures from countries whose religious and cultural customs prohibit such uniforms (Krupnik, 2012). The Badminton World Federation (BWF) instituted a rule that women must wear skirts, and an American Deputy President of the BWF defended the rule by claiming, "We just want them to look feminine and have a nice presentation so women will be more popular" (Paisan Rangsikitpho as cited in Longman, 2011, ¶ 11). When the Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) League re-launched in 2009, it appears they valued style over (athletic) substance as they hired Project Runway winner Christian Siriano to team with PUMA to design the uniforms. Further, they hosted a fashion show in New York City in which players walked a runway to showcase the new uniforms, designed specifically for a "sense of fashion, flair and femininity" (WPS, 2009, ¶ 3). There is no evidence of similar fashion shows for the unveiling of new men's sport leagues, or even new uniforms for existing men's leagues! Taking the hypersexualization of female athletes a step further, entire leagues are being formed in which women athletes play sports in lingerie. The Lingerie Football League (LFL) has been in existence for 3 years, has a television contract with MTV, and will sport 12 teams in 2013. The LFL has recently announced plans to expand to Canada to begin play in 2012, Australia in 2013, and Europe in 2014 (Woods, 2012). LaVoi (2012) reports a new Lingerie Basketball League (LBL) and Bikini Hockey League (BHL) have also recently formed. Sadly, the cases noted above provide just a glimpse into the constant barrage of (hyper) sexualization of female athletes and women's sport.

### **Homophobia and the Marketing of Women and Women's Sport**

Why, in 2012, do such blatantly sexist rules, marketing campaigns, and entire leagues exist? Why are female athletes still treated so differently? Why is there such a focus on their femininity, and by extension, their heterosexuality? Obviously, homophobia plays a huge role in the media coverage and marketing of

women's sports and female athletes. As Griffin recently noted, "Women are much more vulnerable to the lesbian label being used as a way to limit participation and disparage women's sports in general" (as cited in Sartore-Baldwin, 2012, p. 143). As an institution, sport possesses ubiquitous appeal (Fink, 2008) which renders it, "one of the most powerful economic, social, and political institutions on the planet" (Kane, 2011, ¶ 6). As such, it is a potent tool in the reinforcement of male hegemony. By their very nature, female athletes who exhibit strength, power, and superior athletic ability threaten this male hegemony (Fink et al., 2012; Messner & Sabo, 1990). Women "naturally" are not "supposed" to be as strong, athletically gifted, or powerful as men. Females are "supposed" to be "naturally" feminine, perhaps graceful in movement, but weaker and less "genuinely" athletic. As such, female athletes' exhibitions of physical excellence fracture long held, "common sense" notions of gender roles, patriarchy, and male hegemony (Fink et al., 2011; Messner, 2009; Hardin & Greer, 2009). In response, athletically superior female athletes, particularly those who do not conform to a more feminine and heterosexual archetype, are typically labeled as "unnatural" or "deviant," and often, lesbian (Griffin, 1992; Sartore & Cunningham, 2009).

Subsequently, the threat to traditional gender norms and hegemonic masculinity posed by female athletes is mitigated by those in power by applying the lesbian label. As Griffin (1992) noted:

The lesbian label is a political weapon that can be used against any woman who steps out of line. Any woman who defies traditional gender roles is called a lesbian... Any woman who speaks out against sexism is called a lesbian. As long as women are afraid to be called lesbians, this label is an effective tool to control all women and limit women's challenges to sexism. (p. 259)

Thus, all female athletes, regardless of their sexual orientation must traverse through the terrain of women's sport that is steeped in homophobia. They must be ever vigilant of their appearance, behavior, mannerisms, and so on in order to avoid the lesbian stereotype. As Nyland (2007) states "Homophobia regulates the behavior of female athletes and discourages significant challenges to traditionally male preserves" (p. 77).

Homophobia has strong and deep tentacles in the world of women's sport, and this entrenched notion has an especially meaningful impact on the marketing of women's sports and female athletes. One needs look no further than the 2011 World Cup aftermath to see its stranglehold. Most soccer aficionados would claim that Abby Wambach was the biggest American star of the games, and yet Hope Solo earned far more media attention and endorsements (Merril, 2011). Why? Wambach is attractive, humble, and well-liked by her teammates, but "she also can't sell heterosexiness like Solo" (After Atlanta, 2011). When asked about

Hope Solo's appeal and the role her appearance plays in her popularity, Scott Becher, a sport marketer and President of Sport and Sponsorships said, "Of course it does. But it's not just looks. With Hope, and this has nothing to do with Abby or anyone else, but don't you think there is kind of a sexy appeal to her looks?" (as cited in Merrill, 2011, ¶ 11).

This statement is just one example of how homophobia is so embedded within women's sport that there has become a taken-for-granted notion the best, and perhaps only, way to sell women's sport and promote female athletes is to focus on sex appeal. As Kane (2011) notes "This approach, or so the argument goes, reassures (especially male) fans, corporate sponsors, and TV audiences that females can engage in highly competitive sports while retaining non-threatening femininity" (¶ 6). This tactic reassures the public that not all female athletes are lesbian, that women can be athletically talented and sexy, and the typical gender order is not threatened by women in sport. When asked if homophobia played a role in the WTA's new marketing campaign, Marie Hardin commented, "That's a huge part of this... There's this idea of the lesbian bogeywoman, the predatory lesbian in sports. Unfortunately, there's a real fear mongering that doesn't help women's sports at all" (as cited in Adams, 2011, ¶ 3).

### **Sex DOES NOT Sell Women's Sport**

Hardin is absolutely correct. This focus on the "heterosexy" aspects of the female athlete may serve to reinforce hegemonic masculinity, but it does nothing to sell women's sport. In fact, there is a growing stream of empirical evidence that this taken for granted notion that "sex sells" women's sport just not true (Cunningham, Fink, & Kenix, 2008; Fink, et al, 2004; Kane & Maxwell, 2011). This recent research suggests the opposite is true: focusing on the athletic accomplishments of female athletes and women's teams is more effective than highlighting the athletes' attractiveness or sexiness.

For example, Fink et al. (2004) used associative learning theory and the match-up hypothesis to test the effectiveness of two different strategies (a focus on appearance versus a focus on athletic excellence) for selling a women's sporting event. The match-up hypothesis is used widely in the endorser effectiveness literature and suggests that an endorser will be much more effective when there is a natural fit in the consumer's mind between the endorser and the endorsed product. As such, Danica Patrick should be a more effective endorser of motor oil than a product unrelated to her sport. Given this background, Fink et al (2004) hypothesized that when advertising a female sports event (in this case a college softball game), an athlete's expertise should be more important than her attractiveness in terms of effectively persuading people to attend. An experimental design was used to manipulate a fictitious female athlete's attractiveness and expertise. In the "expertise" condition, the advertisement included phrases highlighting the



athlete's skill (e.g., Voted NCAA player of the year), whereas in the "less skilled" condition, these phrases were not included. The attractive athlete had long blonde hair, some make-up, and a slender face, while the less attractive athlete had short brown hair, a fuller face, and no make-up. The results of the experiment revealed the female athlete's expertise, not her attractiveness, was the more important factor in athlete-event fit, and, subsequently, participants' intentions to attend the event.

Cunningham et al. (2008) replicated the aforementioned study and advertised an intercollegiate tennis event, as it was anticipated that a more "sex appropriate" or "feminine" sport like tennis could, perhaps, elicit different responses. The results again showed expertise was the most important factor in enticing people to attend the event; however, there was an interaction effect – when the endorser was manipulated to have lower levels of expertise, the attractive athlete was perceived to be the more effective endorser. Still, both of these studies provided initial evidence that an athlete's expertise or skill should be the focus of marketing efforts for women's sports events.

A recent study by Kane and Maxwell (2011) provides further evidence that sex does not sell women's sport. In a mixed methods study, they conducted focus groups and obtained survey data with consumers of all different age groups. They presented the consumer groups with various media depictions of female athletes from athletic competence, to soft pornography.<sup>1</sup> The athletic competence photo was given the highest rating across all groups. In contrast, the more sexualized the photo, the more it alienated all females and older males. Further, while young men found those photos interesting, such photos did not entice them to attend or watch women's sports or increase their respect for women's sports.

### **The Negative Effects of Current Marketing and Media Practices**

Even worse, studies have shown that focusing on an athlete's attractiveness or sex appeal can actually have deleterious effects for the athlete in the eyes of the consumer. Knight and Guiliano (2002) conducted an experimental study in which they developed fictitious newspaper articles manipulating the sport story's main focus (the athlete's athleticism versus her or his attractiveness). The results indicated participants provided significantly lower ratings of both the female and male athlete when the story's focus was the athlete's attractiveness. Similarly, Fink (2008) conducted an experimental study using actual athletes, Maria Sharapova and Andy Roddick, in which the athletes were depicted in "sexy" or "athletic action" photographs as part of an advertisement for a tennis charity event and measured participants' perceptions of the athletes on several outcome measures. Interestingly, participants exposed to the "sexy" advertisement rated both Sharapova and Roddick lower on measures of expertise and respect for their athletic accomplishments. Further, similar to the studies described

previously, participants exposed to these advertisements were also least influenced to attend the event. So, not only is there mounting evidence that sex *does not* sell women's (or men's) sport effectively, but there is growing evidence that such marketing campaigns and media depictions negatively impact consumers' attitudes about the athletes, especially in terms of respect and athletic expertise.

Keep in mind that the participants in these studies were exposed to the experimental manipulation for only a very short period of time, long enough for participants to read an article or view an advertisement. Even with such a brief exposure, participants' attitudes towards the athletes' athletic accomplishments significantly decreased when the focus was on appearance, or when the athlete was shown in a sexy pose. This was true for both the female and male athlete. However, research over the past 20 years provides enormous evidence that female athletes, compared to males, are depicted in ways that highlight their attractiveness and/or sexiness (e.g., Creedon, 1998; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Grau, Roselli & Taylor, 2007; Kane, 1988). The combination of these facts suggests the longitudinal exposure to typical media and marketing portrayals has tremendously damaging effects for attitudes toward female athletes and women's sport.

### Keeping Up With the Times?

Recent studies on athlete endorsers also indicate that current marketing practices may not be keeping up with younger consumers' tastes. As stated earlier, the female athlete most likely to receive an endorsement deal typically plays a more "female appropriate" sport (e.g., golf, tennis, figure skating). Fink, Parker, Cunningham, and Cuneen (2012) conducted an experimental study with college students and manipulated the type of sport in which the female athlete endorser participated: boxing versus tennis. It was anticipated the female boxer would receive lower ratings on measures of endorser effectiveness given that she participated in a very masculine sport. And, while the female boxer received slightly lower ratings on attractiveness (even though the same person was used in each advertisement), ratings of trustworthiness and expertise were the same. Further, sport type had no influence on participants' perceptions of endorser-product fit, nor intentions to purchase the product. Thus, **the female boxer was just as effective as the female tennis player, providing evidence that female athletes participating in more typically masculine sports can also be effective endorsers with young consumers.**

The female athlete used in the Fink et al. (2012) advertisement was visibly feminine, so Fink, Parker, and Mudrick (2012) conducted a study to determine whether the female athlete's gender expression (masculine versus feminine) impacted participants' (college students) perceptions of effectiveness. Fictitious advertisements were designed in which the "script" of the advertisement was the same, but the appearance of the athlete was manipulated via Photoshop to be

either feminine or masculine (e.g., shorter hair, baggier clothes, black clothes versus pink clothes, barbed wire tattoo around bicep, and so on). While the results indicated that participants rated the “masculine” female endorser significantly less attractive, it had no impact on their perceptions of athlete expertise. Additionally, gender expression did not impact participants’ intentions to buy the endorsed products. Thus, while participants rated the more masculine endorser less attractive, the masculinity or femininity of the endorser had no impact on participants’ purchase intentions.

Further, Parker and Fink (2012) conducted a study to determine whether an endorsers’ sexual orientation impacted her or his effectiveness. They manipulated the athlete endorser’s sexual orientation in a fictitious biographical sketch written about a fictitious US Olympic athlete. All other biographical and athletic information about the athlete in the sketch remained the same. Results showed the athletes’ sexual orientation had no impact on participants’ perceptions of her (or his) effectiveness as an endorser. A poll conducted in 2005 indicated that 64% of respondents thought it would be unlikely that brands would choose an openly gay athlete as an endorser and 68% thought being “out” would hurt the athlete’s career (Buzinski, 2005). Such assumptions may still be true today, but the results of the Fink and Parker (2012) study suggests that gay athletes can be just as effective as straight athletes in endorsements.

### Concluding Comments

Forty years after the anniversary of Title IX, with women’s participation in sport at an all-time high, media and marketing executives continue to hypersexualize, and hyperfeminize women’s sport and female athletes. However, as you can see from the information presented, sex does not sell women’s sport. Quite the contrary, in fact; the hypersexualization of female athletes serves to (further) erode the public’s respect for their athletic abilities. And yet, recent research indicates that younger consumers care about a female athlete’s skill, not the sport she plays, her femininity, or her sexual orientation.

What attracts people to women’s sport is the same thing that attracts people to men’s sport – amazing athletic ability and riveting contests. The 2011 Women’s World Cup was not the most watched soccer telecast ever on ESPN and the second most watched daytime telecast in cable history (Novy-Williams, 2011) because the athletes were pretty, sexy, or heterosexual. It achieved those milestones because it was an amazing game, with exceptional athletes, making unbelievably athletic plays. Obviously there are still many people threatened by someone like Baylor basketball star Brittany Griner with her 7’ 4” wingspan, size 17 shoe ([www.baylorbears.com](http://www.baylorbears.com)) and androgynous look. However, as a result of the advocacy work and research conducted by the folks who have contributed to this book, and others, such views are slowly changing. GLBT advocates, Cyd Zeigler,

Helen Carroll, and Pat Griffin (2012) commented: "2011 was a watershed year in the fight to end homophobia and transphobia in sports. We have finally reached a tipping point when anti-gay slurs, silence and discrimination are no longer the accepted norms in sports" (§ 2).

One might think this would lead to market forces dictating a change in how media and marketing executives present women's sport and female athletes, but the emphasis on female athletes' femininity and heterosexuality is so insidious that even many female athletes themselves buy into this notion. Griffin calls it the "Freedom to be Feminine Movement" (as quoted in Sartore-Baldwin, 2012, p. 145). And yet recent research indicates that, presently, and perhaps more than ever, consumers possess more enlightened ideals regarding female athletes. This suggests the time is right for a real change in the way we market women's sport. Unfortunately, homophobia amongst media and marketing executives, league executives, athletic administrators, and perhaps even some female athletes themselves, inhibits the orchestration of such change. Thus, it will take significant effort to convince these stakeholders to transform their tactics. Still, with continued research and advocacy work, and given the substantial progress made thus far, I am quite hopeful they can be convinced such change is warranted.

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## Note

1. (Readers interested in seeing the examples can go to: [http://www.cehd.umn.edu/tuckercenter/lecture/past\\_lectures/2007-spring/DLS-Spring-2007.pdf](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/tuckercenter/lecture/past_lectures/2007-spring/DLS-Spring-2007.pdf).)

# Musings of a Psychologist

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*Mary Ann Covey*

Covey, M. A. (2012). Musings of a psychologist. In G. B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Sexual orientation and gender identity in sport: Essays from activists, coaches, and scholars* (pp. 61-68). College Station, TX: Center for Sport Management Research and Education.



## Introduction

When I was first asked to participate in the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport Conference, I asked myself why. Why me? My primary role at the Student Counseling Service at Texas A&M University is Associate Director. First and foremost, I am a psychologist, and my duties include: provision of individual, couples, and group counseling to a diverse student population; crisis intervention; referrals; consultation and outreach; and supervision of interns and/or practicum students. My areas of special interest include training issues, eating disorders, diversity issues, gay/lesbian/bisexual issues, sexual assault/abuse, working with student-athletes, and gender issues. As an administrator I am responsible for our training program. I manage all aspects of the internship program including recruitment and selection of interns, orientation, supervisor-intern pairing, intern seminars, selection and supervision of the Practicum Coordinator, evaluation of the many areas of training of the interns, and chairing the Training Committee (composed of nine professional staff members who represent diverse Student Counseling Service constituencies). In addition to the aforementioned duties related to practice and training, my administrative tasks also include the supervision of the after-hours on call system, Helpline, and Career and Academic Counseling. I have also been in the role of Coordinator of Counseling and Programming with Student Athletes for the past 20 years. In this role, I provide presentations and educational workshops regarding the commitment to personal development of student athletes. Topics have included: women's issues, diversity issues, sexual orientation, date rape, and eating disorders. I am also the main referral source for individual counseling, and am available as a consultant for coaches, academic advisors, athletic administration, and trainers. I created and implemented The Eating Disorder Protocol for Student Athletes at Texas A&M University and have been an active member of the Student Athlete Development Committee and the Student Athlete Advocate Committee.

It appeared to me that my role as a psychologist and administrator of a college counseling center was quite unique as I gathered with the other professionals that were asked to participate in the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport Conference. There were two main groups represented: activists and researchers/faculty members. It was clear that the initial meeting was groundbreaking, given that these two distinct groups had never crossed professional paths. Did these two groups have the same mission? What type of work were they doing? How could they learn from each other? The passion, energy and investment in issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity in sport was inspiring. My task then was to see how I fit with this group and what I had to contribute. I found that I could relate to a part of both the activists and the researchers, but I also had a different perspective to share.

In my first year of my doctoral program, my older brother came out to me. When



I look back on that event, it changed me in ways I never could have imagined. Over the course of my career, I have met with many family members after someone in their family has come out. I often can honestly tell them that I had the same reaction when my brother came out to me: (a) shock, although once one is able to take an objective step back, there may have been many signs; and (b) self-blame, as I was pretty sure that beating my brother in sports his entire life “caused” him to be gay. My presenting issue the first time I went to therapy was that I “made my brother gay.” I remember my kind and wise therapist giving me a small smile and saying “Wow, you are really powerful!” I also could connect with initial feelings of sadness; what kind of life would my brother have? How could he possibly find happiness? It is common for family members to make the entire discussion about their reactions rather than truly connecting with the member of the family who took this tremendous risk and shared this information. In my case, I remember the next day my brother wanted to make jokes, and he even mentioned that he found a character on my favorite soap opera attractive. It was too soon for me to be able to joke, so I pretended to laugh and quickly changed the subject. I had to work on my assumptions of what it meant to be gay. I had to get past my own stereotypes and preconceived notions about homosexuality. Once I got past my own bias and prejudices I was able to really let myself connect with the courage it took for him to tell me. I was so thankful that our relationship was solid enough that he could trust me and know that I would work through my own stuff to eventually be supportive and affirming. I doubt at that time he could ever imagine how much his coming out process would impact my personal and professional development.

One particular event stands out to me in my development as an advocate for LGBT issues. Still in graduate school, I had spent a day with my brother’s boyfriend while my brother was at work. We met him at a restaurant for supper, and I went up and gave him a big hug. His boyfriend stood at a distance, and they gave each other a shy smile and some weird half hug. What the hell was that? It bothered me and always stays with me. That was simply not right. What kind of world was it that people could not feel safe enough to express their love? They have now been together for almost 20 years. My brother and his husband were married in the state of Massachusetts and are wonderful role models for my young daughters of a healthy, loving, stable, and committed relationship. It is clear to me that my passion in advocating for human rights can be connected to my relationship with my brother, as well as the development of my own worldview.

It is my worldview that one needs to respect the dignity and worth of each individual. Sounds pretty basic, doesn’t it? However, when you put that view into practice, it becomes quite complex. How can I not advocate for issues related to equality and basic human rights given my worldview? When I was an under-

graduate I initially wanted to be a police officer. Why? Because I wanted to help people, and I thought that being a member of Charlie's Angels would be pretty cool. At 18 years old, I did not have a lot of depth or experience regarding what I wanted or who I was. As a sociology major, I had many opportunities to learn about people who were not treated with dignity and worth. I shadowed a social worker and watched as she met with abusive family members. I learned how to make resources accessible to people who may not have been aware of all that was available to them. I also realized that I liked the one-on-one connection more than dealing with systems. I also completed an internship at a maximum security prison for male juveniles, and found through shadowing a counselor that I loved working with the boys through group therapy and individual meetings. I discovered that I had a gift and ability not only to connect with the boys but to help them truly feel understood. It was at that point of my undergraduate that I knew I wanted to further my studies.

During the same time as I was developing my future academic goals, I connected with a priest at my undergraduate, St. Bonaventure University. Father Tim Quinn taught sociology for approximately thirty years and introduced me to the idea of what it meant to be an advocate. The Seneca Nation of Indians was touched deeply by Fr. Tim's warmth and genuineness. In 1979, they adopted him into their Hawk Clan and gave him the name Da-hud-the-tah, which means, "He enlightens." Fr. Tim challenged me to stand for something and really helped me articulate my own worldview. I remember that we took a field trip to a nearby prison, and we discussed the complexity of what led people to make poor decisions and how easy it became to blame the victim. Sitting on the bus, he shared with me about how truly difficult it was to have deep compassion and understanding. During my senior year, we talked frequently about St. Francis of Assisi and his teachings. Fr. Tim was 79 years old when he passed away in 1995, and the lessons he taught me about celebrating the dignity and worth of each individual continue to live on in me.

As I continued my training to become a psychologist, I found that the role of being an activist was not always clear when addressing the clinical needs of the client. As a psychologist, you are trained to meet the needs of your clients and accept them for who they are and not impose your beliefs or values. At the same time, you are to have multicultural competence. You have to be aware of issues related to diversity and the best standard of care to meet various groups. I must also navigate the complexities of how political and visible my advocacy can be when my role is to serve the best interest of the person I am treating. For example, I often wear a cross around my neck. A Jewish student once told me that she found it offensive that I was trying to "promote" Christianity in a counseling session. I simply tucked my necklace into my shirt. Was I really being an advocate for Christianity? It did not matter; what mattered was my client's perception of

what I was wearing. This occurred during my last year of graduate school, and it raised my awareness of the importance of my environment and the impact of my own behavior. I knew that my intent was not to promote a religious agenda; however, I needed to be aware of the possible messages of my jewelry, clothes, and office décor. Understanding this difficult balance has been important in my professional development, but it has not prevented me from being a strong advocate in areas of diversity.

My role as an advocate can be seen in many of my professional experiences and interest areas. Several years ago I received the Women's Progress Award, which was created to honor Texas A&M University students, staff, faculty, and administrators who encourage and promote sensitivity to and awareness of issues that relate to women. I have been the keynote speaker for the Aggie Women in Leadership program and spoken about empowering women and the role of sport. I have served on the Board of Directors for the local Rape Crisis center for many years and supported issues related to women's health. I have made countless presentations over the years regarding issues related to eating disorders, body image, sexual assault, and relationship concerns. I continue to strive to make women's voices heard and, hopefully, respected. It is an ongoing challenge to balance the implication of publicly supporting issues that relate to women while possibly working clinically with a female student who may feel differently. For example, this semester I had a female student athlete talk about the implications of Title IX, and in her understanding, it did not mean much. I tried pointing out some of the advancements of women in sport as a direct result of Title IX, and she was quick to point out why she did not think that women should have the same opportunities as men. I wanted to spend the rest of our session arguing with her about women's rights, yet that was not why she was referred to me. The goal of our therapy was to help her better cope with the loss of a family member, not listen to me educate her regarding women's rights. So, I have to be aware of my own agenda and monitor if or how it relates to the clinical work I do with my clients.

My role as an advocate for LGBT issues has been highly visible over the years. In the mid 90's, I had a large role in the creation of Aggie Allies. I was a part of a group of students and staff members of the Division of Student Affairs that recognized the need for more visible support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the university community, and Allies was created in an attempt to create a safe space for them. It is an independent campus committee currently hosted by the Department of Student Life. Allies includes staff, faculty, and students at Texas A&M University who display an Ally placard outside their office or residence hall room to identify them as individuals who are willing to provide a safe haven, a listening ear, and support for LGBT people or anyone dealing with sexual orientation issues. All Allies attend a training workshop,

called Allies Advance, to learn about the benefits and responsibilities of being an Ally, and has signed an Allies contract before posting their placard. Some Allies choose to advocate more visibly by participating in events like Coming Out Week or Gay Awareness Week. All Allies have the opportunity to learn more about LGBT issues by attending Continuing Education events. At the time I am writing this, there are over 500 members on our campus. I have been contacted by numerous institutions of higher learning over the years with requests to either copy or create a similar program to Allies. Most recently, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) contacted me regarding an interest in the program of Allies. I hang my placard next to my office door, as do the majority of the psychologists and counselors at the Student Counseling Service. As a staff we have discussed the ways the placard may be interpreted, and we have come to the conclusion that each staff member who chooses to hang the placard can address questions or concerns by clients on an individual basis. I have never had a student respond negatively to the placard.

Again I want to stress the complexity of not having your own personal agenda as a therapist when working with clients. Over the years I have worked with students who have struggled to come out, only to find out years later they report they are happily married to the opposite gender. I have worked with couples who have been married for over 20 years to the opposite gender and have had gay affairs the entire duration of the marriage. People argue over the nature or origin of sexual orientation, and all I can say is that after all my years of experience, I have seen people all over the spectrum of sexuality. It is clearly not a "black and white" issue, but most people are very uncomfortable with the "gray." In my role as a therapist, I am very comfortable with the "gray," but this is not true for all people, and these differences can make being an advocate challenging.

I also can relate to the faculty/researcher due to my role as a trainer, which has roots to my early teaching experiences. I taught Foundations of Psychotherapy and found myself discussing with students how to work with LGBT people. What was clear from these situations is that I had the opportunity to challenge people and also share my understanding and information. I was clear and concise in addressing concerns and talked about the role of the American Psychology Association regarding issues related to sexual orientation. During that time, I also developed a private practice where I noticed that many people who wanted to discuss the implications of being gay came to my office. I did not advertise, but I was known. My outspoken views were well known in the graduate school and appeared to be passed on to others. I also was known being a founder of Aggie Allies, so again my support of LGBT people was clear. I began to realize that I was in the role of being an "expert" in issues related to sexuality and gender identity, and I had no training except that I was "safe" and "affirming." As a

result, I began to attend conferences and trainings related to working with issues related to LGBT students. It is interesting to note that I became known as an expert simply because in the environment I was in: I was known as “safe.”

As a trainer, I often teach seminars on counseling with LGBT students, and some of the common issues presented. I present to our student volunteers who are workers on the after-hours crisis hotline. From 1996 to current, I have presented on increasing sensitivity about LGBT issues so that Helpline Workers will be able to more effectively respond to callers of these orientations or callers who are questioning their sexual identity. The HelpLine provides information, referral, support, and crisis assessment and intervention for A&M students and those concerned about A&M students. Twice a year they train a new class of volunteers. Each year I present to our intern and practicum students about the unique issues presented by our LGBT students. I also offer an advanced training option for our interns to focus on clinical work with this population.

The research of faculty members connected to sexual orientation and gender identity in sport has been used in both my role as a trainer and as a clinician. Research informs practice, which clearly has been evident in my career. It was such an honor to meet Pat Griffin, whose work I have often used in discussions related to managing dating relationships among teammates and the role of religion and homosexuality in athletics. It was exciting to meet and discover others’ work and realize how I might incorporate it into my own lectures and presentations.

During the past 20 years, I have been a therapist to numerous student athletes, a presenter to students and athletic department staff, and a consultant for staff, coaches, trainers, and athletic scholastic supervisors. I have consulted regarding many situations in areas of concern related to mental health issues. Many different university and college administrators have consulted with me regarding eating disorders or disordered eating, sexual assault training and response protocols, risk assessment of mental health issues, communication skills, and advocacy for issues related to diversity. I have been quite visible as a supporter of issues related to LGBT students on the local, state, and national level. My support for the LGBT community is very transparent. Over and over again, I have been a “safe” place for people to discuss issues related to sexuality and identity. Many professionals from athletic departments across the country have expressed to me that they do not have someone at their own institution to discuss sensitive issues because they “don’t feel they can trust someone in their own department or university.” Student athletes from many different institutions have called me and asked for advice on the coming out process. Issues related to being out in high school, only to be in the closet in college, have also been explored. Coaches have discussed the implications of romantic relationships on teams. I have talked with parents who want to blame the institution, the coach, the team, the sport – anyone they can think of to blame for their son or daughter’s sexual orientation. I

have addressed concerns that student athletes are trying to “prove” their sexual orientation by engaging in high-risk behavior. I have seen increased drug and alcohol use in student athletes trying to hide their sexual orientation. I could go on and on.

My unique perspective on sexual orientation and gender identity in sport is that at all levels of participation there needs to be visibility of support and affirmation. The current YouTube campaign of “It gets better” is a great example of visibility. Although the political climate of some high schools, colleges, and professional sports do not feel safe to publicly come out, there do need to be people who are seen as “safe,” and if counseling is needed, professionals need to be visible and available.

# Bridging the Gap: Researchers and Activists Pursuing LGBT Equality in Sport

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## Introduction

The purpose of this book was to bring together researchers, administrators, and activists to better understand LGBT issues in sport and physical activity. This interest emerged from the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport Conference (held at Texas A&M University in April 2012) and, more fundamentally, from calls for greater collaboration among researchers and practitioners (e.g., Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoeber, 2005; Irwin & Ryan, in press; Van de Ven, 1989). Therein lies the premise of Lewin's contention that "there is nothing more practical than good theory" (1952, p. 169).

In reviewing the chapters, three points emerge. First, sexual prejudice and heterosexism have been and still are pervasive in many areas of sport. Trans athletes, coaches and administrators, sexual minorities of color, female athletes, and women's teams represent just some of the persons or groups facing negative treatment and limited opportunities in sport. Second, sexual prejudice and heterosexism have meaningfully decreased in other areas of sport, most notably men's team sports. While men generally express more hostile attitudes toward sexual minorities than do women (Herek, 2002; see also Cunningham, Sartore, & McCullough, 2010), there is growing evidence that when gay and bisexual men disclose their sexual orientation to their teammates, the subsequent responses are increasingly positive and supportive. Finally, there have been many improvements in LGBT equality over time—something attributable to changing societal and cultural norms, but more fundamentally, to the hard work of activists and allies for equality.

It is the final theme—that of creating change in sport—on which I reflect for the remainder of this chapter. I argue that a diverse and inclusive sport environment is most likely to be realized when people see the benefits—for themselves, their athletes, coaches, teams, and organizations—of doing so. And, these benefits are best conveyed when researchers and activists work collaboratively to both uncover and convey them. In the following sections, I present the case for LGBT equality in sport organizations and then offer possible suggestions for strengthening the connections between the work in which activists engage and the scholarship researchers produce.

## On the Benefits of LGBT Diversity and Inclusion

In discussing the benefits of diversity and inclusion, it is important to first highlight that both elements—diversity and inclusion—are requisite conditions. As Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) noted, organizations with a diverse workforce but do not have an inclusive environment are unlikely to reap diversity's benefits. The same goes for workplaces that are inclusive in nature but have a homogeneous workforce. Instead, the benefits of diversity are most likely to be realized when employees differ from one another and are situated in an environ-



ment where those differences are valued, appreciated, and seen as a source of learning. Ely and Thomas (2001) have advanced similar arguments.

Of the many benefits of having a diverse and inclusive workplace, I argue that core rationale for LGBT equality is and should be moral in nature. By this, I mean sport organizations, and all entities for that matter, have a duty to provide fair and equitable treatment to those with whom they interact. Within the context of sport, this obligation entails ensuring that all persons, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity, have the opportunity to be physically active; are free of institutionalized norms and values restricting their sporting experience; can participate on sport teams without encumbrance or fear of exclusion; are treated by others within the organization with respect and dignity; and can progress into leadership positions, as a player, coach, or administrator.

Organizations lacking these fundamental characteristics not only limit the opportunities and diminish the experiences of sexual minorities, but, because of the inherent interconnectedness among persons within a social setting, they hurt all members of that entity. While set in a different context, Martin Luther King recognized this interconnectedness in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Writing to other clergy, he noted:

I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states.... Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. (p. 178).

So it is with sport organizations, as a failure to provide opportunities and quality work experiences for *some* people negatively affects *all* persons in the workplace. The manifestations of LGBT inequality include decreased workplace morale, intergroup conflict, a prevailing sense of injustice, infringement upon the self-verification process, damaged external image, and decreased organizational attraction, among others.

Ideally, the discussion of the need for LGBT equality would stop here, as team leaders, coaches, and administrators would recognize the social and moral obligation they have for diverse and inclusive groups. But, such is not always the case. Instead, persons in positions of power are frequently more convinced of diversity's value when they also observe its relationship with improved processes and performance outcomes (see also Fink & Pastore, 1999). The available research examining these relationships has shown just that: groups coupling high sexual orientation diversity with an inclusive environment have better group processes and outperform their peers on various measures of effectiveness.

In one of the first studies to empirically examine this issue, we examined the relationships among sexual orientation diversity, an inclusive environment, and objective measures of performance among National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletic departments. We collected both survey data from top-level administrators and publically available data from a variety of sources. As a way of accounting for possible extraneous effects, we statistically controlled for the size of the department and the gender and racial diversity of its employees. The results provided robust support for the benefits of diversity and inclusion. Those departments that coupled sexual orientation diversity with an inclusive diversity strategy far out-performed their peers, sometimes by as much as sevenfold (Cunningham, 2011c).

These findings provide the case for the benefits of LGBT equality. Additional research we have conducted, as well as that of other scholars, points to why this relationship takes place. In a theoretical article, Nicole Melton and I suggested that sexual orientation diversity results in a number of workplace advances, including improved decision making, greater marketplace understanding, and enhanced goodwill among consumers (Cunningham & Melton, 2011). Thus, the performance gains are due to improved internal processes and external relationships, and subsequent empirical work supports this perspective. Consider the following: sexual orientation diversity and a strong commitment work in tandem to create a creative work environment (Cunningham, 2011b); job applicants are more attracted to LGBT-inclusive organizations, particularly within the sport context (Melton & Cunningham, in press); and consumers are more willing to patronize sport organizations supportive of sexual minorities than they are those that are not (Cunningham, 2011a). Among sport teams, researchers have shown that inclusive forms of masculinities and the presence of gay and bisexual men on a team can result in greater team bonding and cohesiveness (Anderson, 2011), and sexual orientation disclosure provides female athletes with unique leadership and mentoring opportunities (Fink, Burton, Farrell, & Parker, 2012). Finally, LGBT inclusiveness allows athletes, coaches, and administrators to more fully focus on their work and performance, as they no longer have to self-monitor or operate in fear that their sexual minority status will hurt them in the workplace.

The evidence is clear: not only do sport organizations have a moral and social obligation to provide a diverse and inclusive workplace, but it benefits them to do so. The advantages include improved internal processes, better external stakeholder relationships, and performance gains beyond what less inclusive organizations can realize.

### **Bridging the Gap**

If the case for LGBT inclusion is clear, why is LGBT inclusion not more commonplace? As the contributions in this book have illustrated, there are clearly a host

of factors at the societal, organizational, team, and individual levels (for more information related to multilevel explanations, see Cunningham, 2012). I argue, however, that one of the key barriers to greater inclusion is the gap that exists between the theoretical and empirical developments uncovered by LGBT scholars, and the work in which coaches, administrators, and activists engage. This is not to suggest that the two sides are completely missing one another, like two ships passing in the night, as there is *some* cross-collaboration; rather, I simply argue that researchers and activists, coaches, and administrators do not collaborate with one another or know of the other's activities on any sort of large scale.

There are two general sources of this gap: one focusing on the dissemination of new knowledge and the other on the creation of it (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). The former occurs when new discoveries by one party (i.e., the researchers) do not get into the hands of the other (the activists). The latter gap largely occurs at the genesis of the research process: scientists develop theories, ask research questions, and design studies that are not relevant, too narrow in focus, or that simply address the wrong issues—all of which take place because of a lack of understanding of what is taking place within sport organizations. Both of these gaps can be addressed in a variety of ways.

### **Collaborative Research Projects**

One way of bridging the gap between researchers and activists is for the two to collaborate with one another in the research process. Such partnership can occur during the theory generation stage, throughout the research process (i.e., research question development, study design, analysis, interpretation of the findings), and in arriving at conclusions. Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) further argue that collaborations should be structured in such a way that people bring very different experiences, perspectives, and expertise to the table, as this allows for a richer and more dynamic collaborative experience. Indeed, Frisby and colleagues (2005) further suggest that collaborations (a) can help make research more accessible to all persons; (b) reduce the potential for participant exploitation, whereby researchers and their careers benefit from the information research participants provide; and (c) have political benefits, as all persons are provided “voice” and can make decisions about the research process and how they are represented.

Note that these ideas are not new, as a number of authors have argued that research is likely to be richer and more meaningful when scholars and practitioners collectively engage in the process (Frisby et al., 2005; Irwin & Ryan, in press; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006; among many others). Nevertheless, such collaborations represent the exception in many academic fields, particularly management and its sub-disciplines. But, while relatively rare, the benefits of such partnerships are potentially great, as the result is engaged scholarship, or “a collaborative form of inquiry in which academics and practitioners leverage their different perspectives and competencies to coproduce

knowledge about a complex problem or phenomenon that exists under conditions of uncertainty found in the world” (Van De Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 803). The push for LGBT equality within sport would benefit from such engagement.

### **Communicative Patterns**

Another way to bridge the gap between researchers and activists working for diversity and inclusion is to vary their communicative patterns. In many cases, researchers will publish their work in academic journals read by other scholars, while activists will seek to not publish their findings, or when they do, they write for trade publications. In either case, the two groups are writing for like-minded others. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as (for example) there is a need for scholars to communicate with one another in ways commonly understood within that profession. The problem arises when communication tools limit the degree to which others have access to the findings.

There are several ways to address this gap. Some academic journals (e.g., *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport*, *Human Resource Management*) purposefully seek to reach both academics and practitioners, thereby broadening the reach of the work published in these outlets. These journals serve as potential outlets for scholars, activists, or the aforementioned collaborative research teams. This book represents another example of an effort to bridge the researcher-activist divide. In other cases, researchers might seek to diversify the outlets where they submit their work. A colleague of mine who works extensively in the area of LGBT equality once indicated that for every project she completes, she writes one manuscript for an academic journal and another for a trade publication, the latter of which provides a general overview of the issues at hand. In doing so, she is able to reach both desired audiences. As a third option, researchers can be more strategic in disseminating overviews of their findings. For instance, one contributor to this volume, Eric Anderson, will frequently share the findings from his studies with various media outlets, such as Outsports.com, and these organizations then provide summaries for their readers.

Additionally, researchers and activists can attend similar conferences. In many cases, conferences are designed with a particular audience in mind, and as such, academic conferences (as an example) might hold limited appeal for persons outside the academy. But, other conferences are designed to allow for scholars, activists, and other practitioners to meet, share their ideas, and engage in constructive dialogue. George Mason University, for instance, holds an annual conference entitled “Workplace Diversity: Practice and Research” with the aim of bringing together a wide variety of persons to discuss best practices and research in diversity management (for more information, see <http://som.gmu.edu/diversity/>). The Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport Conference, held in April 2012 on the Texas A&M University campus, represents another example.

Finally, there is a chance to generate resources for both researchers and activists to readily access information. This is the aim of the “LGBT Sports Blog: Theory to Practice” previously mentioned in the Preface. With a host of activists and scholars serving as contributors, the purpose of this collaborative effort is to (a) serve as a site for LGBT news and research, (b) ensure research findings are readily accessible for all persons, (c) increase awareness of LGBT issues in sport and physical activity, and (d) facilitate connections among researchers, practitioners, and activists, with the ultimate aim of making sport a more diverse and inclusive environment.

### Collective Action

Finally, there is a need for collective action on the part of both researchers and activists. The job of scientific exploration and discovery is no more limited to researchers than is the job of passionately and articulately advocating for LGBT equality limited to activists. Rather, all persons play a role in advancing sexual orientation diversity and inclusion within the sport context. Thus, there is a need for collective efforts on the parts of researchers and activists. I have previously suggested two ways in which this can happen: collectively theorizing or engaging in research activities, and purposefully broadening the communication outlets where our work is disseminated.

But there are other options, too. Some persons adopt an activist role in their scholarship. Adair (2011), for instance, suggests that, “scholars ought not be politically neutral toward findings and implications of their research” (p. 9), but instead, use their insights to address real problems and help redress injustices. Booth (2011) advances this argument further, submitting that knowledge without utility is futile. From this perspective, researchers have an obligation to advance understanding of a given phenomenon *for the purpose of equality and social justice*.

Others, while perhaps adopting a scholar activist role, also engage in policy debates and decision making. Pat Griffin, Erin Buzuvis, Sue Rankin, Ellen Staurowsky, and many others, are all persons who have used their scholarship to thoughtfully inform their arguments for greater LGBT inclusion. They work collaboratively with others, such as administrators at sport governing bodies or national advocacy groups, to implement research-based diversity training, reform policies at the local (e.g., community sport leagues) and national (e.g., NCAA) levels, and bring the topic of LGBT equality to the forefront of people’s consciousness. Similarly, many activists, like Cyd Zeigler and Wade Davis, work with scholars and other LGBT advocates to advance equality in sport. In each of these examples, researchers and activists work in tandem to best realize the desired end: a sport context characterized by diversity and inclusion.

## Conclusions

Thus, while strides have been made and attitudes toward LGBT individuals have largely improved over time, there is still work to be done. This work is best accomplished when all parties work together—a collaborative effort aimed at generating new knowledge, developing novel theoretical perspectives, challenging outdated stereotypes, demonstrating the many social, workplace, and economic benefits of diversity and inclusion, and ultimately, making sport a context characterized by LGBT equality.

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